

Implementing English as the First Foreign Language in the Primary Cycle in Algeria: Attitudes, Procedures and Challenges

ادراج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية أولى في الطور الابتدائي في الجزائر: توجهات، إجراءات وتحديات

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Abstract:

This research is an exploratory study that aims at thoroughly investigating the implementation of English as the first foreign language in the primary cycle in Algeria, instead of French, through the eyes of practitioners: the teachers of the primary schools. More precisely, it tackles teachers' attitudes, viewpoints, and suggestions on the most effective procedures and mechanisms for a successful implementation of English in the primary school in Algeria. Therefore, this study was conducted in two primary schools with the sum of 34 teachers, where data was collected through a questionnaire of 17 quantitative and qualitative questions. Results showed a consensus among the teachers who strongly supported implementing English as the first foreign language in the primary cycle and provided effective procedures and solutions for a safe, successful operation.

Keywords: Education System; English; Foreign Language Teaching; Language Conflict; Language Planning; Language Policy; Primary Cycle.

المخلص: تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تسليط الضوء على أحد اهم القضايا اللغوية الطارئة والأكثر اثاره للجدل في الجزائر حاليا والتي تتمثل في ادراج اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة اجنبية أولى عوضا عن اللغة الفرنسية في المستوى الابتدائي من خلال رؤية المعلمين في المدارس الابتدائية كخبراء في الميدان. وتركزت أهداف البحث حول دراسة وتحليل توجهات وراء المعلمين حول هذا الموضوع وكذا اقتراحاتهم حسب خبراتهم المتنوعة فيما يخص الأليات والإجراءات الناجعة لإنجاح هذا المشروع. ومنه، فقد تم اجراء دراسة ميدانية في مدرستين ابتدائيتين تضمان 34 معلم ابتدائي (عربية وفرنسية) من خلال استبيان ضم 17 سؤالا متنوعا نوعيا وكميا. وقد خلصت الدراسة الى ان المعلمين يدعمون بقوة اللغة الإنجليزية ومجمعون اجماعا تاما حول ضرورة ادماجها كلغة اجنبية أولى في الابتدائي، كما تم اقتراح أليات متعددة وإجراءات دقيقة لإنجاح العملية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإنجليزية، التخطيط اللغوي، السياسة اللغوية، الصراع اللغوي، الطور الابتدائي، تدريس اللغات الأجنبية، النظام التعليمي

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1. INTRODUCTION

The diverse sociolinguistic profile in Algeria has always been a rich arena for serious language conflicts and rivalries among Arabic (Standard and colloquial), Tamazight (mainly Kabyle), and French. These conflicts intensify during the major social, economic and political events in the country, which spark ideological and intellectual debates related to the country's languages, language policies and the education system. The classical language conflict has always been between Arabic and French, where Arabic is represented by the advocates of the Islamic, Arabic culture and principles, and French, by the so-called elite who are influenced by the French culture. Since Algeria's independence in 1962, both parties have defended their language during the critical periods in the country's history, where the language issue inevitably appeared as one of the serious problems in the socio-political life. However, the recent changes in the Algerian society, which has become more open to the world because of globalization and social media, introduced English as a new player in the sociolinguistic conflict in Algeria.

The existence of English as a foreign language in Algeria generated a fierce language conflict with French, which is fueled by the idea of replacing French by English as the first foreign language in the country. This conflict intensified in the last couple of years after the Algerian Hirak of 2019 (the nation-wide protests that started in February 2019 as movements to achieve the Algerians dream country), where people attacked French and called for its replacement with English. The people's demand of English has been since then increasing in varying ways in both real life and social media discourses. One of the demands of Algerians, as spotted on Facebook and public discourses, is the implementation of English in the primary school as the first foreign language. Indeed, many studies have been conducted or have addressed the English-French conflict in Algeria. However, the issue of implementing English in the Algerian primary school has not really been investigated except for rare studies such as Marouf's (2017) theoretical review of the topic, and only a few studies has empirically investigated this topic among the teachers of primary schools in Algeria. Therefore, this research is concerned with the implementation of English in the Algerian primary cycle, with focus on the different attitudes, stances,

challenges, prospects and procedures as perceived and explained by the teachers of primary schools. Accordingly, the study touched upon following questions:

1. How do the teachers of primary school evaluate the status and importance of English in Algeria?
2. How do they react to the call for its implementation in the primary cycle?
3. What procedures do they suggest for a successful implementation?
4. What challenges and prospects do the teachers indicate?

This paper starts first with a literature review that illustrates the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria and English and its rivalry with French in the country. Then, it moves to reporting, interpreting and discussing the study findings, and closes with stating the significance of the present research and its limitations and recommendations.

2. The Sociolinguistic Situation in Algeria

Algeria, with the Berbers as the original people, has been a host of various civilizations and cultures through time. According to Metz (1994) the major factors that shaped Algeria's history have been colonization, Islam, arabization and the independence struggle, through different eras including the colonization of Carthaginians, Romans and Byzantines in the BC era, the introduction of Islam and Arabic in the 7th century, and the French colonization and the independence era later on. Another key factor that influenced the modern history of the country is the civil war of the 1990s, which had a deep impact at all levels (Zeraoulia, 2020).

