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Attitudes of Algerian EMI and non-EMI Lecturers and Students Toward English


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Abstract

Objectives: The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the attitudes of English medium instruction (EMI) lecturers and students and non-EMI lecturers and students toward English in Algeria. The Algerian government plans to implement English as a medium of instruction in higher education.

Methods: The research was carried out at an Algerian university where French is the primary language of instruction, but English is used as the medium of instruction for certain courses in the engineering department. Data were gathered through a questionnaire, which was distributed to a group comprised of 52 EMI lecturers, 226 EMI students, 70 non-EMI lecturers, and 254 non-EMI students in engineering programs. Additionally, 18 EMI lecturers, 18 EMI students, 18 non-EMI lecturers, and 18 non-EMI students were interviewed.

Findings: Most participants hold a positive attitude toward English, with a slightly negative attitude among senior non-EMI lecturers. Educational, instrumental, and linguistic reasons were the main factors behind the participants' positive attitudes. Most Algerian higher education lecturers and students are aware of the high prestige of English and its importance in research and technology. On the other hand, some senior lecturers display negative attitudes, believing that English does not deserve its high prestige and status.

Recommendation/Significance: In its implementation of EMI, the Algerian Higher Education Ministry should highlight English's eminence in the global community and underscore its advantages in the Algerian context. This could be accomplished by organizing workshops and training sessions that center on such benefits.

Keywords: English medium instruction, *EMI*, *higher education*, *attitude*, *language planning*, *Algeria*

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Introduction

English has gained significant recognition as a global language of communication, with 1.5 billion speakers worldwide (Dyvik, 2024). This prevalence is especially evident in international business, where English is the primary mode of communication. Moreover, English is the most used language in scientific and technological discourse, leading to a significant percentage of scientific publications in English. The language's strong and dominant position worldwide is attributed to the emergence of globalization, which has also led to the widespread use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education systems worldwide (Ament & Pérez-Vidal, 2015; Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018).

Despite the high international status of English, the case in Algeria is quite different. The Algerian linguistic profile is complex and multilingual for several cultural and historical reasons. One of these is the French colonization, which persisted for 132 years and gave the French language a highly prestigious status in Algeria (Bouhmama & Dendane, 2018). For that reason, English is less prevalent than French in social communication. Moreover, English is treated as a foreign language in Algeria. It is taught to students starting in middle school, unlike French, which is taught from the second year of primary school. At the university level, English modules such as English for Specific Purposes are offered in only some Algerian universities (Medfouni, 2020).

Recently, however, the Algerian government has made a great effort to promote the use of English in Algeria in general and in academic fields specifically (Allal, 2020; Bouthelji, 2022; Missedi, 2019). This decision supported the effort to keep up with the globalized market, promote scientific research, and provide more foreign opportunities for Algerian students. The Algerian Higher Education Ministry has therefore set short- and medium-term objectives to implement English as an official language of teaching and learning content in Algerian universities in the long run. This decision was supported by the Algerian president and the higher education minister (Allal, 2020; Bouthelji, 2022; Missedi, 2019). The views of Algerian politicians are nevertheless mixed; some see the implementation of English medium instruction (EMI) in Algerian higher education as a means of eliminating the remnants of colonialism and opening doors for more opportunities, whereas others see it as a threat for the education system (Youcef, 2021). While Algerian educationists and linguists think that this move will open Algerian higher education to more opportunities, they anticipate a challenging process that needs to be investigated heavily from different perspectives, such as the stakeholders' attitudes toward English and EMI and involving all types of language planning in the investigation (Belaref & Mhamdia, 2022).

Clearly, lecturer and student readiness for the implementation of EMI in Algerian universities deserves closer investigation. One important aspect of this investigation is the attitudes of higher education lecturers and students toward English, due to the impact of language attitude on the learning process and the implementation of new language policy (Papaja, 2012; Şen, 2013; Zhao, 2015). Despite this, only a few studies have investigated English and EMI in the Algerian higher education context (Belmihoub, 2015, 2018; Benrabah, 2007, 2013; Chemami, 2011; Medfouni, 2020). These limited studies investigating language attitudes in Algeria have focused more on French, since it is the current language of instruction (Belmihoub, 2018; Medfouni, 2020). Thus the purpose of the current study was to investigate the use of English in an Algerian higher education institution to gain insight into the attitudes of lecturers and students toward English. Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) and Rubin (1977) suggested investigation into and promotion of the status and prestige of a given language is needed for language-in-education planning. Understanding lecturer and student attitudes toward the prestige of English is also important because people avoid learning or using a low-prestige language (Mekroud, 2017). This study therefore focuses on the prestige of English among Algerian higher education students and lecturers, and its findings have implications for language planning in the higher education sector.

