

Challenges of Scientific Research and Writing for Publication in English :Teachers of Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes as a case study

تحديات البحث العلمي والكتابة من أجل النشر باللغة الإنجليزية: أساتذة جامعة جيلالي ليابس

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Abstract :

The present study aims at investigating the challenges encountered by teachers while conducting scientific research and while writing for publication in English. To undertake this study, the researcher has opted for a 3-open-ended questions survey about the importance, the challenges, and suggested strategies vis-à-vis the discussed issue. The subjects were 20 teachers from faculty of human and social sciences and faculty of science and technology from Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbes. The respondents demonstrated positive attitudes towards the importance of English in research, especially in writing for publication. However, their answers revealed serious challenges that may hinder them from writing and publishing in English. These challenges are classified in two categories : discursive (language- related) and non-discursive (non-language- related). Finally, the participants suggested the key role that should be played by higher education policy makers in order to boost writing for publication in English.

Keywords: Challenges, English, higher education policy makers, writing for publication

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التحقيق في التحديات التي يواجهها الأساتذة أثناء إجراء البحث العلمي وأثناء الكتابة للنشر باللغة الإنجليزية. ولقيام بهذا البحث، ارتأت الباحثة الاعتماد على استبيان يتكون من ثلاث أسئلة مفتوحة حول الأهمية، والتحديات، والاستراتيجيات المقترحة فيما يتعلق بالاشكالية المطروحة.

شملت العينة عشرين أستاذًا من كلية العلوم الإنسانية والاجتماعية وكلية العلوم والتكنولوجيا بجامعة جيلالي ليابس بسيدي بلعباس. أظهر المشاركون مواقف إيجابية تجاه أهمية اللغة الإنجليزية في البحث العلمي، خاصة في الكتابة من أجل النشر. كما كشفت إجاباتهم عن تحديات جدية قد تعيقهم من الكتابة والنشر باللغة الإنجليزية. وتم تصنيف هذه التحديات إلى فئتين: خطابية (مرتبطة باللغة) وغير خطابية (غير مرتبطة باللغة).

وأخيرًا، اقترح المشاركون الدور الأساسي الذي ينبغي أن يلعبه صانعو السياسات في التعليم العالي من أجل تعزيز الكتابة من أجل النشر باللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحديات، اللغة الإنجليزية، صانعو السياسات في التعليم العالي، الكتابة للنشر.

1. Theoretical Background: The Recent Roles of English in Academic Research

As English has become the major language for academic publishing in international journals, university lecturers and researchers have no choice but to publish in English in order to have wide representation and recognition. The use of English in higher education institutions and universities for research and pedagogical purposes is seen as an unavoidable route that policymakers around the world sought to give serious consideration to. Using English in higher education is seen as "a parallel and unavoidable process resulting in improved international academic communication worldwide" (Balan, 2011, p. 15). Algeria is no exception; a recent shift towards English can be seen as a result of deliberate governmental efforts responding to global pressures. In this context, Bouabdesselam (2022, p. 29) claims that the introduction of English education and the use of English in particular social spheres is a relatively recent phenomenon that is linked with political influences, economic opportunity, development, and globalization. He similarly argued that English has become essential for Algeria's modernization and integration into the global economy, particularly in the science and technology sectors. The same author notes that the country's youth, educated under the Arabized system, increasingly recognize the practical benefits of English for academic and professional advancement.

Starting with the government's decision to introduce English at the primary levels, launched by President Tebboune, the reform represents a commitment to educational reform and global engagement. This policy does not concern only linguistic needs but also aims to enhance the nation's global profile through the adoption of a widely spoken language (Bouabdesselam, 2022).

Additionally, English language implementation for young learners shows the rising presence of this language in Algerian social life. Today, Algerians, notably youngsters, are exposed to the English language more than before. A step revealing the government's intention to equip the coming generations with the tools they need to access global knowledge and compete at the international level.

One of the most important implications of this shift is the increasing debate on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). In fact, today in Algeria there are increasing discussions about using it to teach academic subjects not only in science and technology but even in humanities. This reflects serious ambitions that help to open doors to modern knowledge and innovation. If EMI is seriously adopted in the Algerian universities, it could reshape the future of Algerian universities and the country as a whole, positioning English as a channel that bridges academic achievement with international development.

