

TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ANGLICIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AT MAGHNIA UNIVERSITY CENTRE

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ABSTRACT

Using English in all domains has become a necessity for all countries worldwide. For many years, Algeria has planned to integrate English mainly in the education and economic sectors. Consequently, policymakers hastened language planning to introduce English as a medium of instruction. The present paper aims to examine Maghnia University Centre's teachers' attitudes towards this new language planning initiative. The significance of the study lies in exploring the new policy's effectiveness and the constraints facing teachers in learning English. The analysis showed that teachers at Maghnia University Centre welcome the new language planning and its prospective advantages. The study also indicated that teachers showed interest in the training programs provided by the university. The results also revealed that teachers preferred to be trained in specific English according to their fields of research rather than general English courses.

KEYWORDS

Algerian higher education, attitudes, English as a medium of instruction, Maghnia University Centre, teachers' training

1. Introduction

Due to advancements in all domains and public life worldwide, the use of English has become crucial to communicate with other communities. English is now a widely learned foreign language (Johnson, 2014). It dominates the present globalized world and has become an instrument of progress in sciences, technologies, and education. The English language does not only extend the different fields of science but also becomes a common lingua franca among different communities (Balan, 2011; Rjosland, 2011). Therefore, many governments seek to include the English language as a teaching instruction in the educational policy; precisely, the Algerian government expressed its urgent desire to adopt the English language as a primary language in Higher Education in 2022, taking a step out of the colonial French language that has been used ever since the post-independency period.

The French language imposed its presence not only in Algerian society but also in the educational system, more precisely Higher Education. The need to adopt a globalized language is an essential decision taken by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education. Many people were against the newly introduced policy, especially those who favored the use of French as a second language. The present research work tends to cast light on the newly introduced language policy that gives value to English. It tends to test the attitudes of Maghnia University centre's teachers towards using English in higher education. It also attempts to explore the weaknesses within the new policy and the main problems facing teachers in learning English. To reach this aim, the researcher set the following research questions:

- What are the attitudes of Maghnia University Centre's teachers towards the integration of English in Algerian universities?
- What are the weaknesses of the new language policy?
- What are the obstacles facing University teachers in learning English?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English and the Ministry's New Policy

The issue of language use in higher education has been a topic of debate in the last few years. Ever since the independence the Algerian language policies went through many different changes, starting with the colonial French language, moving toward the Arabization policy in the country to the use of French as a medium of instruction, and then English in teaching the major university fields.

In his study, Benrabah (2007) discusses language planning and policy in Algeria. He mentioned that the Algerian history after the independence consisted of three phases that had an impact on the educational system, the first phase was highly confined by the colonial legacies in which the French language was dominant as a network of schooling and education system with the Arabic language growing steadily in importance. The second phase according to Benrabah lasted in between (1960-1990) where Modern Standard Arabic was gradually imposed in the education sector, in the early 2000's the third phase began when the Arabization policies were less determinate and the authorities began to think of a reformulation of these policies (Benrabah, 2007, p. 225). The continuous changes in the education language policy harmed Algerian higher education. According to Benrabah, the education system failed" during that time. Many factors led to this failure, including the historical background of the country.

The Arabization policy had an essential role in shaping the Algerian identity. This policy was founded by the Algerian government to develop and promote Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) as the national and official language of Algeria to fight against French colonialism and save the Islamic Arabic identity of the Algerians. During that time, two trends encouraged the move towards Arabization, and the second part supported the concept of monolingualism (GrandGuillaume, 2004, p.4)

In 1963, Algeria announced the Arabic language as the first national language of the country (Kulung, 2021; Malki, 2020). Policymakers decided that French is used as the language of science in fields of medicine, biology, economy, etc while Arabic covers domains of human and social sciences. About 75% of the Algerians voted for this policy in 1999 (qtd in Benrabah, 2007). Hence, Algeria adopted the bilingual education system to teach sciences like medicine. According to Hamzaoui (2021), French leads to social and political stability in post-colonial Algeria.

Medfouni (2020) claimed that English was introduced in the 1970s to compete with French. However, most Algerians, mainly those who speak French prefer to Frenchize Algerian higher education and all sectors. Algerians are with the Ministry's decision to anglicize Algerian Higher Education to the use of French because their awareness of the importance of French was raised in the last decades. They become exposed to English on TV channels and social media more than French on the one hand. Educated people, mainly at universities found that English has become the language of science and publishing on the other hand. Medfouni (2020) concluded that this new policy will change people's attitudes towards French and introduce English as the language of science and research.

