

Teachers' Perceptions towards the Englishization of the Algerian Higher Education: Pros and Cons

Dr. Abla AHMED KADI* Senior lecturer at the English department of Ziane Achour university of Djelfa, ablaahmedkadi@gmail.com

Received: 28/10/2021

Accepted: 10/3/2022

Published: 2/6/2022

Abstract:

The objective of this descriptive study is to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the Englishization of the Algerian higher education i.e. it intends to draw attention to the pros and cons of establishing the English language as a formal instrument of instruction that will presumably substitute the French language at the university level. In pursuit of this stated intent, an online questionnaire was addressed to a random sample of 70 teachers from different faculties at 16 Algerian universities. Both quantitative and qualitative data were accumulated. Quantitative data were subjected to statistical analysis. On the other hand, qualitative data were treated using thematic analysis. The results demonstrated that the teachers believe that the Englishization process will give the Algerian university a global reputation and lay the foundation for a renewal in the educational practices. The findings also revealed that the Algerian teachers encounter a plethora of obstacles in integrating English in the classroom.

Keywords: Algerian university; Englishization; pros; cons; teachers' perceptions.

Jel Classification Codes: XN1, XN2.

* Corresponding author: Dr. Abla AHMED KADI,

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English is increasingly becoming an instrument of progress wherein the language is regarded as the driving force of scientific research, technological innovation and educational progress. Accordingly, implementing English as a teaching tool in the Algerian university has always been of perennial interest to the Algerian authorities who have recently begun to take practical steps towards the formal integration of the language in higher education, and thus, revolutionizing the conventional pedagogical practices to conform to the current teaching transformations that reached the Algerian university.

Admittedly, not only has English become a key to making worldwide advances at different levels and a lingua franca that eliminates communication barriers as well as a vehicle for various global transactions but also an integral part of international education curricula and, on top of that, a recognized tool for lesson delivery. In the Algerian university context, however, English is still, say, at its infancy and generalizing its use among the community of teachers at university is a long-run process which requires much time, concerted efforts and a multi-dimensional program to reach its full integration in the higher education setting. Therefore, there is a consensus among the Algerian people, in general, and the authorities, in particular, that English serves as a bridge towards the internationalization of the Algerian university owing to the fact that academic and scientific prevalence works in tandem with this universally spread language.

It is worthy to mention that French, being a former colonizer's language, and thus, a second language after Arabic, has extended its impact for many decades since the independence proclamation, not merely on the Algerian society but also on many sectors of the country including the higher education. Hence, this has constituted another incentive towards the switch from French to English, and therefore, emancipating the Algerian university from the shackles of the French-oriented education.

Correspondingly, the decision of adopting English as a means of education at the university level has not developed in vacuum; rather, it is based on several considerations. Further, despite being aware of this challenging process, the officials in charge of the Ministry of Higher Education and scientific research in Algeria have invited teachers to embrace English as a teaching vehicle and urged them to make a gradual departure from the traditional academia and give the Algerian university an international reputation.

In light of what has been discussed earlier, this paper aims to explore the Algerian teachers' perspectives regarding the benefits that the Englishization process will bring to the Algerian university, most importantly, it attempts to outline the drawbacks of implementing English as an instructional tool in the classroom.

2. The Internationalization of Tertiary Education: A Global Trend

Due to the ongoing globalization process, English has emerged as the backbone of worldwide tertiary education. The language gained momentum owing to its contribution to the development of science and technology, on the one hand, and because of the pivotal role that it plays in the dissemination of the internationalization policy on the other.

Internationalization in the context of higher education is defined as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). In almost a parallel situation, Rahmani (2021) argues that the internationalization of higher education sector requires embracing

the English language as a global language and a communication vehicle. This policy links universities that share similar interests worldwide and it serves as a tool that boosts quality university education through international publications and researches that enhance the university's international profile.

Further, Crystal (2003) explains that a language can be considered as global when it is spread in every country. Therefore, it is worth stating at this level that the English language prevails in the worldwide academia since it is acknowledged as “the first foreign language in almost all education systems” (Beacco & Byram, 2003, p. 52).

Galloway and Rose (2015) assert that “internationalization of higher education remains a priority for universities worldwide, and movements are inextricably linked with increasing the role of English in the university setting” (p. 230). In fact, Motteram (2003) stresses the multifaceted benefits of integrating English at universities, as it is the main catalyst for advances in many sectors such as technology, scientific investigations, medicine, engineering, and higher education. Moreover, it contributes to make universities recognized worldwide, promotes research output, and increases the employability rate for graduates (Delgado-Márquez et al. 2013).

