

English Use in the Algerian Media Discourse: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract

As a part of the Maghreb, Algeria is the largest francophone country after France where French co-exists with the native languages (Berber & Arabic) since the French occupation. Unlike in the Middle East, English in Algeria was only part of the curriculum in education and as a specialty in higher education. However, nowadays, we notice the increasing spread of English in Algeria beyond education. That is, we notice the presence of English in other domains such as Oil Industry, Maritime Industry, Marketing, and even Media. Thus, the present paper attempts to investigate the status and the presence of the English language in the Algerian Media. The purpose of the study is twofold; first, to explore the different Algerian TV channels and online Newspapers / blogs that use English as a means of communication & information. Second, it seeks to know about the attitudes of the Algerian audience/readers towards the Algerian media in general and those being delivered in English in particular. As for methods of data collection, we relied on an observation and a questionnaire. The findings of the study reveal mainly the following: 1) nowadays, the Algerian TV channels, public and private, have increased considerably in quantity and quality. 2) The three languages in use in Algeria (i.e., Arabic, Berber, and French) are all present in the Algerian TV programs. 3) Similarly, the number of Algerian newspapers has significantly augmented in recent years. And they are written mainly in Arabic and French, in addition to some contributions in Berber in some regional newspapers. 4) Besides, we noticed a widespread of Algerian blogs covering many aspects of the Algerian updates. Importantly, we noticed the presence of many blogs written in English by Algerian bloggers (and for the Algerian reader). 5) Significantly, the event that attracted us most is the experience of Dzair News in delivering the news in English. 6) The majority of participants (68%) follow the Algerian news reported in French, followed by Berber (Kabyle) with 21%, and finally in Arabic with 11%. 7) The majority of participants (76%) generally follow the world news in English. 8) Finally, All the participants expressed their positive attitudes towards the use of the English language in the Algerian Media. Also, most of them added that it would be very useful at the national and international levels.

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1. Introduction

Since its openness policy for the private sector, the Algerian Media scene is increasingly flourishing with a multilingual diversity and from diverse horizons. Nowadays, the Algerian Media encompasses more than 30 national TV channels, more than 60 newspapers titles, and many blogs that contribute to the Algerian Media coverage. Accordingly, the Algerian Media is presented in the three languages in use in Algeria, namely, Arabic, Berber, and French. However, some (new) experiences in presenting the Algerian news in English came to the surface and admirably attracted our attention. It is the case of the English edition of the news presented in Dzair News and other blogs written in English by Algerians for an Algerian audience.

2. Statement of the Problem

As a part of the Maghreb, Algeria is the largest francophone country after France where French co-exists with the native languages (Berber & Arabic) since the French occupation. Unlike in the Middle East, English in Algeria was only part of the curriculum in education and as a specialty in higher education. However, nowadays, we notice the increasing spread of English in Algeria beyond education. That is, we notice the presence of English in other domains such as Oil Industry, Maritime Industry, Marketing, and even Media. Thus, the present paper attempts to investigate the status and the presence of the English language in the Algerian media. Also, it

English Use in the Algerian Media Discourse: An Exploratory Case Study seeks to know about the Algerian audience towards the Algerian Media in general and towards those presented in English in particular.

3. Questions of the Study

The present study addresses the following questions:

1. What are the different Algerian Media that use English as a means of communication?
2. What are the attitudes of the Algerian audience towards the use of English in the Algerian Media Discourse?

4. Assumption of the Study

In the present study, we assume that the Algerian audience, mainly EFL students, has a great interest and positive attitudes towards the Algerian Media presented in English.