2.2 Algerian University Teachers' Attitudes Toward Anglicizing Higher Education

Kirkpatrick (2011) maintained that the introduction of English requires its internationalization to be used. This stresses the need to use programs that are based on English (as cited in Kadi, 2022). As a language policy, Algeria signed an agreement with the US embassy that Algerian universities will follow the same standards as international universities (Kadi, 2022).

Algerian people share positive attitudes toward the introduction of English. They start using English in many fields like social media, technology and computing, and educational needs. This leads the French to lose its place and dominance in postcolonial Algeria after

being used for more than 132 years. In this regard, Kadi (2022) cited Benrabah (2013) when he claimed that:

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).

This means that English has become more dominant in the last 50 years worldwide. It is determined as the language of science. All countries are obliged to use English even strong powers like China, Russia, Japan, and Korea. It was difficult for English to replace French after the Algerian independence since French was used as a second language and was prevalent in all domains, mainly education as Kadi (2022) highlighted. After the Algerian social movement in 2019, Algerians wanted to remove French and memories of colonialism.

After the ministry decided to use English as a Medium of Instruction recently, university teachers and students in scientific branches were instructed and forced to learn English. According to Benrabah (2013), "French is imperialist and colonialist for Algerians, English is at large a language of scientific knowledge in the world" (p. 33).

Policymakers and instructors hope that English will replace French in all domains, mainly education due to the positive attitudes of Algerians towards English. After the industry attempted to introduce English to higher education, students and teachers showed interest in learning and using the language in research. Rahmani (2021) claimed that "the integration of English into the Algerian higher education level will impact positively future academic research and improve the quality of the educational system" (p. 11).

2.3 Anglicizing Algerian Higher Education

In a globalized world, English, as a lingua franca, has taken the lion's share as the language of science, business, innovation, and advancements. According to Kadi (2022), language is considered global when it spreads to all countries worldwide. English spreads in all countries worldwide and is acknowledged as "the first foreign language in almost all education systems" (Beaco & Byram, 2003, p. 52, as qtd in Shimauchi, 2018, p. 88).

Using English as a teaching instruction in Algerian language planning has long been an option in the Algerian University as it is mentioned previously. Recently, they have started to take concrete steps towards the formal integration of the language in Higher Education, revolutionizing the traditional pedagogical practices to fit the new teaching trends that have reached the Algerian University. However, English is still in its infancy in the

context of Algerian universities, and it will take time, concerted efforts, and multifaced programs to fully integrate it among the community of university teachers (Kadi, 2022).

In conclusion, Englishization has become a growing phenomenon worldwide even in the countries that are not a part of the British colonies. Algeria is no exception. Policymakers turn their attention towards the Englishization of higher education because introducing English becomes a necessity.

2.4 Pitfalls in Anglicizing Algerian Higher Education

According to Rahmani (2021), the attempt to anglicize Algerian higher education is important. However, the sudden shift toward using English may lead to many problems for both teachers and students since they do not have a mastery of English compared to French. In his study, Kadi (2022) found a great number of teachers favor French over English since it is a second language and teachers can switch to the mother tongue easily. He also found that only 11.42% of teachers started using English in their lectures.

Kadi (2022) also found that English as a language has no historical or pedagogical connection with education in Algeria. It will be difficult for them to switch to English since they have been using French as a medium of instruction for a long time. This generation of Francophones can be called the generation gap since they do not cope with the necessity of globalisation. This means that education in Algeria was based on a bilingual educational system. With the decision of Englishization of education in Algerian Universities, this benefit turns into a pitfall.

Kadi (2022) further added that language planning is hard for those whose background studies and knowledge are in French and Arabic languages, i.e., their academic background is not in English. He also claimed that the introduction of English creates boundaries between their knowledge and the way they teach.

Kadi (2022) also found that teachers tend to use their teaching terminologies in French related to their specialities. Hence, they will find it difficult to use specialized English. This may raise the question: How can teachers who form a generation gap use specialized English and have not even a background in general English? Through the present research work, the reader will explore the attitudes towards Anglicizing Algerian Universities from the Maghnia University Centre's teachers' perspective. We will also explore the benefits and pitfalls of such an introduction.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1 Sampling

The researcher used a sample of 60 teachers from Maghnia University Centre to answer these research questions. The sample was selected randomly from different institutes. These teachers already attended the beginning of the training during the academic year 2022-2023 and are continuing their training for the academic year 2023-2024.