Literature Review

English as a Medium of Instruction

There are many educational settings wherein subject content is taught in English, when English is not the students' mother tongue. This phenomenon has many labels, such as English medium education (Earls, 2016), English medium instruction (Macaro et al., 2018; Tatzl, 2011), and English as the lingua franca medium of instruction (Björkman, 2010). For this study, we use the term *English medium instruction* (EMI). Medium of instruction refers to the language used to deliver skills, knowledge, and values in the classroom and as a communication tool between the teacher and the students (Noor ul Islam et al., 2015). EMI is the "use of English in the offer of university degree courses in higher education instead of the domestic language of the country" (Karakas, 2015, p. 1); academic subjects are taught in English in countries where English is not the first language (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018).

The term EMI is commonly used alongside other terms, including Englishization, content and language integrated learning (CLIL), and content-based instruction (CBI). Although these terms are often used interchangeably, there are slight differences in meaning among them. Englishization (Wilkinson & Gabriëls, 2021) is the gradual replacement of a previously used language with English in specific domains, primarily encompassing education, politics, culture, and economics. CLIL is an educational approach in which non-language subjects are taught through the medium of a foreign language (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010). CBI is the integration of language teaching with content instruction (Snow, 2001). It aims at teaching language skills and subject content by providing students with communication opportunities that help them acquire the target language (Brinton et al., 2003). Although CLIL and CBI appear similar to EMI, there are some differences. For example, CLIL is generally used in secondary-level instruction, while EMI is used primarily at the tertiary level. Moreover, CBI focuses more on language than content (Simbolon, 2016), while CLIL focuses on the integration of language and content. In contrast, EMI programs focus primarily on content, although incidental language learning is expected (Aguilar, 2017; Banegas & Manzur Busleimán, 2021).

Benefits and Drawbacks of EMI

In higher education, EMI offers many benefits. The primary benefit is English proficiency. For instance, 75% of students surveyed agreed that studying in English improved their language skills and helped them be confident when speaking in public (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). Similarly, students who took their entire degree using EMI improved their English grammar and writing skills (Ament & Pérez-Vidal, 2015). Additionally, EMI appears to enhance study skills, because learning in English requires various skills, including time management (Al-Wadi, 2018; Başıbek et al., 2014). EMI also encourages students to study English and put more effort into their subject of study (Al-Wadi, 2018; Chang, 2010). Finally, EMI provides students with work prospects (Airey, 2012; Griffiths, 2013). Multiple researchers have found that most students believe EMI programs increase their possibilities for employment and elevate their social standing (Briggs et al., 2018; Sah, 2023; Soe et al., 2020).

In conjunction with these benefits, many researchers have also argued that implementing EMI in higher education presents numerous challenges. Some studies report that students and lecturers in EMI programs face difficulties related to language proficiency, content learning process, low confidence, and anxiety (Dioz et al., 2011; Ryhan, 2014). Poor participation and lowered academic achievement have been found to be associated with low English proficiency (Dioz et al., 2011; Zare-ee & Hejazi, 2017). Griffiths (2013) observed that lecturers needed more time to deliver their lectures, due to problems related to paraphrasing and word searching, which resulted in less content coverage. Additionally, students in another study reported feeling uncomfortable expressing themselves in English about issues related to their study (Al-Wadi, 2018). Kim (2014) reported that EMI puts additional pressure on students because they need to study English alongside their other courses that are taught using EMI.

In summary, EMI benefits students in a variety of ways, exposing students to authentic English oral and written texts, such as real conversations and dialogues, interviews, academic papers, and scientific textbooks, all of which improve English language skills. However, it may also cause significant difficulties for students and lecturers. It can lead to issues such as misunderstanding due to low English proficiency, added pressure, and miscommunication in the classroom due to low confidence and anxiety.