5. The Theoretical Background

The linguistic situation in Algeria remains one of the most fascinating sociolinguistic case studies where at least two ethnic groups live together and share at least three languages and dozens of dialects. In his outstanding book entitled *Language Conflict in Algeria: From Colonialism to Post-Independence* (2013), Professor Benrabah gives a panoramic sociolinguistic view on the language situation in Algeria mainly from 1962 to 2012. He listed many turning points in the sociolinguistics of Algeria mainly with the Arabization policy and its failure

English Use in the Algerian Media Discourse: An Exploratory Case Study to ‘eradicate’ the French language from the linguistic scenery of Algeria. Unexpectedly, French remains the privileged language after the Arabization policy (93). Accordingly, Benrabah asserts that this result is due to the non consideration of the “*input from the community’s language practices and attitudes, and it ignores extra-linguistic factors that are likely to affect language spread or decline*” (98).

Accordingly, we notice the spread of English in present day Algeria in many domains thanks to its openness policy towards the world market and its involvement in many international programs and diplomatic relations. Also, we notice a real motivation within Algeria toward the mastery of English. It is seen through the remarkable efforts of the Algerian ministry of higher education to train and develop the Algerian teachers of English mainly by offering scholarships to the English speaking countries for M.A. and Ph.D. programs in favor of would be Algerian teachers of English. Besides, the different exchange programs jointly organized by the Algerian government and the British council and the American Embassy give significant results and contribution in the wide spread of English in Algeria. Furthermore, in discussing multilingualism in Algeria, many scholars (Chemami, 2011; Belmihoub, 2012; and Benrabah, 2013) agree that English has a promising status and future in Algeria.

As far as Media, as a domain and institution, is concerned, it is “*a significant form of information release*

English Use in the Algerian Media Discourse: An Exploratory Case Study *in many countries*” (Zeinalabedini, 2014:5). Accordingly, many broadcasting channels reached high scores of audience, thanks to the use of English as a mean of expression, mainly News channels such as BBC, CNN, Al Jazeera English, etc. Besides, media language/discourse received much interest and investigations from different perspectives and areas of study. Thus, the present study is exploratory and attitudinal investigating English use in the Algerian media discourse.

6. Methods

The present study is a mixed method research encompassing both qualitative and quantitative analysis of data. It relies mainly on two research methods, namely, an observation and a questionnaire. In the observation, we observed and browsed the Algerian TV Channels and the Web looking for online newspapers and blogs written in English by Algerians for Algerians. As far as the questionnaire is concerned, it is designed to elicit information about the audience attitudes towards the Algerian Media in general and to those presented / written in English.

7. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is twofold:

- 1) To explore the different Algerian TV channels and online Newspapers / Blogs that use English as a means of communication & information.

- 2) It seeks to know about the attitudes of the Algerian audience/readers towards the Algerian media in general and those in English in particular.

8. Population & Sample of the Study

1. For the observation, the population of the study consists of all Algerian Media (TV Channels, Online Newspapers, and Blogs). However, the sample of the study consists only of those delivered in English.
2. For the questionnaire, the population of the study consists of all Master EFL students enrolled in the department of English at Bejaia University during the second semester of the academic year of 2016-2017. However, the sample of the study consists of 100 Master 2 students.

9. Significance of the Study

The present study derives its significance from the following:

1. It gives an overview of the English language use in the Algerian Media Discourse.
2. It highlights the unique experience of Dzair News in presenting the news in English by Algerian young English speakers (recently graduated from the Algerian Universities) which is an opportunity to invite / motivate our EFL students to make use of their linguistic skills in the Algerian Journalism and Media.
3. It could be considered as a modest contribution to Media Discourse Studies in general and Media Discourse in Algeria in particular.

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10. Results & Discussion

The present study is mainly descriptive based on a mixed methods research design. The findings are presented qualitatively by transcribing the researchers' observation and standpoints; and quantitatively through some statistical measurements presented in figures.

11. Analysis & Discussion of the Observation

After observing and browsing the Algerian Media, we could come to the following observations:

- Nowadays, the Algerian TV channels, public and private, have increased considerably in quantity and quality.
- Also, the three languages in use in Algeria (i.e., Arabic, Berber, and French) are all present in the Algerian TV programs.
- Similarly, the number of Algerian newspapers has significantly augmented in recent years. And they are written mainly in Arabic and French, in addition to some contributions in Berber in some regional newspapers.
- Besides, we noticed a widespread of Algerian blogs covering many aspects of the Algerian updates. Importantly, we noticed the presence of many blogs written in English by Algerian bloggers and for (the Algerian reader).
- Significantly, the event that attracted us most is the experience of Dzair News in delivering the news in English (according to the international standards with the amazing pronunciation intelligibility of the Algerian young journalists).