The presence of these various civilizations, cultures and major events in Algeria, through its long history diversified the country's culture, especially in its linguistic side. This has generated the multilingualism that characterizes today's Algeria with Berber, Arabic, and French as the major country's languages (Benyelles, 2011; Belmihoub, 2018a; 2018b) and some rising languages in recent years such as English and Chinese (Benrabah, 2014).

2.1. Arabic: Modern Standard Arabic (SA) and Darija (Colloquial Arabic)

As stated in the nation's constitution, Arabic, usually referred to as Modern Standard Arabic (SA), is the official language of Algeria. It had gained this status in the post-independence era following the political and linguistic campaigns of arabisation and reinforcing the Arabo-Muslim identity (Mostari, 2004b; Marouf, 2017). This explains why the language dominates the linguistic reality in the country in all domains. However, in reality, Arabic as a diglossic language (Ferguson, 1959) exists with its high and low varieties in Algeria.

The high (H) and low varieties (L) operate differently in Algeria. As stated in (Benyelles, 2011), the high variety is represented by two sub-varieties: Classical Arabic, used only for prestigious and religious purposes (rarely used in everyday life); and MSA, used for official purposes such education, media, law and administration (pp. 7-8). On the other hand, the low variety, as often called dialectal or colloquial Arabic, is a simplified, Algerian version of Standard Arabic and used in unofficial situations in the daily life of Algerians (Benyelles, 2011, p. 8).

2.2. Tamazight

Tamazight, or Berber, is the language of original people of Algeria, and it is still used today in some regions of the country as a minority language. This language has witnessed hard turbulences through its history because of the many conquerors who invaded Algeria starting from the Romans and Byzantis, until the coming of Islam (Benali-Mohamed, 2007). However, it resisted and preserved its existence through this challenging history. Today, between 17 to 20% of the Algerian population speak Tamazight (Mezhoud, 2015). This language has four major varieties: Takbaylit in the North (cities of Tizi-ouzou, Bejaia, Bouira and Boumerdas), Tachawit in the Aures region (Batna and Khenchela), Mzab Tamazight in Ghardaia, and Tamachak in the Algerian Sahara and Touarg regions (Achab, 2001).

The Berbers in Algeria had struggled for the official recognition of Tamazight in Algeria. However, it was only until 2002 that the government set Tamazight as a national language through a constitutional amendment in article 3 (Benstead & Reif, 2013). Tamazight has not yet reached the high status it has always opted for in the country. As stated by (Marouf, 2017), it could not impose

itself in Algeria at a larger scale due to its writing system, which still struggles over the graphic to use: Arabic or Roman.

2.3. French

French is relatively an unofficial second language in the country. Though it is not recognized in the Algerian constitution as a second language, it exists everywhere in the country. This is a result of the long French colonization in Algeria, which introduced, then imposed, French in the country. The French colonizer adopted a “deracination and deculturization” policy in Algeria to split the people from their culture and language (Benrabah, Competition between four “world” languages in Algeria, 2014, p. 44), which, as put by (Gallagher, 1968) facilitated the total Frenchification of the Algerians and the country. This deep assimilation of French in the Algerian culture has shaped the presence of the language in the sociolinguistic profile of the country. As confirmed by (Belmihoub, 2018b), French dominates many aspects in Algeria until today.

After the independence (1962), there were attempts from the Algerian regime to minimize the dominance and spread of French through the Arabization policy, which could not totally eradicate French from the country, for it was already part of the elites culture and penetrated even the linguistic structure of Arabic (Marouf, 2017). Indeed, this evident today in Algeria even after 50 years of independence. French is still the first foreign language in the Algerian educational system, starting from the primary school. In the official, public media, there channels, which broadcast in French like “Canal Algérie”. Sign roads, posters and headquarters in the country include French. More importantly, French is part of the Algerian Arabic. Thus, French is deeply woven in the Algerian society and culture.

2.4. English

English is not truly part of the sociolinguistic situation in Algeria, for it does not exist in the people’s daily life, nor it is used in official contexts as a foreign language, as French is. It exists only as a foreign language in the education system in Algeria starting from the middle school. However, it has relatively increased today as Benrabah (2014) expected when he anticipated:

the preservation of the French language in the North African former colony of France does not necessarily guarantee its presence in the long run, especially with English kept as a standby”. In Benrabah (2007b, p.117), [Benrabah] argued that were French to decline in Algeria, it is English and not Arabic which would replace it as the language of economic power (pp. 52-53).

In the last two decades, English has been increasingly – though in a fluctuating manner - founding its presence in the country, following differing socio-economic and political factors. There have been many initiatives and projects for the promotion of English in Algeria. In recent years, the British council set promising collaborations with the Algerian authorities and official institutions to enhance the learning and teaching of English in the country such as its 2008’s partnership with the Ministry of National Education and 2012’s partnership with Echorouk newspaper (Gherzouli, 2019). Moreover, as reported by the newspaper *Liberté* (2012), in a collaboration with the Ministry of Education and under the sponsorship of the oil company Anadarko, the British Council launched the ‘English for the Future’ program to train 69 teachers from 2009 to 2012; the training lasted 5 days and ended with Cambridge TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test).

In 2013, another project was launched by the US Embassy in Algeria and Berlitz Center to offer free English language classes to people from different ages and levels (Belmihoub, 2018b). These diverse projects and programs helped in promoting English in Algeria and opening new opportunities for Algerians to access this language. Nowadays, English is a trending topic in the Algerian society, especially in the public, unofficial sphere. This is quite apparent in the social media discourse of Algerians, where English is introduced and supported by the majority of Algerians as a necessity. Accordingly, English is most probably making its way as the first foreign language in the country.