Additionally, technological innovation has completely changed how English is taught and learned. The higher education level's institutions need to take the adoption of English into consideration because it is the setting where the significant use of various technical instruments and inventions is required. This use may be connected to improving learning chances or helping to provide new opportunities for discoveries or inventions. According to Moursund and Bielefeldt (1999), improving people's lives is technology's primary contribution. Since the bulk of technologies are the outcome of research and study conducted in the English language, academics and researchers must learn to use it effectively. However, challenges were usually said to be encountered by non-native English speakers. In this context, a study conducted by Flowerdew (1999a) on Chinese academics about writing for publication in English revealed that the majority expressed difficulties in writing in English. Based on Ferguson,

2007 & Canagarajah, 1999, the figure below illustrates the challenges that might be faced by teachers and academics:

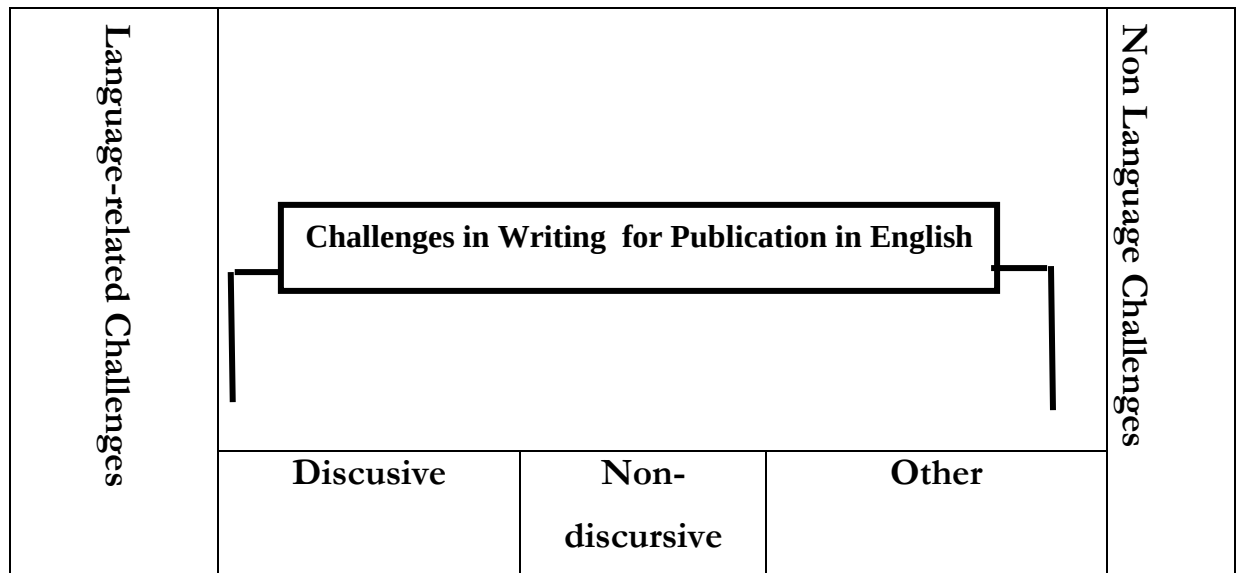


Figure 1. Challenge in Writing for Publication in English

2. Why is writing for publication difficult in English?

Writing academic papers in English poses considerable difficulties, especially for scholars who are non-native English speakers. Researchers face a number of challenges, such as linguistic, rhetorical, cultural, and institutional factors that affect the writing process and the acceptance of academic work. According to Flowerdew (1999), writing for publication involves not only clearly expressing ideas but also mastering the standards of academic English, which encompasses grammar, vocabulary, and discourse style. Non-native teachers usually find problems with summarizing, constructing arguments, and using discipline-specific language, all of which are essential for academic credibility. Moreover, the rhetorical and genre conventions in academic English are totally different from those found in other languages and cultures. In the same vein, Hyland (2015) asserts that academic writing is fundamentally based on Anglo-American

rhetorical traditions that favor specific methods of organizing arguments and articulating assertions. Thus, academics from different fields might have their writing seen as “ambiguous” or “irrational” solely because it deviates from conventional standards. Cultural norms and academic barriers might also contribute to the situation. Canagarajah (2002) contends that the prevalence of English in scholarly publishing may cause epistemic disparity, since the overwhelming majority of journals frequently prefer methodologies that conform to Western conventions. Additionally, numerous researchers, particularly in developing countries, do not have access to proper training, guidance, or assistance in academic writing. Li and Flowerdew (2007) indicate that even if researchers are experts in their area, they might lack familiarity with editing and proofreading, comprehending reviewer comments, or choosing appropriate journals—elements that influence publication success.