Attitudes Toward English

Several studies have examined attitudes toward English among university lecturers and students who use or intend to use EMI. Jebali (2020) conducted a study in Tunisia, whose higher education ministry was planning to adopt EMI in universities. She found that lecturers and students had a positive attitude toward English and believed English is a key tool for science and research. Moreover, she found that the attitude of lecturers in EMI programs was more positive than that of lecturers in programs where French was the medium of instruction. Alsubaie (2021) found similar results in a study of Saudi Arabian students using EMI. Almahmoud (2012) found that students at EMI programs in Saudi Arabia believed English is a prestigious language.

Messaoudi and Elachach (2017) found that 99% of Algerian master's degree students recognized the importance of English for knowledge and development. On the other hand, Chemami (2011) and Belmihoub (2018) found in studies of Algerian university students that students preferred to learn French, as it was the language of instruction. Amin (2018) found that only 20% preferred to learn English and only 17% believed it was necessary. Previous research on English in Algerian higher education has focused primarily on university student attitudes toward learning English as a second language, with limited attention given to their attitudes toward the language itself. There is a need to understand both lecturer and student thoughts, knowledge, and beliefs about English, as they are crucial to the success of any EMI course (Banks, 2018).

Theoretical Framework

A thorough understanding of attitudes may help create effective language planning (Almahmoud, 2012). Furthermore, attitude can measure a language's value, practice, and prominence among community members, which may help in status, acquisition, and prestige planning (Tulloch, 2004). The discipline of language planning involves managing and directing a language within a community. Haugen (1959) introduced this concept and defined it as creating standard grammar, orthography, and dictionaries to guide speakers and writers in a community. Kaplan and Baldauf (1997) expanded on this definition, stating that language planning encompasses the function, structure, and acquisition of a language or language variety in a given community. Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) further proposed a framework for language planning goals, which resulted from research into various political ideologies, language policy, and planning in different contexts. This framework includes status, corpus, acquisition, and prestige planning, as well as policy and cultivation planning goals.

Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) identified four types of language planning: status, corpus, acquisition, and prestige. These types were first introduced in frameworks by Haugen (1959), Kloss (1969), Cooper (1989), and Haarmann (1990). Haugen (1959) and Kloss (1969) both introduced status planning and corpus planning, with status planning referring to decisions that affect the relative status of one or more languages and corpus planning pertaining to activities related to the forms of a language, such as creating or developing new vocabulary and grammar rules. Cooper (1989) introduced acquisition planning, which ensures that the planned language is taught, learned, or used as a medium of instruction in the educational system. The final type of language planning, which is the focus of this study, is prestige planning (Haarmann, 1990): Planning activities must have sufficient prestige to guarantee favorable engagement from planners and those who are supposed to use the planned language. Prestige-related goals need to promote and intellectualize a language effectively. Prestige

planning involves the development of policies and strategies to promote and enhance the prestige of a language in specific situations (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). This includes the use of specialized language forms and encouraging their use in important or prestigious settings. The prestige of a language can be increased through its promotion and use by different entities, institutions, or individuals, as well as through the intellectualization of the language in high-status activities (Haarmann, 1990; Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003).

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to examine the attitude of Algerian higher education lecturers and students toward the English language, as Algeria plans to adopt English as a medium of instruction in universities. Specifically, we investigate the following research questions:

1. What are the attitudes of Algerian higher education lecturers and students toward English?
2. What are the reasons behind the attitudes of EMI lecturers and students and non-EMI lecturers and students toward English?
3. Are there any significant differences between the attitudes of EMI lecturers and students and non-EMI lecturers and students toward English?

Methods

Context and Participants

This study was conducted with participants at an undergraduate engineering program at a public university in northern Algeria. The university's primary language of instruction is French, but it also offers some EMI programs within its engineering faculty. The participants in this study were selected from both EMI and non-EMI programs to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitude of Algerian lecturers and students toward the English language. This study is part of a research project approved by the university and was conducted in compliance with institutional guidelines and ethical standards.

Randomly sampled participants included lecturers and students from the department that uses EMI and from another department that uses French as a medium of instruction (non-EMI participants). Purposive sampling was used to select additional participants for interviews; these also included lecturers and students from both EMI and non-EMI programs. Teaching experience of the lecturers ranged from 5 to 20 years. Some completed their postgraduate studies in English, while others did so in French. The student sample was comprised of first-, second-, and third-year students.