3. English vs. French in the Algerian Education System

The status of English in the Algerian education system has been changing since the French colonial period because of the language policies the successive Algerian governments adopted following the major social, economic and political events the country has witnessed. The presence of English in the education system in Algeria has always been in the intermediate level, except for

a short period in the 1990s. As indicated by (Marouf, 2017), during the colonial period, English was taught as the first foreign language starting from grade 1 in the intermediate level; however, in the first years following independence, it was taught starting from grade 3.

Between 1970 and 1990, “French was taught as a subject and as the first mandatory foreign language, starting from the fourth grade in the primary cycle. English was the second foreign language, introduced in Middle School (eighth grade)” (Benrabah, 2014, p. 50). In 1993, Ali Benmohamed, the Minister of National Education, implemented English in the fourth grade in the primary schools, where pupils had to choose between French and English as the first foreign language (Laib, 1993). Unexpectedly, French dominated as the only foreign language in the primary cycle (Benrabah, Competition between four “world” languages in Algeria, 2014), and the minister’s project of English was paused and later cancelled due to some unknown reasons. There was a reform in 2003 that introduced French in the primary cycle from grade 2 instead of 4; it was then moved to grade three in 2006 (Marouf, 2017), and still as such until today. Currently, French is the first foreign language in Algeria and is taught starting from Grade 3 in the primary cycle while English is taught only starting from grade 1 in the middle school, which consist of four years.

At the university level, the former Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tayeb Bouzid ordered in 2019 the 77 universities to promote and start using English instead of French, declaring that “the French language does not get us anywhere” (Ghanmi, 2019). Along the same vein, in a survey launched by the ministry of higher education on its official website about the implementation of English as the foreign language of education at universities, 90% of voters strongly supported the proposal (Bensouiah, 2019). However, these initiatives either halted or evaporated in certain ways, and English is still not officially implemented in the higher education. This has not put out the Algerians enthusiasm and desire for having English as the foreign language in the country. For instance, the public call for implementing English as the first foreign language instead of French in the primary school has sparked again, as reflected by the people’s voices on social media. Indeed, this issue is the concern of the present study.

4. Method

The present research is an exploratory study, which targeted both qualitative and quantitative data. It aimed at investigating the issue of implementing English in the Algerian primary cycle and promoting it as the first foreign language in the country from the angle of the teachers in primary schools. More precisely, the study tackled the teachers' attitudes towards English and its status in Algeria, as well as its implementation in the primary schools, with focus on the procedures, challenges and prospects of this operation. Accordingly, the study touched upon the following questions:

1. How do the teachers of primary school evaluate the status and importance of English in Algeria?
2. How do they react to the call for its implementation in the primary cycle?
3. What procedures do they suggest for a successful implementation?
4. What challenges and prospects do the teachers indicate?

Therefore, the sampling, data collection tools, and analysis and interpretation of the results were set to meet the research's orientation and aims.

The study targeted the teachers of primary schools in Algeria, for they are experts in the field and their views and explanations are more accurate and significant in understanding the underpinnings of this topic. Accordingly, given the exploratory nature of the research and the time and effort constraints, two primary schools in Telerghma (district in the state of Mila, Algeria) were selected for the study. The first one is '*Salah Eddine El-Ayoubi Primary School*', and the second one is '*Smaili Miloud Primary School*'. The sum of the teachers in both schools was 34.

Data was collected through a questionnaire that consisted of 17 quantitative and qualitative questions, in diverse formats (yes-no, multi-choices and open-ended), which addressed the research aims and questions stated earlier. The questionnaire was administered in a hard-copy format with the help of two teachers from both schools, after taking permission from the principals. The results are reported, interpreted and discussed in the following sections.

5. Results

In this section, the results of the study are reported and analyzed. Each question is worked separately and supported by the tables or the figures depending on the nature of the data and its structure.

Q1: Gender

What is your gender?

This question is one of the questions that offer an overview about the research sample and its nature. The participants' answers are shown in Table 1.

Table N°1: The Participants' Gender

Gender/Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Female	25	73.5%
Male	9	26.5%
Total	34	100%

The results indicate that among the 34 participants, 25 are females (73.5%) and 9 are males (26.5%). Female teachers representing the majority of participants in the study is normal as most of the teachers, especially in the primary level in Algeria, are women.

Q2 : Teaching Specialty:

Which language do you teach? Arabic French

Table N°2: The teaching Specialty

Specialty/Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Arabic	27	79%
French	7	21%
Total	34	100%

As shown in Table 2, 79% of the participants (n=27) are teachers of Arabic while 21% are teachers of French (n=7). This is a normal distribution of the teachers' specialty given that more teachers of Arabic are required than the

teachers of French at the primary school as the pupils study French only starting from the third year and Arabic from first year.

Q3: Teaching Experience:

For how many years have you been teaching?

In this question, the teaching experience of the participants was investigated, for the experience is important in having valuable views and reflections on the topic. The results are illustrated in Figure 1.