Moreover, the **pressure imposed on teachers to publish in English-language journals** for career advancement or institutional promotion intensifies these challenges. The "publish or perish" idea pushes scholars to write in a language that is not their own, often at the expense of clarity, originality, or confidence (Belcher, 2007).

3. Statement of the Problem

“Publish or perish” is an adage in academic environments stressing the importance of the publication of scientific papers. As a leading medium of international academic journals, publications, and academic achievements, English has come to have higher status for promotion and for supporting scholars all over the world to apply for research grants. However, getting a scholarly article published is a complicated process for non-native speakers of English. In this context, Fahi (2002, p. 113) and Moldovan (2011, p. 392) argue that there are some basic requirements for writing for publication in English,

such as careful and consistent word choices, short, clear, direct sentences, writing in the active voice, writing unified, coherent, and well-structured paragraphs, stylistic uniformity, and maintaining brevity and clear thinking with sound arguments. Therefore, some teachers face numerous obstacles when attempting to write for possible publication of their articles in English. To investigate the present problem, we raised the following research questions:

4. Research questions:

- 1-What are the teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards using English in scientific research and in writing for publication in the Algerian university?
- 2-What are the challenges teachers encounter while writing for publication in English?
- 3-Which strategies should be adopted by higher education policy makers to encourage teachers to write for publication in English?

5. Research Hypothesis

- Teachers may have positive attitudes towards the utilization of English as a language of scientific research and writing for publication.
- We believe that linguistic inefficiency is the major challenge faced by the teachers when using English.

6. Methodology

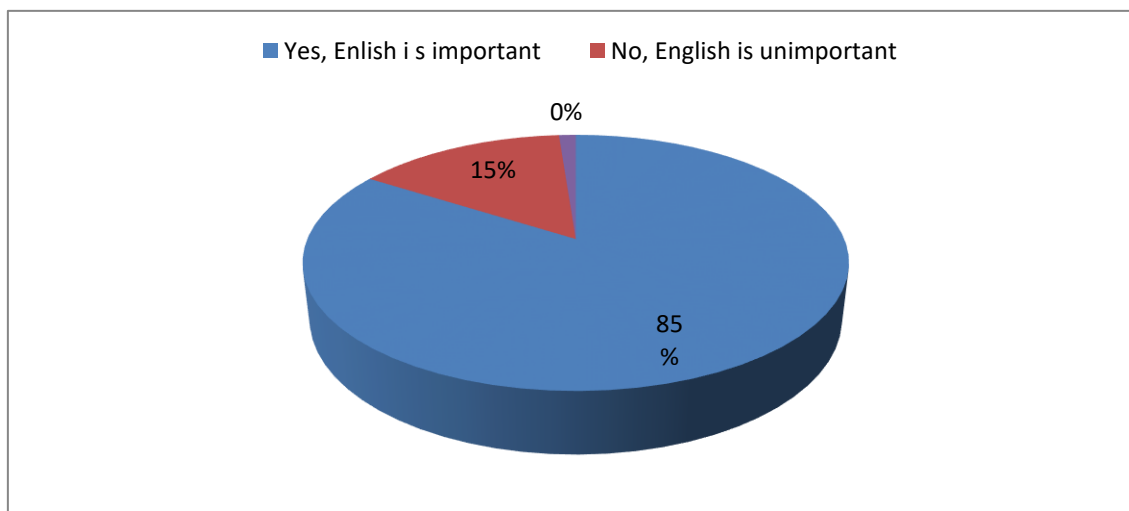
Through an unstructured questionnaire translated to two languages, i.e., Arabic and French, and addressed to teachers in faculties of human and social sciences and science and technology, the researcher conducted an exploratory study using a qualitative research method. The use of this tool refers primarily to

the fact that unstructured questionnaires have gained prominence in qualitative research due to their ability to elicit in-depth and nuanced responses from participants. As opposed to structured questionnaires that rely heavily on close-ended questions and pre-coded answers, according to Kumar (2014), unstructured questionnaires offer open-ended, flexible formats that allow respondents to express themselves freely. This method is especially beneficial in exploratory research where the researcher aims to gain real insights into the respondents' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives without imposing predefined answers. Moreover, it is argued that unstructured questionnaires are particularly useful when researching sensitive topics or personal experiences, as they allow respondents to steer the conversation and choose how much to reveal (Denscombe, 2014). This is exactly the case of the present paper, which aims specifically to investigate the non-native English teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the challenges they encounter when attempting to conduct research or to write for publication in English. To serve this objective, an unstructured questionnaire consisting of three open-ended questions was used. The questions are related respectively to the importance of English in article publication, the challenges teachers face when trying to write for publication in English, and some suggested strategies for boosting writing via this language. A total of 20 teachers' answers were collected and analyzed.