Instrumentation

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the research questions, to improve the validity and reliability of findings (Mathison, 1988), and to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' attitudes. Quantitative analysis was used to provide a numerical presentation of the participants' attitudes and a comparison across groups. It was also used to test the significant difference between the groups using a *t*-test and one-way ANOVA. Additionally, quantitative analysis can provide areas to explore further in qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis was used to complement the findings of the quantitative analysis, by providing the reasons behind participant attitudes. Both analyses complement each other. For the quantitative section, data were collected using a 4-point Likert close-ended questionnaire, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire contained items adapted from previously conducted surveys (e.g., Al-Wadi, 2018; Almahmoud, 2012; Badwan, 2019; Jebali, 2020; Medfouni, 2020). To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, an expert's opinion on the structure of the questionnaire was obtained. Furthermore, the

Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated based on the data obtained during the actual study to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged from 0.92 to 0.94, which indicates a good internal consistency of the full scale.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

Quantitative Phase

The study was conducted over a period of 4 months in 2022. Hard copies of the questionnaire were distributed randomly at the beginning of the semester to 52 EMI lecturers, 226 EMI students, 70 non-EMI lecturers, and 254 non-EMI students. The student questionnaire was distributed to the first 20 students in each classroom. The researchers also chose five lecturers from each office to answer the questionnaire. We received responses from 47 EMI lecturers, 160 EMI students, 59 non-EMI lecturers, and 170 non-EMI students. Responses were transferred into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, with columns labelled according to the variables in the questionnaire. The spreadsheets were saved in CSV files and then imported to IBM SPSS Statistics 29.0 for analysis.

Qualitative Phase

Qualitative data were gathered through individual semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interview questions were mainly guided by relevant literature on EMI and language planning (Appendix). The goal of conducting interviews with the participants was to supplement the findings of the questionnaires and collect in-depth data concerning the participants' attitudes toward English and the reasons behind those attitudes. Participants were requested to provide their email addresses in the hard copies of the questionnaire if they agreed to participate in the interview. The interview sample was chosen from those who gave an address. Purposive sampling was used to maximize the probability that the sample included a range of attitudes. The interviews were recorded and took 20 to 60 minutes with each participant. The data obtained from these interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (King & Horrocks, 2010). To ensure a focused understanding of each group's perspectives, data obtained from the students and lecturers were analysed separately, resulting in different themes for each group.

Researchers familiarized themselves with the data by reading the responses of the participants many times to comprehend the patterns and to attach brief comments. Then, the researchers coded the data from 72 transcripts to capture the surface-level meaning of participants' responses, such as positive or negative attitudes toward English. At this stage, the researchers also identified words and sentences from the transcriptions that have similar meanings, such as, "English is a simple language," and, "English is a beautiful language." The researchers convened a collaborative session aimed at discussing and enhancing the coding process, which resulted in a codebook that involved the descriptive codes identified during the analysis. Next, the descriptive codes and pertinent materials (excerpts from the interview transcripts) were organized into thematic clusters. Following this, the researchers meticulously reviewed all the clusters, focusing on their interpretation to address the research questions. Finally, the key themes were derived, refined, and interpreted. A member-checking process was carried out during our departmental seminar, where we engaged with other faculty members to discuss and validate our findings.

Results

Quantitative Results

Table 1 presents results reflecting the attitudes of EMI lecturers (overall $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.26$) and non-EMI lecturers (overall $M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.50$) toward English.

All EMI lecturers believe that research is more developed in English. They also consider English as a language of science and technology ($M = 3.96, SD = 0.20$). Moreover, EMI lecturers perceive conducting research in English as highly important ($M = 3.94, SD = 0.24$). Similarly, most EMI lecturers strongly agree that English is important in higher education ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.28$). The low standard deviations and the high mean scores for these statements indicate a strong agreement among EMI lecturers, which means that they recognize the importance of English in academic discourse. Most lecturers also strongly agree that English is a global language ($M = 3.87, SD = 0.33$). Finally, there is general agreement among EMI lecturers that English can boost job opportunities ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.13$); however, the results here reflect higher variation in responses compared to that of the other statements.