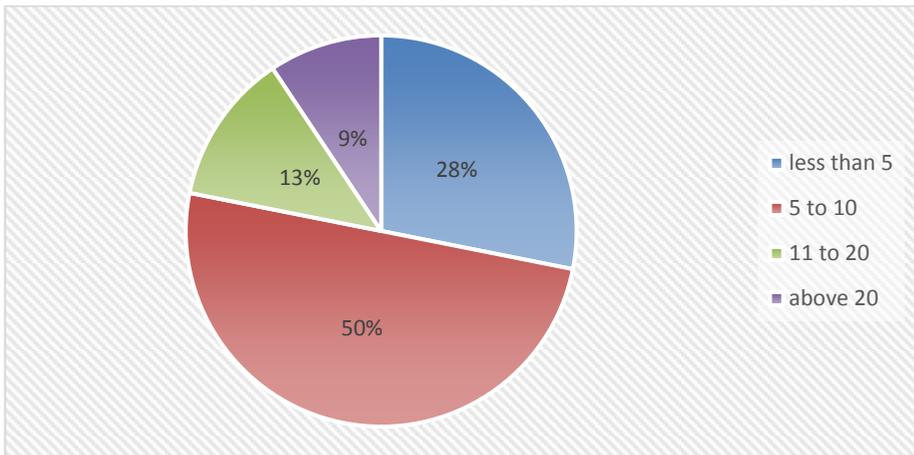


Figure N°1: Teaching Experience

The teaching experience was divided into four categories: less than 5 years, 5 to 10 years, 11 to 20 years, and more than 20 years. As the figure shows, 50% of the participants have a teaching experience ranging from 5 to 10 years; 28% have worked less than 5 years; 13% have work experience ranging between 11 to 20 years, and 9% have a very long teaching experience with more than 20 years. Given these percentages, it is clear that most of the participants have either considerable number of teaching years or long careers as teachers.

Q 4: The status of English in Today's Algeria

Concerning the status of English in today's Algeria, most of the participants stated that it is neglected, under-estimated and not receiving the required interest, and even catastrophic. As a sample answer along this vein, one of the participants stated:

“اللغة الإنجليزية اليوم في الجزائر مظلومة و لا تتلقى الأهمية اللازمة”

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[In today's Algeria, English is under-estimated and not receiving serious attention]

Moreover, some participants compared it to French, which is still dominating the foreign language presence in Algeria, both in terms of practice and culture. They indicated that it is still struggling behind French, despite of its importance in the world. For instance, one of the participants said that:

"بدء الجيل الصاعد في التوجه نحو الإنجليزية ولكن مازالت الفرنسية اللغة المسيطرة وذات الأولوية ممارسة"

[Though the youth generation in Algeria are orienting more towards English, French is still of greatest dominance and importance in the country in terms of practice]

Another answer was:

"اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر اليوم تعتبر اقل أهمية من الفرنسية ولا تعطى أي أهمية رغم قيمتها البالغة"

[English today is less important than French in Algeria and is not given any interest despite of its extreme importance]

Still, a few participants had optimistic prospects for the future of English in Algeria, saying that it is becoming a necessity, gradually founding its place in the country as the first foreign language and gaining the interest it should have.

Q5: Do you think English has become a necessity nowadays in Algeria?

This question tackled the presence of English in today's Algeria, investigating if the country is in great need to shift towards English and adopt it as an official foreign language. The participants' answers are included in Table 3.

Table N°3: English as a Necessity in Algeria Today

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0%
Total	34	100%

As shown in Table 3, all the participants (n=34 / 100%) agree that English is a necessity today in Algeria. No one (0%) was against the importance of this language in today's Algeria. This consensus reflects the extent to which the participants support English, and the extent to which its necessity in the country is undebatable.

Q6: Do you think English should be given more interest in Algeria?

This question focused on the participants' views towards the interest English is receiving in Algeria. In other words, it investigated whether the language should be highlighted more by officials and risen to a higher status or it is in its right place for the moment. The results are included in Table 4.

Table N°4: The Interest English Receives in Algeria

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0%
Total	34	100%

As shown in the table, 100% of the participants call for more interest and focus on English in Algeria, and no one (0%) said that this language is receiving enough interest. Again, as in the previous question, there is a consensus among the participants on the more attention that should be given to English in Algeria so that it reaches the status it deserves given its cruciality.

Q7: Should the status of English in the Algerian educational system be revisited?

This question explored the status of English in the Algeria educational system. More precisely, it checks if this language is not in its right place in education in the country, and if this should be reconsidered by the authorities. The results are shown in Table 5 below.

Table N°: 5. Revisiting the status of English in the Algerian Education System

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0%
Total	34	100%

Table.5 shows that all the participants (100%) think that English is not having the status it deserves in the Algerian educational system. There is a consensus that the authorities should reconsider the status of this language and revisit the educational system so that English is set in its right place.

Q8: Should English be implemented as a foreign language in the Algerian primary school?

This questions lies at heart of the study. It is a straightforward question on whether English must be included in the primary school in Algeria or not. The participants' answers are shown in Table 6.

Table N°6: Implementation of English in the Algerian Primary Cycle.

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Yes	34	100%
No	0	0%
Total	34	100%

The results indicate that all the participants (100%) call for the implementation of English in the Algerian primary school. This consensus reflects the extent to which English is required in the primary level in the Algerian educational system as a foreign language nowadays.