Technology is regarded as a contributing factor for accelerating the international expansion of English in an unprecedented fashion. Accordingly, Mckay (2003) acknowledges the role of technology in the worldwide diffusion of English since there is a growing number of non-native English teachers who seek, nowadays, to learn the language in order to have access to “scientific and technological information, international organizations, global economic trade and higher education” (p. 34).

Therefore, in order to answer the 21st century requirements, the Algerian authorities felt the need to make a gradual and radical change by taking a step further into the internationalization of the Algerian higher education to keep pace with the global trends of education and elevate the Algerian university to reach the highest status in the international ladder.

3. A Language Policy: The English-ization of the Algerian University

There has always been a commonsense thinking that English is a language that can widely open Algeria into the global world. For the past few decades, many reforms have been initiated to metamorphose the Algerian Higher Education. Indeed, the motive was to establish an educational system that is tailored to the practical needs of the university teachers and students alike. University teachers are required to expand their English linguistic competence in order to strengthen the position of English, and, thus, uplift the Algerian higher education to meet international models.

The rise of English as an internationalization tool has made countries all over the world embark on language programs. Kirkpatrick (2011) refers to the linkage between modern education and English as a medium of instruction as universities worldwide depend on Englishization in order to internationalize. Along the same lines, Balan (2011) states that English provides a variety of social and educational services, countries around the world perceived the importance of endorsing English as a means of teaching. Further, Wilkinson (2013) confirms that programs based on English as an instructional tool have become very popular in non-native English higher education contexts.

Englishization has overwhelmingly emerged as a growing phenomenon in almost all countries where English is not the native language. Algeria is no exception, as the authorities in charge of the higher education sector found themselves in face of this growing trend. At this point, implementing English as the language of teaching and scientific research started to be highly debated and attempts to expand discussions with the university community and Algerian people on strengthening the English language has become necessary more than any other time.

Rahmani (2021) sheds light on the poll posed recently on the official Facebook page of the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in order to check whether the decision to establish English as a language of teaching at university will be advocated by the majority of Algerians who were supposed to vote and show their (dis) approval. Importantly, the results showed that the vast majority of respondents supported the proposal to adopt the English language, in addition to Arabic, in formal communications.

Therefore, the decision had met with a consensus of opinion among the Algerian population and university community alike, showing the extent to which the Algerians are aware of the growing urge of being internationally involved.

To put the aforementioned language policy into practice, the ministry ultimately collaborated with the US embassy in Algeria to enhance the process of English language learning at university, they signed an agreement so that the Algerian higher education will enjoy the same status that international universities have, as stated in the recent report of the US embassy which promised to “transform the way Algerians learn English at universities and ultimately ensure that all Algerian graduates, professors, and researchers acquire the English skills they need to succeed”. (U.S Embassy, 2021). Furthermore, the US embassy asserted that the benefits of the project are manifold, as it will push Algeria to the fore of academic excellence and, thus, will attract students from worldwide countries. Further, this collaboration will launch a training program on how to teach English in science and technology added to the exchange programs which involve sending Algerian students to the United States.

According to the report issued by the British Council (2010), English is very beneficial for the students' international mobility and this can be demonstrated in the IELTS and TOEFL competences tests which students are required to take in order to obtain an opportunity to study abroad. In parallel, Belmihoub (2018) asserts that this Englishization policy started long ago through different collaborations, he adds that the internet has its share in the process:

Private language centers, the US Embassy, and British Council support of various English education programs, contribute to the rise in the number of users since the end of the civil war of the 1990s. Facilitated by the Algerian government's Communications Ministry, the advent of the Internet and mobile technology has also facilitated access to online resources and platforms for English learning and use thereby driving up the number of Algerian youth using English (p.7)

Balan (2011) states that the English language has also impacted the international academic journals which started, long ago, to publish their papers in English. Most indexed journals, including the ones previously published in other languages, have switched to English in order to guarantee worldwide authorship and readership.

Therefore, Englishization has extended its reach to the Algerian university in response to the

pressures of an internationalized world. The ministry of higher education authorities urged the university teachers to embrace the language in the classroom in order to transform the teaching/learning environment into a more vibrant one, give the Algerian university pedagogy a contemporary mold and, most importantly, come up with a university internationally valorized.