All non-EMI lecturers agreed that research is more developed and easily accessible in English ($M = 4.00$). They also strongly agree that English is regarded as a language of science and technology ($M = 3.96, SD = 0.18$). Furthermore, there is a general agreement among the participants that it is important to conduct research in English ($M = 3.66, SD = 0.54$), with some differences in opinions. The results show that while there is an agreement among non-EMI lecturers regarding the importance of English in higher education ($M = 3.56, SD = 0.64$), this is perceived as being slightly less important than the role of English in research and science. These results indicate that despite their use of French as a medium of instruction, non-EMI lecturers acknowledge the significance of English for engaging in the academic and scientific contexts. Non-EMI lecturers also believe that English is a global language ($M = 3.71, SD = 0.52$). Furthermore, there is moderate agreement among non-EMI lecturers that English can boost job opportunities ($M = 3.03, SD = 0.64$), suggesting varied opinions among the participants about the association between English and employment prospects.

Table 1. EMI and Non-EMI Lecturers' Attitudes Toward English

	Statement	EMI lecturers		Non-EMI lecturers	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	Research is more developed and easily accessible in English.	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00
2	English is regarded as a language of science and technology.	3.96	0.20	3.96	0.18
3	It is important to conduct research in English	3.94	0.24	3.66	0.54
4	English is important in higher education.	3.91	0.28	3.56	0.64
5	English is considered the global language.	3.87	0.33	3.71	0.52
6	English can boost job opportunities.	3.79	0.54	3.03	1.13
	Overall	3.91	0.26	3.65	0.50

Both groups of lecturers hold positive attitudes toward English. They also expressed a high level of agreement with the first three statements. This finding indicates a strong awareness among both groups of lecturers that English is a dominant language in the domains of education, research, and technology. Results of a *t*-test indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the two groups, $t(5) = 1.77, p > 0.05$.

Table 2 presents results reflecting the positive attitudes of EMI students ($M = 3.91, SD = 0.21$) and non-EMI students ($M = 3.90, SD = 0.22$) toward English. Students in both groups exhibited total agreement with the statements, "English is considered the global language," "English is regarded as a language of science and technology," and, "Research is more developed and easily accessible in English." When it comes to the importance of English in higher education, EMI students ($M = 3.86, SD = 0.43$) and non-EMI ($M = 3.85, SD$

= 0.46) students expressed strong agreement. Furthermore, there is a general agreement among both groups that English can boost job opportunities. There is no statistical difference in attitudes between the two groups ($t(8) = 0.00, p > 0.05$).

Table 2. EMI and Non-EMI Students' Attitudes Toward English

	Statement	EMI students		Non-EMI students	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	English is considered the global language.	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00
2	English is regarded as a language of science and technology.	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00
3	Research is more developed and easily accessible in English.	4.00	0.00	4.00	0.00
4	English is important in higher education.	3.86	0.43	3.85	0.46
5	English can boost job opportunities.	3.72	0.60	3.68	0.65
	Overall	3.91	0.20	3.90	0.22

In order to test whether a statistically significant difference exists between EMI lecturers, non-EMI lecturers, EMI students, and non-EMI students, one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results indicate that there is no statistically significant difference between the four groups, $F(21) = 2.22, p > 0.05$. These findings suggest that, in terms of their attitudes toward English, lecturers and students in both instructional settings display similarly positive attitudes

Qualitative Results

Findings from the interviews revealed that most participants (EMI lecturers and students, non-EMI lecturers and students) have a positive attitude toward English. Four themes reflecting positive attributes emerged, two from the lecturer transcripts and two from the student transcripts. For those who reported negative feelings about English, two themes emerged.

Theme 1 (Lecturers): The International Image of English

Both EMI and non-EMI lecturers viewed English as the lingua franca of the world. For that reason, most non-EMI lecturers kept repeating statements such as, "English is an international language," (Lecturer I) and, "English is the language of the world," (Lecturer S) when describing their thoughts about English. Lecturers also consider English as the most used language globally. Moreover, they see it as a vital tool for global communication. For instance, one EMI lecturer stated, "English is an international language and the most spread language in the world," (Lecturer A); another said, "English is the global language. Nobody can be involved in our modern world without English" (Lecturer Z). This finding highlighted that the participants perceive English as important and relevant in the globalized world. It also underscored that English is seen as valuable for people who seek to engage in the global world.