Q9 : Should English be implemented as:

- The only foreign language
- The First foreign language
- The second Foreign language

This question is related to question 8, and it investigates the place English should take in the primary school. The participants were given three choices. The first choice was adapting English as the only foreign language and cancelling French. The second choice was implementing English as the first foreign language and French becomes the second one. The third choice was keeping French as the first language and adding English as the second foreign language. The answers of the participants are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

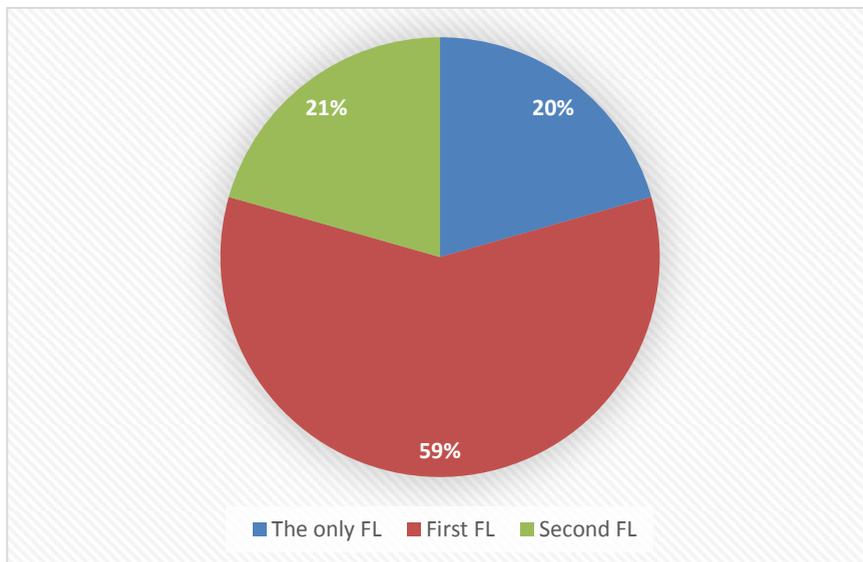


Figure N°2: Status of English as a Foreign Language in the Primary School

As shown in Figure 2, 59% of the participants see that English should be implemented as the first foreign language and French becomes second after it. 21 % see that French should be kept as the first foreign language and English as an additional foreign language, and 20 % are with the exclusion of French from the primary school and implementing English as the only foreign language. Thus, based on these results, it can be stated that about 80% of the participants call for

the implementation of English as the dominant foreign language, either by itself or with French as the second language behind it.

Q 10: The benefits of English for the pupils:

Regarding the benefits English would offer to the primary school pupils, most participants pointed to one essential asset of language: being the language of science, technology and international communication. More precisely, they stressed in their answers the power and dominance of English as the ‘language of the world’. Moreover, they explained that English would help the pupils for the acquisition of knowledge and information, which is mostly in English nowadays. Thus, they get prepared for future academic and professional careers and cope with the accelerating development at the universal scale. The following are some sample answers:

"اللغة الإنجليزية تساعد التلميذ على المدى البعيد في البحث العلمي سواءا الكترونيا او في الحياة العادية "
[English would help the pupil in the long term in the scientific research, both online and offline]

"اللغة الإنجليزية لغة العلم و التواصل تساعد التلميذ على الاندماج في الحضارة العالمية "
[English is the language of science and communication and it helps the pupil to get integrated in the global culture and civilization”]

"تساعد الإنجليزية التلميذ في تنمية أفكاره و اتصاله بالعالم كونها لغة العالم "
[English enables the pupil to enrich his ideas and develop his skills, for it is the language of the world]

Some participants expressed the efficiency and importance of English in comparison to the uselessness of French; they even went further saying that English would help in ruling out the useless French and free the country from it. This explanation is illustrated in these two answers:

"عكس اللغة الفرنسية فاللغة الإنجليزية لغة العلم و التطور الاجتماعي و الحضاري“

[Unlike French, English is the language of science and the development of society and civilization]

"اللغة الإنجليزية لغة العالم و التطور العلمي وال حضاري و ستساعد في التحرر من الفرنسية"

[English is the language of the world and the scientific and civil development; it would help in freeing the country from French].

Q11: Do you think English is more useful and effective than French for primary school pupils?

This question focuses on the importance of English in comparison to French. In other words, it investigated which language is of greater importance for the kids at the primary school according to the participants. Indeed, this question is strongly tied to question 9, for it digs deeper in the way English would be implemented in the presence of French in the primary school. The results are introduced in Table 7 below.

Table N°7: The Usefulness of English in Comparison to French

Answers	Absolute Frequecny	Relative Frequency
Yes	29	91%
No	5	9%
Total	32*	100%

- Two participants did not answer the question

As shown in the table, the majority of the participants (91%) believe that English is more useful and effective for the kids than French. Only a few participants (9%) believe that French is still more important than English for the kids. Again, English is receiving very high percentages in its favor by the participants. This expresses the greater importance and usefulness of English as a foreign language in comparison to French in the primary level, according to the participants.

Q12: In which year (level) of the primary school should English be implemented?

This question tackles the best procedures of implementation of English. The participants were asked to choose in which of the five primary schooling years English should be implemented. The answers are illustrated in Figure 3.