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12. Analysis & Discussion of the Questionnaire

For the purpose of the study, the questionnaire was handed to 100 Master 2 Students enrolled in the Department of English at Bejaia University during the second semester of the academic year of 2016-2017. The choice of this sample is motivated by the following: we believe that Master 2 students are about the graduate; thus, we expect the majority of them to look for job opportunities. Accordingly, we assumed that Media could be the venue of many EFL graduate students.

Item 01: *Do you follow the Algerian Media?*



Figure1. The Frequency of the Algerian Media Followers

Figure 01 shows that almost all the participants follow the Algerian Media with 98% of the total respondents. This speaks highly about the participants in the Algerian news and development in all walks of life.

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Item 02: *In which language(s) do you watch/read the Algerian news?*

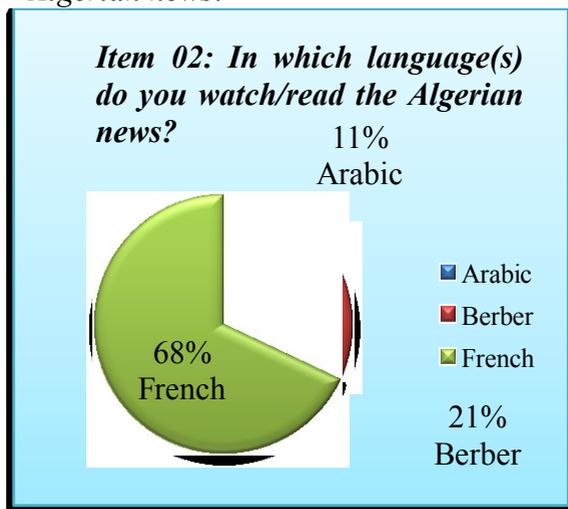


Figure 02 shows that the majority of participants (68%) follow the Algerian news reported in French, followed by Berber (Kabyle) with 21%, and finally in Arabic with 11%. Plausible interpretations for these linguistic choices come from different disciplines and perspectives. Historically, it is because of the deep rooted presence of French in Algeria. Socio-linguistically, it speaks highly on the Sociolinguistic reality that features Béjaia. Psycho-linguistically, it could be related to the bilingual language acquisition and development of Algerian speakers, etc.

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Item 03: *As an EFL student, generally, do you follow the world news in English?*

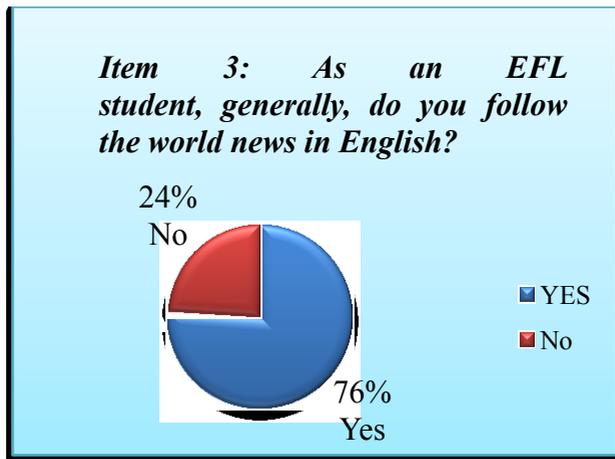
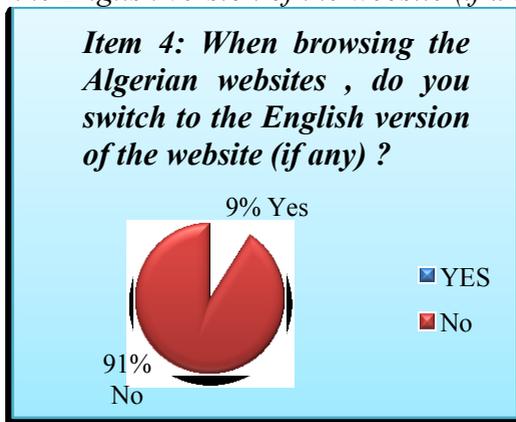


Figure 03 shows that the majority of participants (76%) generally follow the world news in English. However, 24% of the participants don't follow news in English.