Theme 2 (Lecturers): English for Academic and Scientific Endeavours

Both EMI and non-EMI lecturers believe that English has a high status in academia, because it plays an essential role in teaching and research endeavours. They believe that its prestige is related to its status as the language of science, research, and technology. For example, non-EMI Lecturer D stated, "ترتبط أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية، بالعلوم والتكنولوجيا والتجارة. هذه حقيقة. This is a fact." Furthermore, the lecturers believe that the most important teaching resources are in English, and nearly all significant scientific publications are in English. For example, EMI Lecturer Q stated, "English is the language of scientific research, and the huge number of articles published in English is a proof of that."

Additionally, EMI Lecturer Y explained, “I think English is important because I can see that in its relation to science. For example, the scientific textbooks are written in English.” Moreover, non-EMI Lecturer E said, “طالما أن غالبية البحوث والكتب العلمية باللغة الإنجليزية ، ستظل هذه اللغة مهمة.” [“As long as most of the scientific research and textbooks are in English, this language will be important.”] The lecturers acknowledge the importance of English in accessing academic publications and textbooks, which may encourage them to favor the implementation of EMI in Algerian higher education.

Theme 3 (Students): English as a Gateway to Global Opportunities

Both EMI and non-EMI students view English as a gateway to studying abroad, employment, travel, and social media engagement. EMI students in this study stressed the importance of English for working and studying abroad. That can be noticed in EMI Student A’s statement, “لقد ، اللغة الإنجليزية ضرورية للدراسة في الخارج ، لقد ، ”تحققت من العديد من المنح الدراسية وكلها تقريبًا تتطلب اللغة الإنجليزية.” [“English is a necessity to study abroad. I have checked many scholarships and nearly all of them require English.”] EMI Student B also stated the importance of English in the international job market, saying, “أعتقد أن جميع الشركات حول العالم تضع اللغة الإنجليزية كشرط مهم للتوظيف مما ، ”يجعل اللغة الإنجليزية مهمة لأي موظف.” [“I think all the companies around the world are putting English as an important requirement for recruitment, which makes English important for any staff.”] Furthermore, non-EMI Student F said, “أريد أن أتعلم اللغة الانجليزية لكي أستطيع العمل بالخارج فأنا أعتقد أن الإنجليزية هي جواز سفري للشركات العالمية.” [“I want to learn English to work abroad. I think it is my passport to get into international companies.”]

Additionally, the students think that English is beneficial for travelling. For example, non-EMI Student G stated, “إذا كنت تستطيع التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية ، يمكنك السفر إلى بلدان مختلفة والتواصل مع الناس بسهولة. عندما أصبح السفر ثقافة منتشرة ، زاد ، ”هذا من أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية.” [“If you can speak English, you can travel to different countries and communicate with people easily. As travel became a pervasive culture, this increased the importance of the English language.”] This is in line with the findings of Krarzia (2013), which indicated that most Algerian university students chose studying abroad and traveling as the main reasons for learning English.

Non-EMI students also view English as a tool that facilitates their access to social networks. This is clear in Student H’s statement:

في الوقت الحاضر ، يمكنني رؤية العديد من المنشورات في وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي باللغة الإنجليزية. أيضًا ، هناك العديد من الاتجاهات والنكات في اللغة الإنجليزية التي لا يمكنك فهمها إذا لم تكن تفهم اللغة الإنجليزية. لذلك ، أود أن أقول إن اللغة الإنجليزية هي لغة التواصل في [Nowadays, I can see many posts on social media in English. There are many trends and jokes in English that you can only understand if you understand English. I would say that English is the language of communication in social media, lending it significant importance.]

These findings indicate that students are aware of the instrumental role of English in professional, educational, and personal development. The findings also suggest that the students have a pragmatic view of English and associate it with advancement in various life spheres.

Theme 4 (Students): English as Beautiful and an Easy Language to Learn

The students explained that they perceive English as simple and straightforward in terms of grammar and vocabulary when compared to French, which has complex grammar rules. For example, EMI Student C stated, “English is a very easy language, very simple, no complications at all compared to other languages, and that is what I like about it.” Non-EMI Student N also said, “English is a simple language. I like this simplicity. It makes the speaker feel confident when using it. I think this is its strong point.” EMI Student D praised the beauty of the English language by saying, “English is a wonderful language.” Similar to Student D, many other EMI and non-EMI students related the beauty of English to its flexibility and ability to express complex ideas. Students hold a positive aesthetic or emotional appreciation for the English language, due to its capacity to convey a wide range of emotions and concepts. The students also kept repeating statements such as, “اللغة

اللغة الإنجليزية لها نغمة صوت لطيفة [“English has a nice tone sound,”] and “أصوات اللغة الإنجليزية جميلة” [“English sounds are beautiful.”]