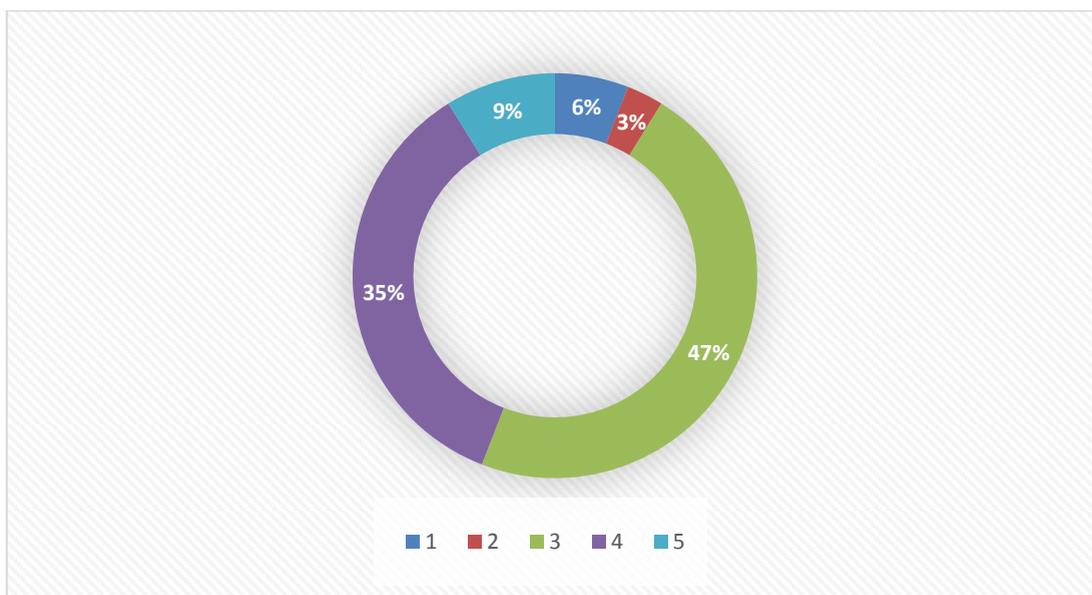


Figure N°3: Primary Cycle Level for Implementing English

As the figure shows, 47 % of the participants think that English is better implemented in the third year, and 35% of them chose the fourth year. However, only a few participants chose the first, second and fifth year (6%, 3% and 9% respectively). Thus these results show that the years which are mostly believed to be the right year to implement English at the primary level are the third and the fourth.

Q13: Should English be taught intensively at the primary school?

This question also tackles an issue related the procedures of the implementation of English in the primary school level. It investigated the intensity of the way English should be taught: intense or light programs. The participants' answers are included in the Table 8.

Table N°: 8. The Teaching Intensity of English

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Yes	14	41%
No	20	59%
Total	34	100%

The results (Table 8) show that 59% of the participants refuses intensive teaching of English for the kids in the primary school while 41% for it. Though more participants are for the intensive program, this issue is still debatable and the participants are divided approximately into two even groups concerning the best program of English.

Q14: Given your experience with the pupils at the primary school, how easy/difficult learning English would be for the kids?

This question investigated the difficulty the kids would encounter when learning English, for this language is completely a new experience for them, unlike French, which is found in the daily life of the Algerians. Thus, the participants were asked to indicate the difficulty level (easy/normal/difficult) based on their experience with the kids. The results are shown in Figure 4 below.

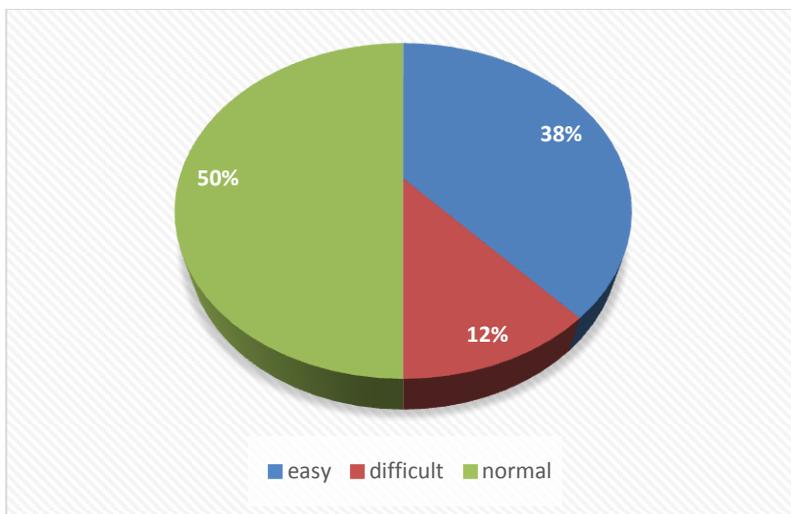


Figure N°4: The Learning Difficulty of English

As shown in the figure, 50% of the participants think that the kids would learn English in a normal way, without any difficulty, and 38% believe that the pupils would easily learn this language. However, 12% believe that it would be difficult for the kids to learn English at the primary school. Given these results, the majority of the participants believe that the kids would face no difficulty in learning English in the primary school.

Q15: Which is best for the kids?

- *To be taught only the language*
- *Or the language and its culture*

Question 15 investigated the most suitable English syllabus content for the kids at the primary level. For these kids are still young, a crucial question was raised: is the English/American culture would be suitable? Accordingly, the participants were asked about the best way to teach English: with or without the culture, and they were also asked, in the second part of the question to explain their choices. The results are shown in Table 9 below.

Table N°:9. Content of the Syllable of English

Answers	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
Language only	34	100%
Language & Culture	0	0 %
Total	34	100%

Table 9 show that all the participants (100%) are against the teaching of the culture with the language. They all called for the exclusion of the English/American culture at the primary level and teaching only the language for the kids.