4. Towards a Transition: from French to English

Replacing French with English has always been a long awaited opportunity for the Algerian people and authorities. In fact, people wanted to undermine the status of a language which reminded them of 132 years of French colonization. What is more, French started to lose its dominance due to the emerging role of English as an international power. In this vein, Benrabah (2013) confirms:

For Algeria's language planners, the purpose of a substitute for French was twofold. First, the language to be adopted needs to be more dominant than French in the world as a vehicle of modernity and technological progress. Second, there was a need for a language not irredeemably tainted by its colonial provenance. English proved to be the ideal candidate and planners intended to return the favour by adopting the arch-enemy of French (p. 90).

The English language has always attained the highest level of unanimity among the Algerian people since its use does not recall the past. As stated by the British Council (2010), "it was felt that English as a historically neutral language in the Algerian context would be able to play the modernising role that was hoped for from French but without the colonialist and non-Islamic associations that French had" (p.13).

Importantly, substituting French with English in the Algerian higher education is not a newly-thought-of decision but rather a culmination of a long-term strategy and a resultant outcome of a series of reforms. In this regard, Benrabah (2013) claims that the process of adopting English as an alternative to French emerged directly after independence despite growing awareness, at the time, that it was not an overnight procedure. Therefore, many endeavors have been undertaken, for many decades, to decrease the French monopoly on higher education which turned out to be a very challenging task due to the penetration of the language in almost all academic transactions.

The Algerian authorities wanted, through this language policy, to ensure a flexible transition from French to English because the French language dominance on the Algerian higher education curricula has always been met with scathing criticism. As a result, many reforms have been recently introduced in order to popularize the use of English and minimize the French language hegemony.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Questions

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do Algerian teachers from different universities and fields of specialization perceive the benefits of adopting the Englishization policy at the Algerian university setting?
2. What are the obstacles of adopting English as a teaching tool in the classroom?

5.2. Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' attitudes towards the advantages of

embracing the Englishization policy at the level of the Algerian university. It also aims to investigate the drawbacks of using the language as a teaching medium in the classroom.

5.3. Sampling and Instrumentation

In order to undertake this work, a questionnaire was designed by the researcher and directed to a random sample of seventy (70) university teachers from different faculties and fields of specialization at sixteen (16) Algerian universities as an attempt to discern their perspectives regarding the pros and cons of the Englishization policy at the university level. Worthy to mention that this study has particularly focused on teachers from the scientific fields of specialization, not including teachers who belong to the letters and foreign languages faculty i.e., teachers from the English, French and Arabic departments.

In doing so, an online questionnaire was sent through their email addresses and through different online communities, notably Facebook groups of university teachers. The questions were asked in both English and Arabic in order to give teachers freedom of choice.

The questionnaire consists of three main sections; the first section gathered background information about the respondents. The second section was devoted to exploring their points of view regarding the benefits of the Englishization process for the Algerian university. The third and last section shed light on the obstacles of integrating English as a means of education in the classroom. The informants were asked to reply to a total of 14 questions, answering a mélange of closed-ended questions and open-ended questions, multiple-choice questions or by giving yes or no answers that best suit their opinions with making comments. In multiple-choice questions, the informants were free to provide different answers. The use of three types of questions would help the researcher collect the necessary information that can contribute to this study.

5.4. Data Collection Procedures

To examine the data obtained from the online questionnaire, both quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures were used. To be more specific, the data gained from the closed-ended questions were treated quantitatively using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to perform statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate frequencies and percentages. The information obtained from the open-ended questions were treated qualitatively using thematic analysis.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Section One: Background Information about the Respondents

To obtain demographic data about the respondents, the teachers were asked in this section to specify their gender, academic degree, and teaching experience. They were also asked about their university and faculty affiliations. Table 1, 2, and 3 recapitulate the respondents' basic characteristics.

Variable	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	42	60 %
	Female	28	40 %
Academic Degree	PhD	39	55.72 %
	Magister	26	37.14 %
	Master	5	7.14 %
Teaching	One to five years	10	14.29 %

Experience	Five to ten years	22	31.43 %
	More than ten years	38	54.28 %

Table 1: Demographic Information of Teachers

The analysis of the first three questions revealed the participants' profile. Among the seventy respondents, 40% are females while 60% are males. Most of the teachers 55.72% have a PhD degree, while 37.14 % hold a Magister degree. The vast majority of teachers have been teaching English for more than ten years. This means that most of the respondents are experienced teachers.