Negative Feelings Among non-EMI Lecturers

Several non-EMI lecturers hold negative attitude toward English; they are all more than 50 years old. Their attitudes were reflected in two themes described below.

Theme 1: English Having Different Levels of Significance

These lecturers think there are other languages more important than English. They also stated that English does not deserve its prestige. For example, Lecturer M said, “اللغة الإنجليزية مهمة ، هذه حقيقة ، لكنها ليست اللغة الوحيدة المهمة ، لذا لا أعتقد أنها تستحق تلك المكانة” [“English is important. This is a fact. But it is not the only important language in the world, so I do not think that it deserves that prestige.”] Lecturer I similarly stated, “Je ne pense pas que l’Anglais soit une langue prestigieuse. Il y a le Français par exemple.” [“I do not think English is a prestigious language. There is French for example.”]

Theme 2: English Having Linguistic Difficulties

Some non-EMI lecturers expressed the idea that English is a tough language to learn, which is one reason for the attitudes they hold. They explained struggles related to mastering English pronunciation and grammar. For example, Lecturer P stated, “اللغة الإنجليزية ... لغة صعبة، لا توجد قواعد ثابتة خاصة عندما يتعلق الأمر بالنطق” [“English, it is difficult, no fixed rules, especially when it comes to pronunciation.”] Lecturer O said, “أنا لا أحب اللغة الإنجليزية ، فعندما أستمع إليها لا أحب طريقة نطق الكلمات ... أعني الأصوات” [“I do not like English. When I listen to it, I do not like how words are pronounced. ... I mean the sounds.”] These views revealed the participants’ feelings of discouragement in English learning endeavours, which may create resistance toward using English in content teaching.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with previous research (e.g., Belhiah et al., 2020; Krarzia, 2013; Mansoor, 2016;) that emphasizes the global importance of English and its significance in academia and research. Our focus, however, is on the Algerian higher education context, for which studies on English and EMI are limited (Belaref & Mhamdia, 2022). Quantitative findings revealed that the majority of EMI and non-EMI lecturers and students have a positive attitude toward English. This may help to avoid the “want-hate relationship with English,” described by Lin (1999, p. 2), which refers to the obligation to use and learn English while holding negative feelings toward it. Positive attitudes toward English can motivate students and teachers to learn and use English (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Tahaine & Daana, 2013). Notably, the findings indicate that language attitudes may not pose a significant barrier to the successful implementation of EMI in Algeria. Moreover, the use of EMI or French as a medium of instruction does not appear to significantly influence overall attitudes concerning English, consistent with findings from Badwan (2019) and Jebali (2020), who stated that the majority of Tunisian lecturers and students have favourable attitudes toward English, regardless of the medium of instruction they use.

Findings drawn from our interviews revealed a common positive attitude among the participants, although some non-EMI lecturers over 50 years old expressed negativity. Findings underscored the concept that English is seen as valuable for people who seek to engage in the global world, confirming findings of Jebali (2020), which showed a correlation between Tunisian lecturers’ positive attitudes toward English and the international image of English. The comments by participants concerning the instrumental value of English in global intellectual and scientific endeavours are consistent with the findings of Badwan (2019), Jebali (2020), and Zare-ee et al. (2013), who stated that the majority of EMI and non-EMI lecturers favor English due to its strong relation to research, science, and technology. Students in this study view English as a beautiful

language and a powerful instrument, aligning with findings reported by Almahmoud (2012), Mansoory (2016), and Belhiah et al. (2020). Both groups of students value English for its benefits to finding international jobs and studying abroad, which is consistent with Messaoudi and Hamzaoui-Elachachi (2017).