3.2 Research Instruments

The researcher designed and used a semi-structured questionnaire as a research instrument for data collection. A self-administered questionnaire was sent to 100 university teachers in different faculties, including economy, law, natural sciences, and faculty of letters and Languages. However, due to time constraints, the researcher collected just 60 answers for the questionnaire.

4. Results

As far as the findings are concerned, the most important questions were selected and linked to the research questions:

Are you motivated to learn English?

Table 1. *Teachers' motivation toward learning English*

Teachers' answers	Percentages
Yes	56.13
No	43.87

Table one shows that teachers' motivation is balanced between 56.13% and 43.87%, i.e., half of the teachers were motivated to learn English while others were not. They justified their answers by claiming that they needed to learn specialized English and not a general one.

What are your opinions about Anglicizing Algerian universities?

Table 2. *Anglicizing Algerian Universities*

Introducing English	Percentages
To learn the four linguistic skills	4.23%
It is a language of science	33.83%
The need for English for scientific publication.	40.61%
It is more effective as a medium to learn science than French.	21.33%

Table two indicates that 40.61% want to learn English for specific purposes to help them in publishing their scientific papers. About 33.83% of the participants claimed that they needed English in their research since it is the language of academic research.

What are your views concerning English proficiency in Algerian Universities?

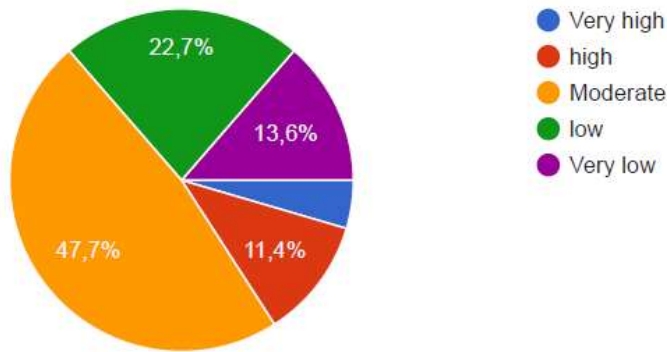


Figure 1. Teachers' views concerning English proficiency in Algerian Universities

About 47.7% of the informants saw that the level of English language in Algerian Universities is moderate since they become more exposed to English rather than French in the last years, while 22.7% claimed that it is low.

What is your level of proficiency before the integration of English?

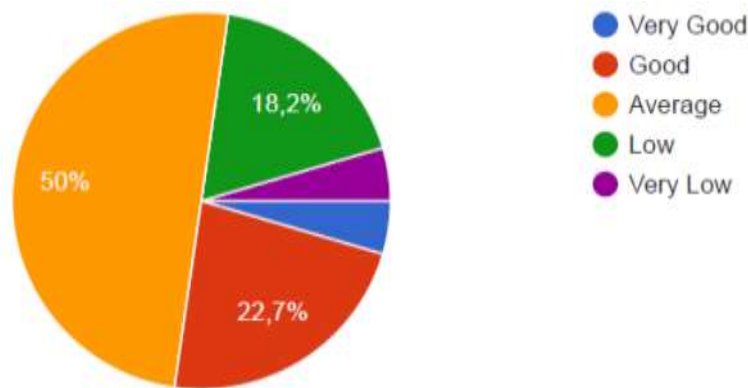


Figure 2. Level of English proficiency before its introduction to education

Figure Two indicates that a considerable number of teachers in Maghnia University Centre with a percentage of 18.2 % do not have a good mastery of English, while 50% have an average level. This means that English needs more time to attain the highest status and reach prevalence in the higher education context. However, it is also worth noticing that a considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 22.7 % evaluate their level as being good (teachers at the Department of English).

What are the reasons behind your low proficiency in using English?