Teachers' Number	University of Affiliation	Teachers' Number	University of Affiliation
10	University of Algiers 1	2	University of Skikda
4	University of Tizi Ouzou	11	University of Constantine
5	University of Tlemcen	3	University of Sétif
3	University of Adrar	6	University of M'sila
5	University of Laghouat	4	University of Biskra
3	University of Oum Bouaghi	4	University of Mostaghanem
2	University of Mascara	2	University of Djelfa
3	University of Annaba	3	University of Bejaia

Table 2: Teachers' University Affiliation

As can be noticed in the table above, the participants are from 16 different universities in four regions in Algeria i.e. east, west, north and south, which may make the sample representative of the whole population i.e. all teachers belonging to the higher education sector.

Faculties	Sciences	Technology Sciences	Mathematics	Engineering Sciences	Nature and Life Sciences
Teachers' Percentage	11.42 %	34.29 %	28.58 %	14.29 %	11.42 %

Table 3: Teachers' Faculty Affiliation

Table 3 shows that the teachers belong to different faculties, notably, from the scientific fields of specialization on which this study is based. It is worth mentioning at this level that the

decision made by the Ministry of Higher Education to adopt English at university concerns mostly these teachers who belong to the scientific specialties since their teaching medium is mainly the French language.

6.2. Section Two: The Benefits of the Englishization policy

In this section, teachers were asked about their perspectives regarding the pros of embracing the English language at university. They answered a variety of questions which can be shown below.

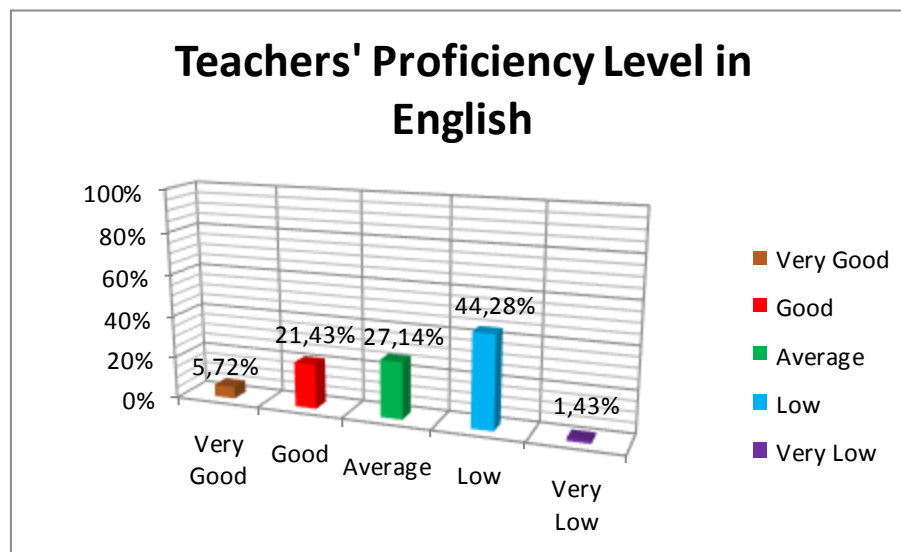


Figure 1: Teachers' Proficiency Level in English

Figure 1 shows that a considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 44.28 % do not really have a good mastery of the English language and 27.14% have an average level which substantiates that the English language needs more time to attain the highest status and reach prevalence in the higher education context, particularly, in the scientific specialties. However, it is also worth noticing that a considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 21.43 % evaluate their level as being good.

The seventh question asked the respondents to give their viewpoints about the reasons that might motivate University teachers to improve their level in English in the first place and the teachers gave wide insight. Below is a summary of those teachers' thoughtful views:

The majority of teachers said that learning English became a must nowadays since it is a universal language and a means of global communication because it facilitates communication with people from overseas and provides a locomotive of opportunities as its acquisition can guarantee a better life. The respondents held that English helps in scientific research because it is the most widely used language for textbooks such as science, maths, and technology in addition to the fact that it facilitates the process of getting access to the Internet and ICTs. What is more, the teachers are aware of the importance of English in scientific journal publications since most of them publish in English now. A great number of teachers regarded English as a pathway to accessing all fields of modern knowledge and academic research sources across the world.