The international status of English and linguistic problems associated with it were the main factors that emerged from faculty holding negative views. This finding aligns with studies conducted in contexts where English is not the second language, such as Tunisia and Morocco (e.g. Badwan, 2019), which share similar cultural and historical backgrounds with Algeria. However, it is contrary to results from studies conducted in contexts where English is the second language of the population (e.g. Tamtam, 2013; Zare-ee et al., 2013). The negativity of non-EMI lecturers in this study could be interpreted in two ways, as they explained in their interviews. First, the lecturers stated that they are more attached to French, as their linguistic, scientific, and educational backgrounds are mainly in French. All those lecturers were educated using French as a medium of instruction, either in Algerian universities or in France, which has shaped their intellectual and professional development. They likely hold a sentimental attachment to the French language that interferes with their awareness of the importance of English. Second, their negative view of English may be related to the fact that they have had less exposure to English and less need to use it in their lives. The historical background of French colonization in Algeria has had a cultural impact: One result of colonization was to deeply ingrain French, by forcing its use as an official language in all domains and suppressing the use of any other languages (Metz, 1994). Moreover, after Algeria gained independence in 1962, the use of French continued in various domains, particularly in education, research, media, and business (Sahraoui, 2020). French thus became the language of the educated and elite classes in Algeria. As a result, many Algerians, including the generation of lecturers who lived through this period, may view French as an important language and a symbol of education and social status and see English as an unfamiliar language with limited status in Algeria.

The Algerian Higher Education Ministry is planning to implement EMI in its universities (Allal, 2020). It is also promoting the use of English in related domains, such as academia and research (Bouthelji, 2022). In this regard, the findings are significant. The positive attitude held by lecturers and students, who regard English as having prestige, may suggest a willingness among them to learn and use English. Positive attitudes toward a language motivate learning it and smooth the learning process (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002). Furthermore, receptiveness can serve as a catalyst for educational administrators and policymakers to consider the integration of English more extensively. It will be essential, however, to address negative attitudes toward English, such as those expressed by the non-EMI lecturers, because these attitudes may result in challenges to the implementation of EMI. According to Mutar (2019), negative attitudes toward a language can act as a psychological obstacle to learning it.

While promoting the use of English and the adoption EMI in Algerian universities, administrators must pay close attention to the risks associated with the dominance of English. The adoption of English could lead to the erosion of linguistic diversity, as well as the marginalization of Arabic and French, which are considered part of the Algerian identity (Sahraoui, 2021). This study underscores the necessity of considering these risks and adopting measures to mitigate them in the formulation of language policies and educational practices in Algeria.

Limitations of the Study

Algeria is a large country with multiple languages and cultural traditions; it exhibits regional variations that could significantly impact attitudes toward English. By choosing participants from one city, the study may not adequately capture the perspectives prevalent in other regions. Educational experiences, language proficiency, and cultural influences can differ considerably across various parts of the country. We therefore recommend conducting research to investigate students' and lecturers' attitudes toward English in different parts of Algeria.

Implications for Practice

In its efforts to promote the use of EMI, the Algerian Higher Education Ministry should highlight the prestige of English in the international community and emphasize the benefits of using English in the Algerian context by offering workshops and training sessions focusing on such benefits. Additionally, providing funding and support for senior non-EMI lecturers may raise their awareness about the importance of English and its international status. Opportunities can include conferences and events at which English is the main language of communication, as well as exchange programs with English-speaking universities or research institutions.

Concerns may center on students' relationships to their cultural heritage, threats to students' mastery of their native languages, and difficulties that may arise for students who are not proficient in English. When implementing EMI, it is crucial to achieve a balance between the benefits of English competence and the need to preserve a nation's linguistic and cultural diversity. Therefore, a closer examination of the structures by which students and lecturers can successfully adopt EMI is required.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into Algerian higher education lecturers' and students' attitudes toward English, shedding light on the reasons behind these attitudes within the Algerian higher education context. English enjoys high prestige among lecturers and students. Leveraging this widespread positivity toward English in order to adopt EMI and improve English language proficiency should therefore be explored. Some negative attitudes on the part of resistant faculty call attention to potential challenges related to EMI implementation initiatives in Algerian universities. By addressing the concerns of lecturers who hold negative attitudes and fostering a supportive environment for English, Algerian higher education can embrace EMI effectively and overcome barriers to its implementation.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

- How do you describe your attitude toward English? Negative or positive?
- What are the possible reasons behind your attitude?
- As an Algerian, how do you see the position/image of English? Why?
- Do you think English has an instrumental value? Why?
- Is English important in higher education? Why?
- Do you think English can boost job opportunities? Why?

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