Item 04: *When browsing the Algerian websites, do you switch to the English version of the website (if any)?*



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Figure 04 shows that almost all the participants (91%) have never switched to the English version when browsing the Algerian websites. However, only 9% have tried it and some even do it regularly (as stated by two students during a short discussion about the topic).

Item 05: *Do you know that Dzair News has an English edition of the news, presented by young Algerian English speaking journalists?*

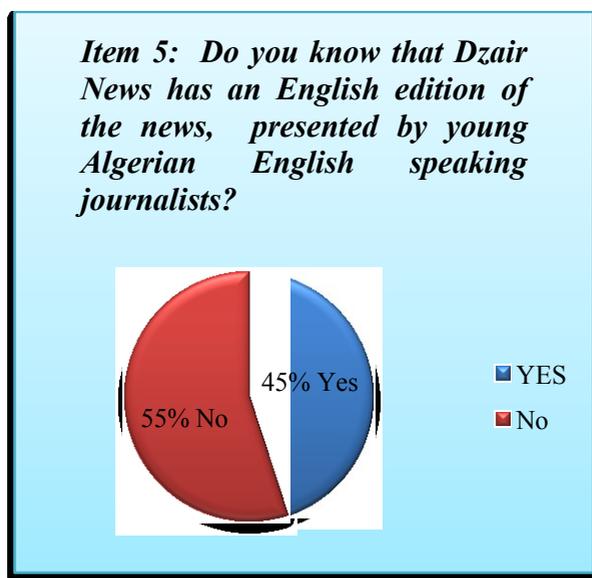


Figure 05 shows that more than half of the respondents (55%) didn't know about the English edition of the news presented in Dzair News (TV). However, 45% of the respondents asserted that they know about it and they really enjoyed watching it.

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Item 06: If yes, would you describe this experience particularly as an EFL student?

For those who enjoyed watching the English edition of the news, they described this experience as follows:

“...It is really motivating to see young Algerian journalists, almost the same age with us, presenting the news in English with an outstanding pronunciation...”

“...It is a great opportunity for EFL students to access Journalism in English...”

“...It attracted my attention towards Journalism job opportunities and especially with this channel (Dzair News / English news section)...”

“...I even started imitating them and get interested in presenting the news and animating TV programs. Also, I'm thinking of doing trainings in that sense...”

Item 7: In general, what is your attitude towards the use of English in the Algerian Media? And what are its advantages?

All the participants expressed their positive attitudes towards the use of the English language in the Algerian Media. Also, most of them added that it would be very useful at the national and international levels. That is, direct job opportunities for EFL students will remarkably increase and it allows the whole world to know more

English Use in the Algerian Media Discourse: An Exploratory Case Study about county mainly trough socio-cultural and nature wilderness documentaries in English that will make the beauty of our country and its diversity shines on the whole world.

Conclusion

The present study has been an endeavor to explore the situation of the English language use in the Algerian Media Discourse scene. Still, the present topic of investigation is not fully and satisfactorily examined. Further studies are expected to come in this respect with larger sampling and in-depth observations and interviews. However, the present exploratory case study could be considered as a preliminary exploration that would give directions to outstanding investigations in the Algerian Media Discourse. Also, it is noteworthy to make reference to the following limitations: 1) the sample of the study is limited to EFL students; thus, further studies may extend their sampling to larger categories. 2) The study is conducted in Bejaia; thus, other studies can be larger in scope and area. 3) Also, the variables of gender and age are not considered in the present study.

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