6.1 Results and Discussions

For data analysis, the researcher adopted a framework for classification of challenges, i.e., discursive (language-related) and non-discursive (non-language-related).

Piechart1. Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance of English in Writing for publication



6.1.1 Attitudes towards English as a Language of Scientific Research

As for the first question, which was about whether the teachers find writing for publication important in English, the majority (85%) agreed that English is the most important language in the field of scientific research, particularly for academic publishing in international journals, however ; only 15% expressed negative attitudes.

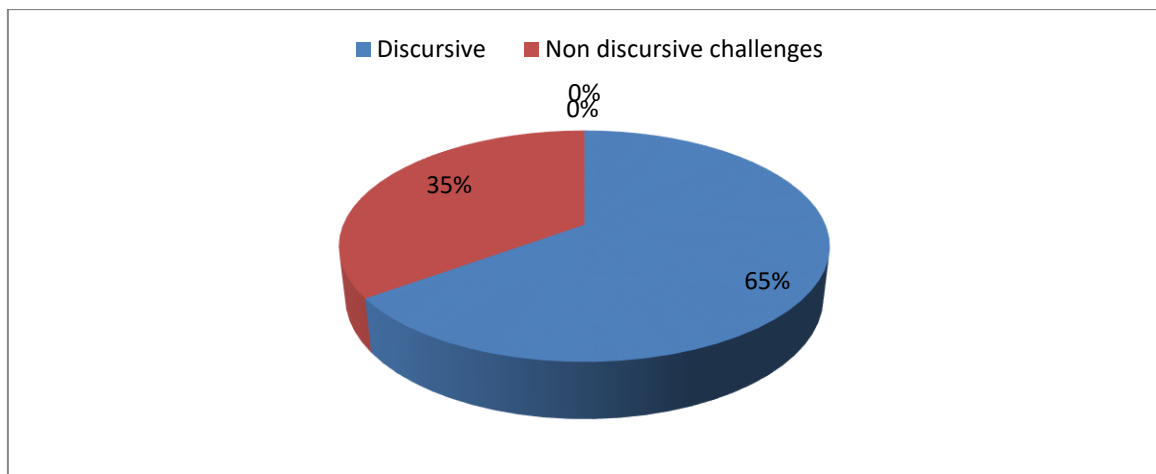
For example, one of the respondents had this to say: *"Yes, of course English is among the languages that are internationally recognized and widely used for communication."* Another teacher reported, *"Yes, so that the publisher can convey the information to a large number of readers around the world."* Some teachers consider it a must to meet promotion and renewal of tenure requirements. *"Yes, writing for publication in English is a must mainly for PhD preparation, to get promoted, for professional development, and to share the latest findings and knowledge,"* added another teacher.

On the other hand, a minority of teachers (15%), represented by three teachers from the faculty of human and social sciences, consider writing for publication unimportant. For instance, one of the teachers declared, "I prefer writing and publishing in Arabic since it represents one of the components of the Arabo-Islamic identity," while another teacher viewed that "writing in one's mother tongue is primordial since countries develop when giving value and interest to their home languages." Another teacher found that "writing for publication is suitable for scientific streams and exact sciences, whereas in humanities, where culture, civilization, and philosophy are studied, Arabic is more expressive."

To sum up, the above-mentioned feedback supports the idea that the majority of teachers are aware of the extreme importance of mastering English as a major world language. In this regard, Huang (2010) claims that the need for publication in English to gain acknowledgements in the international community is of great importance for scholars and that publications in this language may be considered as a platform for polyglot researchers to publicize their works as broadly as possible. The results align also with what Balan (2011) has already stated.

6.1.2. Challenges Encountered

As far as the second question is concerned, which attempts to investigate the challenges the respondents encounter when writing for publication in English, the results obtained show that the overall challenges were referred particularly to two main categories: discursive challenges with a percentage of 35% and non-discursive with a percentage of 65%.