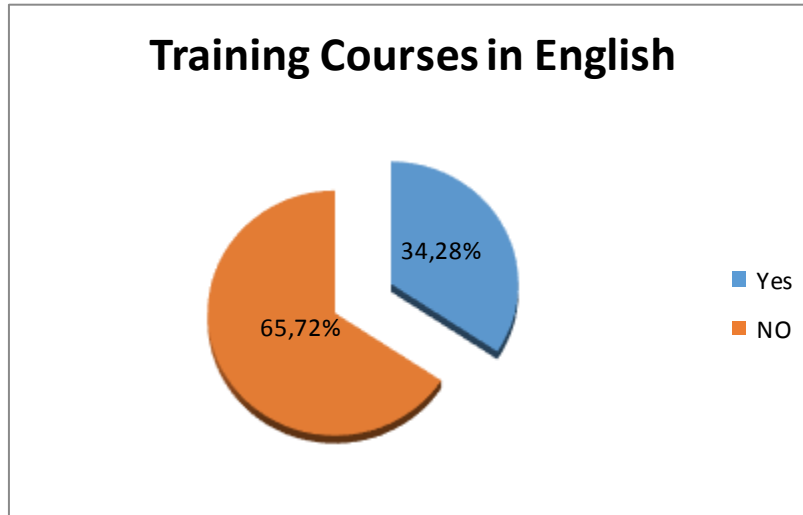


Figure 2: Training Courses in English

As clearly shown, teachers were asked to answer with yes or no about whether they are following specific training courses in English. The analysis of this question revealed that the majority of teachers responded negatively as 65.72% of them responded with “no” which shows that the process of adopting English might take a long time to be fully implemented.

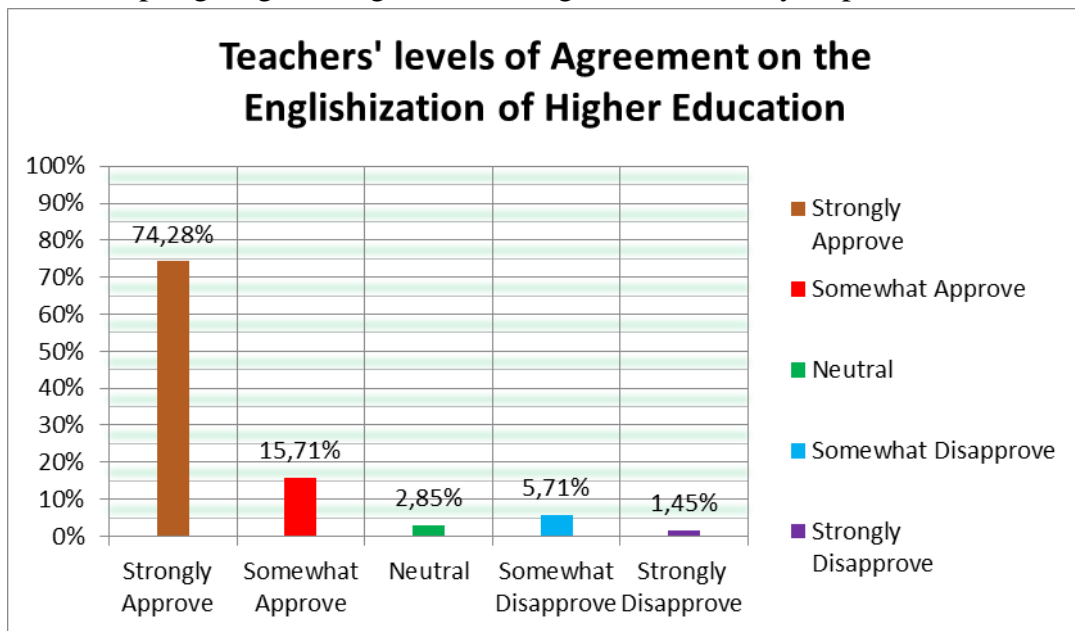


Figure 3: Teachers’ levels of Agreement on the Englishization of Higher Education

This question requested the respondents to reveal their level of agreement on adopting the Englishization policy at the Algerian university. The obtained results showed that the overwhelming majority of teachers with a percentage of 74.28 % strongly approve this proposal and support English as a teaching tool which demonstrates that the university teachers are very aware of the benefits that this language will bring to the Algerian university.