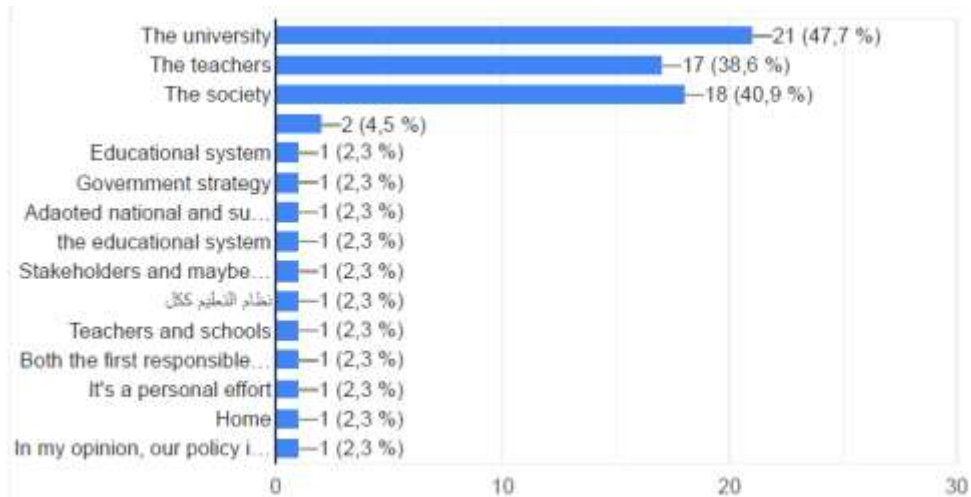


Figure 3. Reasons for the low proficiency in using English

In response to this question, the respondents argued that the university (47.7%), the teachers (38.6%), and the society (40.9%) at a large scale are all held to account for teachers' deficiency in English. The other teachers blame the broad educational system, the government, and the stakeholders' strategy.

Are you with Anglicizing Algerian Universities?

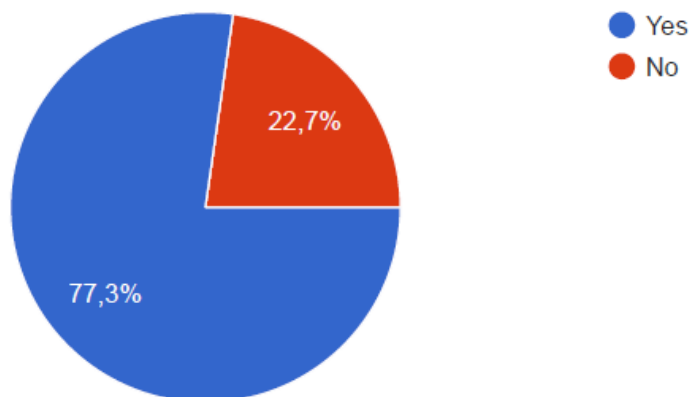


Figure 4. Teachers' Opinion Towards Anglicizing Algerian Universities

The obtained results showed that the overwhelming majority of teachers with a percentage of 77.3 % strongly approve this proposal and support English as a teaching tool. This demonstrates that the university teachers are very aware of this language's benefits to the Algerian university.

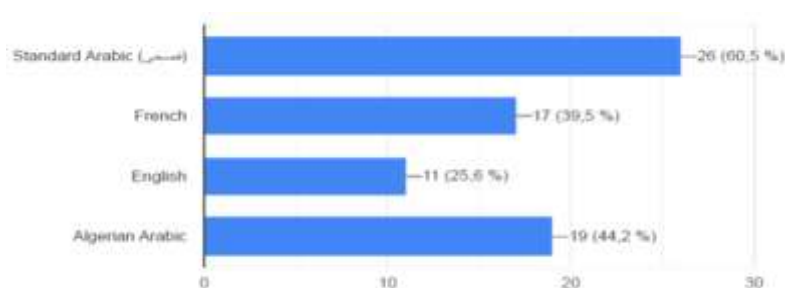


Figure 5. The most used language in the classroom

Figure Five shows how often teachers resort to code-switching when attempting to hold classroom interactions. A considerable number of teachers with a percentage of 40.9% said that they always and often alternate between Arabic, French, and English, which reveals that teachers employ code-switching to minimize students' comprehension difficulties. Very often they find difficulties with choosing the right word, meanwhile, they manage to find other expressions or switch directly to French or Arabic to be sure that students grasp the idea.

In what ways does the experience of learning English improve your skills?

Table 3. *Improving teachers' skills*

Skills	Percentages
Speaking	33.81%
Writing	66.19%

Table three reveals that the new learning experience helped teachers to develop their writing skills as far as grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing are concerned with a percentage of 66.19%. They added that they had a placement test that guided them to choose the level they needed to study, while the speaking skill received 33.81% since it was introduced later on, i.e., they had more sessions to develop writing more than speaking.