Explanations:

Regarding the reasons behind choosing the teaching of “language only” and excluding “culture”, one major issue was commonly stressed in the participants’ answers: the danger of “the foreign culture” for kids at the primary

school. The participants explained that the kids at that age need only the language; they must not be exposed to the English/American culture, for the priority is for the Islamic, national culture at this level, and the English/American culture is a threat for the kids. The following are some sample answers illustrating this view:

إذا تمكن الطفل من اللغة فله الحرية مستقبلا في الاطلاع على ما يريد من الثقافة، اما في الابتدائي “
فالأولوية لترسيخ الثقافة الدينية – الوطنية”

[The kid should master the language at this age, and he will be free in the future to explore the culture. Thus, at the primary school, the priority is for solidifying the Islamic-national culture]

“يحتاج الطفل للغة و فقط، لا للثقافة الغربية في هذا السن”

[The kid needs only the language, and, ‘no for the foreign’ culture at this age]

Another reason for choosing the “language only” was the kids’ cognitive abilities and exhaustion. The participants indicated that at the primary level, the pupils are not able to receive both the language and the culture because they are not mentally and cognitively ready, and this would be very exhausting to them. Therefore, only the language would be perfect at this age.

Q16: Which aspect should be given more emphasis in teaching English in the primary school: grammar or language skills?

This question also tackles an issue related to the syllabus content and the teaching focus. The participants were asked about which is the aspect to be emphasized in teaching English to the kids at the primary school. The first choice is the grammar of the language, where the pupils receive only mere linguistic knowledge such as pronouns, prepositions, tenses, etc. the second choice is the language skills, which are more interaction-oriented and help in fostering communication in English. Figure 5 displays the participants’ answers.

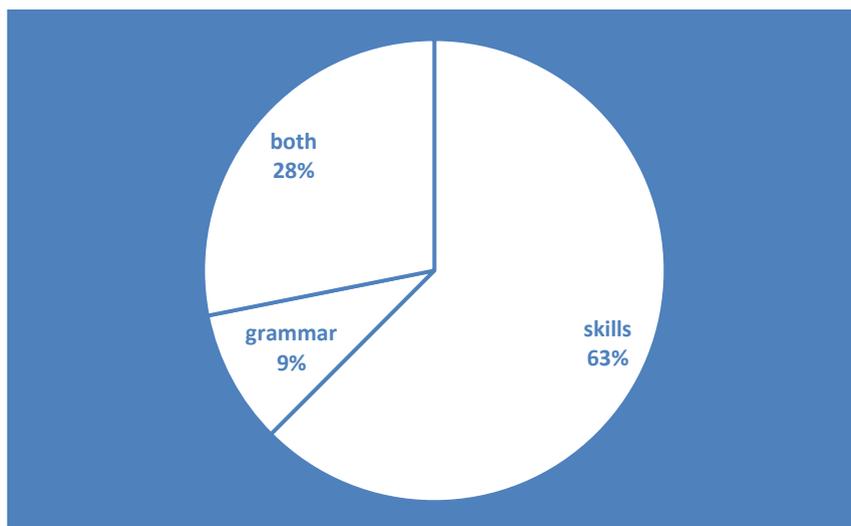


Figure N°5: The Focus in Teaching English

As shown in Figure 5, 63% of the participants see that the skills of language must be emphasized more than the grammar. Only 9 % believe that grammar should be emphasized. Still, 28% of the participants see that emphasizing both aspects is the best choice. Generally, the results show that skills must be given interest in teaching English to the kids in the primary school.

Q17: Do you have any suggestions that would strengthen the research?

The participants' suggestions mostly touched upon issues of best ways of implementation of English in the primary school and its teaching. The following are some key answers that depict these suggestions:

"اضافة لغة جديدة في الابتدائي فكرة عملية ورائدة، لكن العائق يكمن في البرامج الكثيفة والامر يستدعي اعادة تفكير وتخطيط."

[Including a new foreign language in the primary school is practical and pioneering idea. However, the challenge lies in the overloaded syllabi; thus, there must be serious discussion and planning for the operation]

"هذا الموضوع يجب رفعه للوزارة الوصية نظرا لأهميته وفائدته."

[This project should be presented at the responsible ministry because of its importance and usefulness]

"يجب انشاء قسم خاص وملئم باللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة والتركيز على التحوار بها أكثر".

[A special classroom, that fits an efficient teaching of English, must be devoted to the language, and more time should be given to the speaking skill for pupils]

"تكوين أساتذة أكثر في اللغة الإنجليزية مع اجراء بحوث معمقة حول ادراجها بصورة ناجحة في المرحلة الابتدائية."

[More teachers of English must be provided and extensive research on the successful implementation of this language in the primary level is required]

"انشاء تعليم عن بعد للغة الإنجليزية للأطفال."

[Creation of remote teaching of English for the kids]

"تحسيس التلاميذ عند تدريسهم اللغة الإنجليزية ان اللغة ذو حدين ويجب عدم التعرض للعادات والتقاليد."

[Educate the kids that English is a double-edged sword, and they must not be exposed its culture]

6. Discussion

The topic of implementing English in the primary cycle in Algeria has surfaced recently in the people's offline and online discourses, and has consequently been intriguing issue in the country. Investigating the topic based on the primary school teachers' views and stances offered a thorough, expert-based treatment and analysis, which generated a number of significant findings.