The tenth question asked the teachers to give their perspectives concerning how the Englishization process would enhance the Algerian High Educational System. The main points mentioned are summarized as follows:

The majority of teachers confirmed that the Englishization policy fosters good quality teaching-learning processes and broadens teachers’ and students’ horizons. It also serves as a

catalyst for a better academic achievement and allows the Algerian university to join the world realm of higher education. Moreover, the respondents held that English allows the Algerian university to come up on the world stage, revitalizes and modernizes the Algerian university as well as boosts academic sophistication and enhances research output. What is more, the teachers asserted that adopting English improves learning, reinforces its quality and bridges the world of knowledge together.

A considerable number of teachers pointed out that the Englishization of the Algerian university helps to meet international standards of higher education, keep up with the recent developments in researches and engage our university in international events. Furthermore, the respondents argued that English helps students to achieve better and gain opportunities for study abroad exchange programs and engages the Algerian University in Worldwide competitiveness for international graduates.

According to many teachers, the Englishization policy will promote the Algerian university in the global University rankings and attract talent academics from all over the world. It will also open the Algerian higher education to the international community. Most teachers held that English is used as a source of accessing scientific knowledge in the teachers' major fields. Teachers need it when accessing the required information from English resources and data to do their assignments, researches and projects.

According to the teachers' answers to this question, English will open the door for more opportunities for both students and teachers. It will attract high quality researchers and teachers from abroad and allow the Algerian higher education to establish collaborative partnerships with universities around the world and give the Algerian University a global reputation.

6.3. Section Three: The Drawbacks of Adopting English in the classroom

This section was devoted to investigate the obstacles that teachers encounter in the process of embracing English as a medium of instruction.

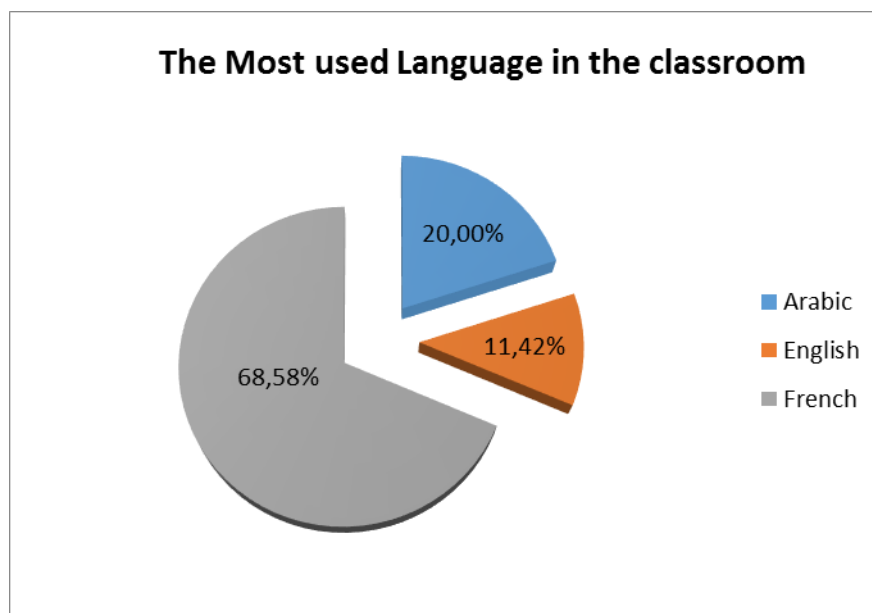


Figure 4: The Most used Language in the Classroom

This figure shows that a considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 68.58 % still use the French language as the main teaching tool while only 11.42 % started adopting English as an education language which elucidates that despite being aware of the value of English, the

majority of respondents use the French language which dominates in comparison to English. Arabic occupies a significant place just next to French which reveals that Arabic as a mother tongue interferes in classroom discussions.