Piechart2. Challenges Encountered

A/Discursive (language-related) Challenges:

65% of the respondents identified challenges related to language, such as lack of technical vocabulary, grammar, sentence formation, writing style, and research-related discourse. They refer the hindrances in the language to the fact that their basic education was focused on French as a 1st foreign language and as a language that gains more privilege in the Algerian society. In this context, Cummin (1984) distinguished between two levels of language proficiency, referring to the use of language for two different purposes and in two different contexts. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills, labelled as BICS, are used in a social environment and deal with the here and now of everyday life. In contrast to Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, known as CALP, which is the basis for students' ability to cope with the academic demands in various subjects of study.

They have also stressed the implementation of English in primary schools today and the change that might occur in language planning in Algeria, especially the future of foreign languages for the coming generation and for education. The

findings of the present research work confirm the previous findings in the same field (Photongunan, 2016; Abdallah Salih, Holi, Clark, 2014; Al Fada, 2012; Flowedew, 1999).

B/Non-discursive Challenges

Non-language-related challenges, or non-discursive challenges, encountered by teachers in utilizing English for academic research and writing for publication represent 35% of the respondents' answers, especially including analytical and interpreting skills, notably for the teachers of humanities, and limited resources and dictionaries as another serious obstacle that teachers face while trying to write for publication in English. Limited access to reliable sources, high cost to conduct research, and high cost of translation are all challenges that were mentioned by the respondents. For some others, administration responsibilities, heavy teaching loads, and the difficulty of finding suitable publishers represent a big hurdle for writing for publication in English.

7. Suggested Strategies

Most participants stressed the pivotal role that should be played by higher education institutions in Algeria to encourage university tutors to be involved in academic research in general and in writing for publication in English in particular. The respondents believe that conducting training, workshops, and conferences administered by experts might help teachers to be acquainted with writing and hence publishing their papers in English. They have also mentioned that the fact that reduction of teaching load, research incentives, and rewards are provided systematically creates a healthy atmosphere for scientific production and may also amplify academic achievements. A teacher from the faculty of humanities raised a vital point related to the importance of equipping

laboratories with computers and developing translation engines that the teachers may rely on when writing or translating their articles.

8. Recommendations and General Implications

English has gained increasingly popular status in academic publishing since the Second World War, when it had already become widespread all over the world as a remnant of colonialism. The status of English in academia is also helped by the fact that it is the world's most studied language, the first language of around 400 million people, and the second language of up to 1.4 billion more. Though these are big numbers, English poses a serious problem to non-native writers, and the set of language-related and non-language challenges encountered by the correspondents in the present research study shows how difficult it is to cope with the current situation and seek a balance between teaching and research. Support by higher education institutions for research is imperative. Universities should turn to vibrant hubs for conferences, seminars, workshops, and symposia where members of the faculty might find appropriate venues to present, explore, and share ideas with other fellow researchers. Furthermore, local journals with international standards can be a good start for those teachers to publish in English. However, top-down decisions in Algeria are always considered as influential in implementing language planning projects.

Thus Since 2019, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS) has launched a project to promote English in the teaching curriculum nationwide, replacing French as a competing foreign language for many years. In 2023, the Algerian authorities implemented this shift to English, starting in September of the academic year 2023-2024. Today, a gradual transition to the use of English as a medium of instruction is witnessed, starting with scientific fields and encompassing humanities and social sciences in the

future. Training of teachers is highly recommended in this context. Another important role is the one that should be played by the teachers through persistence and consistency in the use of English as a language of scientific publication and as a medium of instruction.

9. Conclusion

Writing for publication in English today is seen as a necessity; researchers try every means to write their papers in English. When impossible for the reasons cited above, they have recourse to professionals and translators who provide translation services. Writing in English for the teachers of Djillali Liabes University of SBA is considered a hard task because of diverse factors divided particularly into two major aspects, such as discursive and non-discursive, i.e., language-related and non-language-related reasons. The former consists of the teacher's poor command of the linguistic skills of the English language—its vocabulary, grammar, etc. This inability refers to the fact that they had studied French as a first foreign language and that their first contact with English came late as a second foreign language. Teachers of human sciences claim that their medium of instruction is Arabic from primary school to university and that they teach history, philosophy, and law in Arabic. This means that the nature of the subjects they teach determines the language of research and hence that of publication. As for non-discursive challenges, the teachers enumerated a number of problems related namely to the lack of training, heavy teaching loads, and scarcity of resources, to name a few. Serious measures should be taken, such as providing training centers and encouraging cooperation between researchers nationwide through organizing conferences and seminars to make teachers acquainted with English vocabulary, notably that of scientific research.

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