The study revealed that English is under-estimated in Algeria though its undebatable importance and dominance in the world, as clearly declared by the teachers. In other words, while the entire world has adopted English as the first foreign language, Algeria has not yet dealt with this language as required, for the country is still tied to French as the first foreign language. This reflects the rivalry that is intensifying nowadays between English and French as described in previous studies. Moreover, the study has shown that there is a consensus among the teachers that English is becoming a necessity for today's Algeria, and therefore, it must be given more interest. Indeed, these stances and views of the teachers reflect and support people's call for promoting English in the country as felt in their discussions in daily life and on social media. They also reflect that

the Algerians are becoming more open to the world and coping with the global development and changes.

Regarding the status of English in the Algerian education system, the study's findings stressed that the government must reconsider the teaching of English and set a policy that reforms the system so that it places this language as required. More precisely, there was a consensus among the teachers that English must be included in the primary cycle. Thus, it can be stated that the implementation of English in the Algerian primary school is undebatable for two reasons: first, because none of the teachers was against its inclusion, and second, even the teachers of French (who represent 21% of the study's sample) were with the idea of implementing English in the primary cycle. This view is assisted by the teachers' description of English as the language of science, research, civil and social development, which would, unlike French, boost the pupils' skills and help them in building their personalities and future careers. Therefore, in its broadest sense, this consensus on the importance and effectiveness of English in comparison to French and its implementation in the primary cycle supports the people's call. Thus, English is no longer an option; it is a necessity nowadays in the Algerian primary cycle.

A further debate that lies at the heart of this operation is related to the best procedures to follow for a successful implementation of English in the primary cycle, especially with the presence of French currently as the first foreign language. The first key procedure is concerned with the status English must be given in the primary school. The study revealed that only a few teachers recommended English must be placed after French as the second foreign language while most of the them called for adopting English as either the only foreign language or the first foreign language. On the one hand, this strengthens the English's side in the rivalry with French, and on the other hand, it excludes the existence of French in the Algerian primary school.

The second key procedure is related to the primary school level where English is better included. Based on their experience, the teachers recommended that English should be included in the curriculum of primary cycle starting from either the third or fourth year. Put differently, it is better if English is not

included for the children in their first years in the primary school. As far as the teaching load, the teachers did not agree on whether English should be taught intensively or lightly. This proves that the teaching load is better specified based on field studies and pedagogical experiments in the primary schools so that we accurately decide its nature. In addition, one finding that might be helping in specifying the teaching load is the teachers' view that English will cause no learning problems for the children and it might be even easy for them.

The most critical issue in implementing English for children in the primary school is the culture-related issue. Indeed, this is a classical pedagogical issue in the teaching of foreign languages, especially for children. The effect of the culture of the foreign language culture on the learners has always been questioned. There was a consensus among teachers that children must not be exposed to the English culture, for it is a threat and would negatively affect the personalities and thinking development of the pupils at this early age. Thus, the Algerian education policy makers and consultants must attentively deal with aspect and adapt the primary school curriculum and English subject syllabus to the peculiarities of the Algerian society and the children's needs.

Moreover, the teachers advised for emphasizing the skills of the language more the grammar, i.e. the pupils are better be taught to use the language successfully in communication, for this is what they really need in their life and careers. This advice must be taken into consideration in the syllabus design and selection of the teaching methods and equipment required in the primary schools.

In enriching the exploration of implementing English in the primary cycle in Algeria, the teachers' suggestions advised that more research as the present one must be carried out, for this operation is complicated and requires deeper understanding of the children's needs and orientations and an exhaustive view of all related educational and pedagogical issues. Furthermore, they stated that implementing English in the primary cycle is a pioneering idea and a promising initiative, and therefore, this project must be presented in the official sphere, the ministry of education in Algeria.

Given all these findings, the present study is significant in a number of ways. First, it adds to the existing literature and research on language contact and language policy; it gives new insights about the English-French conflict in Algeria and the way it operates in the education-related issues. Second, it proves

that (Benrabah, 2007b) anticipation that English would replace French in Algeria is closer than ever. In other words, English is the people and experts' number one choice nowadays, and it is just a matter of time to be adapted as the first foreign language in the country. Third, the study confirmed that English is no longer a guest in the country, and orients the sociolinguistic research in Algeria to consider it as one of the current pillars of linguistic changes in both the Algerians' language attitudes and preferences and the government's policies. Finally, this study proved that the English-French rivalry is not based on ideological orientations, for it is the people's call and not some lobbies' choices; it is just based on the Algerians desires to benefit from English as the language of the world and invest in it to cope with the global scientific, civil, social, economic and intellectual developments.

7. Conclusion

The present research proved that implementing English in the Algerian primary schools is a pioneering idea that is founding its way to reality faster than ever. English is becoming a necessity in the country, and it is now the people's choice and demand. This study resulted in a number of significant findings concerning this project and the sociolinguistic research in general. However, it was limited and relatively small due to the time, effort and research capacity constraints. Accordingly, further research that targets other kinds of Algerians such as parents and university professors is required. Moreover, conducting studies among larger samples would add more to our understanding of the topic and helps in drawing the successful strategy for implementing English in the primary cycle in Algeria. As far as the authorities are concerned, and based on the present study's findings, it is highly recommended that this issue should be given more attention through launching national workshops and conferences that includes all Algerians from different backgrounds, professions, educational levels, places, ethnicities and orientations.

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