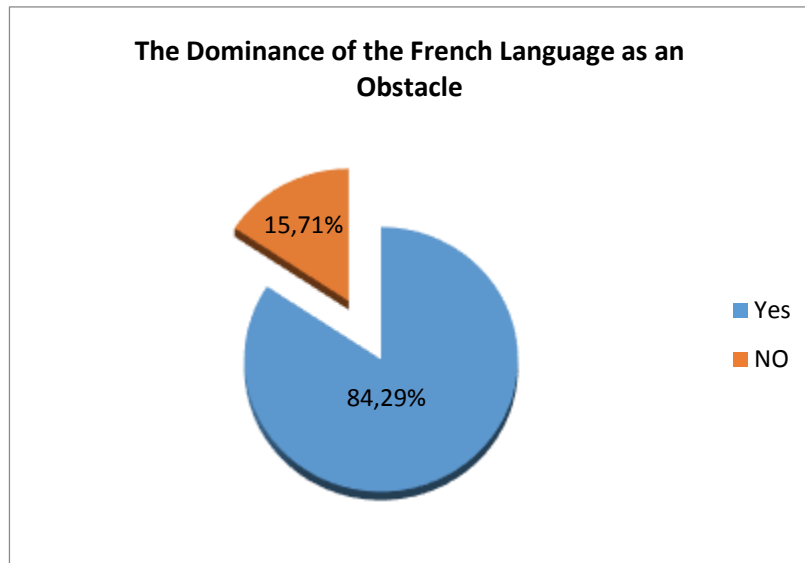


Figure 5: The Dominance of the French Language as an Obstacle

As clearly shown in Figure 5, the teachers have been asked to respond with yes or no on whether they consider the current dominance of the French language in the classroom as an obstacle that would hinder the process of replacing French with English as a teaching tool. The vast majority of respondents with a percentage of 84.29% responded with yes considering this as an obstacle.

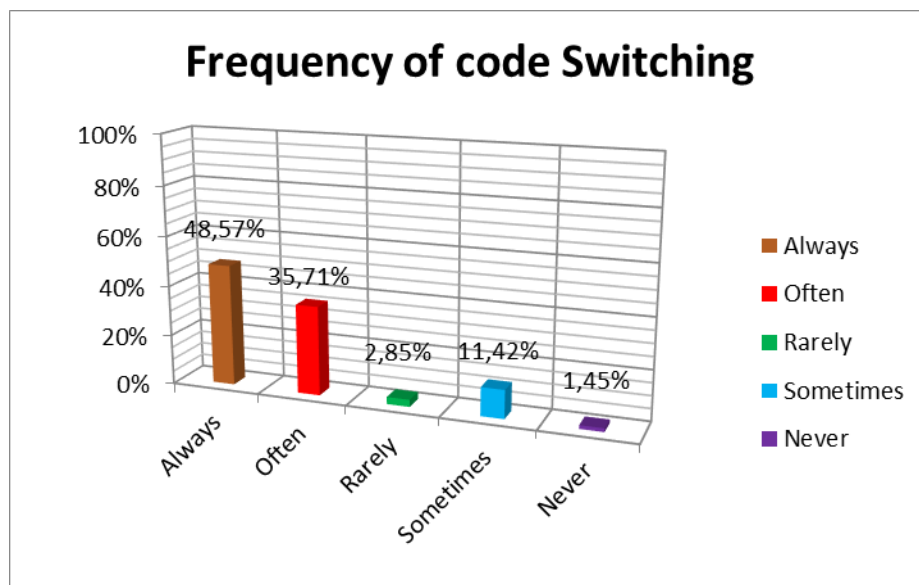


Figure 6: Frequency of Code Switching

Figure 6 shows how often teachers resort to code switching when attempting to hold classroom interactions in English. A considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 48.57% said that they always alternate between Arabic, French and English and 35.71% said that they often necessitate to switch from English to Arabic or French which reveals that teachers employ code switching in order to minimize students' comprehension difficulties and for communicative goals on the parts of teachers as well.

Ultimately, the teachers were asked about the obstacles that they currently encounter in adopting English as a medium of instruction in the classroom. The Teachers have different responses to this question, which can be shown as follows:

- The majority of teachers stated that they find it difficult to replace French with English in classroom communication due to the lack of readiness on the part of teachers and students, on the one hand, and because most of the students have low proficiency in the language on the other.
- The teachers noticed that some of the students do not show much interest in learning the language as they try to get the required grade with almost no internal motivation to learn English for other purposes.
- Some of the teachers pointed to the students' comprehension problems when delivering the material by using English because it is still difficult for most of the students who do not have a mastery or good command of the language
- The majority of teachers referred to the interference of the mother tongue and others asserted that code switching between the three languages by teachers/learners during classroom discussions does not facilitate the full embracement of English as a classroom language.
- The teachers focused also on the fact that the students have limited vocabulary and jargon related to their fields of specialization in English. Thus, teaching students first the jargon of the specialty made it very challenging for the teachers as time was spent in instructing them in the specialized jargon.
- The teachers referred to the pressure from curriculum demands to meet targets which inhibits the effective focus on adopting the language and focus more on how to meet targets.