What are the challenges facing you in learning English?

Table 4. *Challenges facing teachers to learn English*

Challenges	Percentages
Many lectures and assignments in a short period.	73.12%
The learning center is far from their hometown.	26.88%

Table four shows that 73.12% of the teachers find difficulties in learning English due to the great number of lectures and assignments that are introduced in a short time, while 26.88% of the informants claimed that they find difficulties in traveling to Maghniato teach and learn at the same time.

What are the weaknesses behind introducing EMI at Maghnia University Centre?

Table 5. *Weaknesses behind introducing EMI at Maghnia University Centre*

Weaknesses	Percentages
Focusing on developing the teachers' linguistic skills	90.01%
Focusing on general English rather than English as a medium of instruction	8.99%

As Table five indicates, 90.01% of the teachers highlighted that the main aim of this training was to improve the teachers' four linguistic skills rather than teaching them specific English according to their field of research so that they could search and write papers.

As a last question to succeed with Anglicizing Algerian Universities, the following question was asked: "How can policymakers support the Englishization of higher education in the country?"

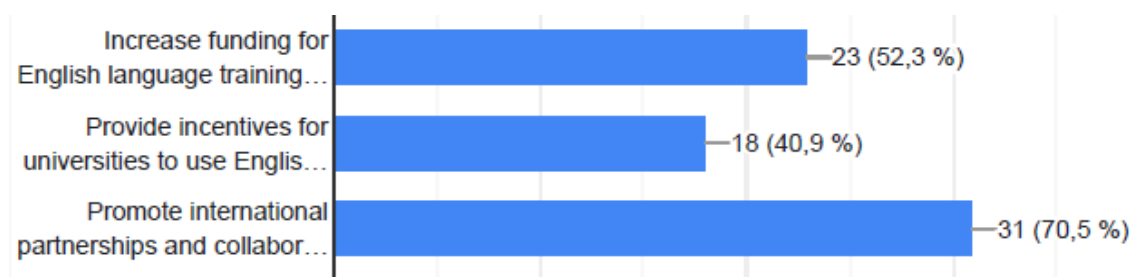


Figure 6. Ways to implement English as a medium of instruction

The majority of teachers (70,5 %) see that training teachers in their fields, promoting international partnerships, and collaborations with English-speaking universities can improve the Englishization of higher education. About 52,3 % of teachers recommend allocating a substantial budget and increasing funding for English language training and resources to raise the standards of teaching English. Another proposition which is given by 40,9 % of teachers calls to provide incentives for universities to use English as the language of instruction.

5. Discussion

It was found that a significant number of teachers in Maghnia University Centre have an average or poor level of English language proficiency. However, the majority of teachers are working on improving their English proficiency and see Anglicizing Algerian Universities as a necessity. They also see their training in specialized English as crucial rather than general English. Teachers believe that the low proficiency in English among Algerian teachers and students adversely affects their academic success and innovation. This finding may answer the first research question “What are the attitudes of Maghnia University Centre toward the introduction of English as a medium of instruction?” teachers see that its implementation is very important. This result is in line with Kadi’s (2022) findings.

Regarding the Englishization policy, the majority of teachers support it and see it as a way to open more opportunities for both students and teachers, attract high-quality researchers and teachers from abroad, and establish collaborative partnerships with universities worldwide. However, the challenges that teachers encounter in the process of learning English include a low level of the language among university students and a lack of pedagogical tools. Another reason is that the old generation of teachers formed a resistance to using English which led to the creation of a generation gap. Teachers also pointed out the lack of appropriate in-service training for teachers on how to teach and conduct research in English. This result may answer the second research question “What are the weaknesses of the new language policy? This result is in line with Kadi’s (2022) findings.

To improve English language teaching and learning, teachers recommend that the Algerian government promote international partnerships and collaborations with English-speaking universities, allocate a substantial budget to increase funding for English language training and resources, and provide incentives for universities to anglicize higher education. This result may answer the third research question.

6. Conclusion

This paper aimed to test Maghnia University Centre’s teachers’ attitudes toward Anglicizing Algerian Universities and the newly introduced policy. The study found that most teachers welcome the new policy since their awareness has been raised in the last few years toward the importance of English as the language of academic research. The findings also revealed that teachers welcomed the university’s training despite their pedagogical responsibilities. The results also indicated that teachers need training in specialized English according to their specialities and not in general English.

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