The majority of teachers pointed to the lack of appropriate in-service training for teachers on to how to teach and how to conduct researches in English.

7. Recommendations

Some recommendations or suggestions were provided by the Algerian teachers who believe that the Algerian higher education sector need to:

- Provide training that meets the international standards.
- Adopt foreign curriculum models.
- Provide a long-term strategy to enhance English in the Algerian higher education.
- Develop a training program on how to teach English in science and technology
- Improve academic literacy and language support.
- Seek many short-term exchange programs in English
- Raise studying entry standards so as to oblige students to study English
- Design the curricula well enough to get the international contents into the teaching practices.
- Increase the role of foreign languages in higher education
- Increase the number of international students in order to diminish the linguistic barriers and develop a global minded and competitive workforce
- Urge teachers to equip themselves as a part of professional development.

- Increase international collaborations with other universities.
- Continue to improve English proficiency levels at pre-university level, so universities can raise entry standards.

8. CONCLUSION

Overall, the English teachers in Algeria as represented by the seventy (70) teachers from sixteen different universities are aware of the importance of having a university with English at its core i.e. English as an instrument of instruction as well as scientific research. Indeed, despite having positive attitudes for supporting English in higher education; the teachers also tend to shed light on the current obstacles which need to be addressed in order to eliminate them and, thus, engage the Algerian university in the international arena.

A limitation of this study is that the number of the participants was relatively small. In order to obtain more generalizable results, further research is needed to gather data from a large sample of teachers including many other faculties throughout Algeria. Another limitation lies in covering only teachers' perceptions towards the pros and cons of adopting English as a means for lecture delivery and research at the Algerian university setting. It would be interesting to explore students' insights as well. Further studies should investigate students' perceptions regarding this matter.

9. Bibliography List :

1. Balan, J. (2011). *English Global Dominance and the Other Languages of Higher Education & Research*. Columbia University: Columbia Global Centre
2. Beacco, J. CL. & Byram, M. (2003). *Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies in Europe: From Linguistic Diversity to Plurilingual Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
3. Belmihoub, K. (2018). "English in a multilingual Algeria". *World Englishes*: JohnWiley & Sons Ltd.1-22
4. Benrabah, M. (2013). *Language conflict in Algeria: From colonialism to post independence*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
5. British Council (2010). *The English Language in Development: Hywel Coleman*. A paper commissioned by the British Council.
6. Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language*. Cambridge : CUP
7. Delgado-Márquez, B. L. et al. (2013). "Being Highly Internationalised Strengthens Your Reputation: an Empirical Investigation of Top Higher Education Institutions". *Higher Education*, 66 (5), 619–633.
8. Galloway, N., & Rose, H. (2015). *Introducing Global Englishes*. Abingdon: Routledge
9. Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). "English as an Asian Lingua Franca and the Multilingual Model of ELT". *Language Teaching*, 44 (2), 212–224.
10. Knight, J. (2003). "Updated Internationalisation Definition". *International Higher Education*, 33.
11. McKay, S. L. (2003). "EIL Curriculum Development". *RELC Journal*, 34(1), 31-47.
12. Motteram, G. (2003). *Innovations in Learning Technologies for English Language Teaching*. UK: British Council.

13. Rahmani, A. (2021). "A Glance into the Status of English Language in the Algerian Higher Education Context". *Algerian Review of Security and Development*, 10 (3), 1199-1210.
14. U.S. Embassy (2021). U.S. Embassy and Algerian Government Sign Agreement to Enhance English Language Learning in Algerian University System. Embassy of the United States of America Algiers, Algeria. <https://dz.usembassy.gov/u-s-embassy-and-algerian-government-sign-agreement-to-enhance-english-language-learning-in-algerian-university-system/> (Consulted on 25/08/2021)
15. Wilkinson, R. (2013). *English-medium Instruction at a Dutch University: Challenges and Pitfalls*. In A. Doiz, D. Lasagabaster, & J. M. Sierra (Eds.), *English-medium Instruction at Universities*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.