

English as a Medium of Instruction in Algerian universities: Realities and challenges

Case study of Eloued University
Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences

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Abstract:

The study aims to analyze the current situation of English as a medium of instruction, and the possible challenges encountered in Algerian universities. The study was undertaken at the Faculty of Economic, commercial, and Management Sciences at the University of Echahid Hamma Lakhdar - Eloued. This investigation relied on the questionnaire form for collecting the required data, where a random sample of 25 professors was selected. The study used the statistical package of Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data and test the study hypotheses. The study reaches several key findings. Most notably, English is not used entirely as a medium of instruction, and some instructors adopt a mixed approach, combining both Arabic and English; others rely entirely on Arabic. Students' limited proficiency in English hinders their understanding, this in turn, discourages instructors from teaching and preparing their lectures in English. Additionally, Current curricula and course materials are not designed to teach in English. The actual learning environment is not supportive to such transition to teach in English. To achieve scientific and academic objectives, continuous training must be ensured for both key stakeholders in the educational process: the teacher and the learner. The shift to English-medium instruction should be gradual rather than immediate or mandatory.

Keywords: *English Language, education, EMI, higher education, Algerian universities.*

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1. Introduction:

Nowadays the phenomenon of English medium instruction (EMI) in higher education has gained a global interest and Algeria is not an exception. The expanding use of English at a rapid pace across the globe can be accounted for its benefits. English is becoming universal in many academic disciplines, and internationalisation is being realised via 'Englishisation' of the curriculum within many higher education institutions.

To keep up with global trends toward English language and the benefits that will bring to the country, the Algerian higher education launched significant initiatives to move from French as medium of instruction to English as medium of instruction in various fields such as science and technology. The attempts toward Englishisation have translated to significant decisions related to the gradual implementation of EMI in higher education, which also involve teachers' training programs.

- **The Problem of the Study:**

We pose the following problem:

What is the current reality of integrating English as a medium of instruction at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, University of El Oued, and what are the main challenges impeding its effective use?

- **The Hypotheses of the Study:**

The study hypotheses are the following:

The use of English as a medium of instruction at the Faculty of Economic Sciences, at University of El Oued, is very limited both in terms of prevalence and effectiveness. This is due to several limitations, most notably the low proficiency level of students. In addition, the linguistic competence of most faculty members does not enable them to teach entirely in English. Furthermore, the current curricula and course materials are not designed to be delivered in English.

- **The Objectives of the Study:**

The study aims to examine the current state of English as a medium of instruction with emphasis on the main challenges hindering its effective use at the Faculty of Economic Sciences - University of El Oued.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review:

2.1 Definition of English as Medium of Instruction

EMI have been defined as the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English (Dearden, 2014). Generally speaking, 'EMI refers to the use of the English language to teach academic subjects, other than English itself' (Dafouz & Gray, 2022) in settings where English is a foreign or second language to at least some of the learners and/or teachers (Smit,

2023). Tsou and kao (2017) state that EMI is perceived as “a strategic decision to improve quality of education, alumni employment, publications, international academic exchange, etc., all of which contributing to the institution’s international profile”.

Other definitions of EMI have sought to broaden its purview to include Anglophone contexts, acknowledging the increasing multilingual educational environments due to the growing number of English as a second language (L2) speakers in these universities (Galloway & Rose, 2021).

In other words, English has moved from being a foreign language taught in parallel with other modules, to becomes the language of science where it is used as means for teaching and learning non-language related academic subjects (e.g. studying medicine content through English; studying Business and commerce through English).

2.2 The reason for the Choice of English as a Medium of Instruction

The rationale for choosing English as a medium of instruction can be accounted for many factors. In higher education one of the major roles of integrating EMI is to internationalise universities, through EMI universities can attract more international students and teacher resources which generally influence its diversity (Wilkinson, 2013). EMI approach promotes easier access to cutting-edge knowledge in variety of disciplines, research studies, and international academia, that contributes directly to countries scientific, economic, and social development (Hu, 2007). In addition, the adoption of EMI may improve university rankings, students’ employability and overall competitiveness in the global marketplace (Coleman, 2006. Pecorari et al. 2011).

Key fact that English holds the status of a global language and its implementation as a medium of instruction in non-English speaking countries can be an opportunity for students to improve their English proficiency, globalize the content they learn, develop academic performance, enhance critical thinking, and boost graduates’ chances for better job opportunities (Elkharma, 2022).

Richards and Pun (2021) summarise the main reason for adopting EMI as follows:

- To improve the learning of English;
- To provide a common language of instruction in countries with multilingual populations;
- To promote economic competitiveness by developing an English-proficient workforce;
- To produce graduates with global literacy skills;
- To enable institutions to attract international students;
- To raise university rankings;
- To increase the prestige of an institution;
- To promote the competitiveness of universities;
- To facilitate regional and international communication;
- To develop students’ intercultural communication skills.

2.3 EMI in the Algerian Higher Education

In recent year, English language has gained more attention in Algeria, especially in higher education. In this context, the Algerian government realises its significance to improve the quality of education, enhance the competitiveness of graduates in the global job market, and increase the attractiveness of Algerian universities to international students and scholars.

The first step toward Englishisation process started officially on July 2019 when the academic community was asked to participate in an online survey, led by Taib Bouzid the Algerian minister about their support to English in higher education. The result appeared to have public support to English language in most of the Algerian academic society (Echoroukonline, 2019). As a consequence, on July 21st 2019 the minister of higher education Taib Bouzid announced an order that motivate the use of English and Arabic titles in all official papers and articles (Elbilad, 2019).

Another key decisions related to the integration of EMI in the Algerian universities can be stated as follow:

- In August 2019 the ministry announced for creating ‘brain trust’ team that includes six experts in linguistics and members from the senior management of the ministry to promote the use of English in Algerian higher education. Hence, to prepare the Algerian higher education for the shift to English-based instruction (Messeded, 2023).
- In October 2021, Abdelbaki Bezgian the subsequent minister stated that the newly-founded schools of mathematics and artificial intelligence should use the English language as a medium of instruction for the purpose of preparing Algerian students globally or better exchange of knowledge and expertise (Touhamia & Bakar, 2024).
- In September 2023, the ministry launched a national platform called Dual_Edx, under the supervision of National Commission of Distance Learning (CNEAD). This online platform established to train non-English language teachers from Francophone/Arabic backgrounds for EMI (Ouarniki, 2023).

2.4 Literature Review:

According to study conducted by Senouci and Gacem (2024) on English as medium of instruction in the Algerian higher education, Saida and the Algerian university in general are no ready to such change despite the public support of the academic community. Hence, a careful planning program are required for both teachers and policy makers for successful implementation of EMI in the Algerian higher education. AMARA (2025) article emphasizes the importance of English as medium of instruction in delivering academic subject effectively. Messeded (2023) findings appear to have positive attitude on part of participants' learning experience, but also reveal a mismatch between the learning needs and objectives, and the content trainees. Khenioui and Boulkroun (2023) study reveal that the successful EMI transition is on teachers' hands as they are change forerunners. Furthermore, it offers recommendations for policy and practice, including strategies for supporting teachers and addressing the challenges emerging from this shift. Ghoulali and Bouabdallah (2024) results

indicate that while teachers are aware about the necessity of English in a globalized world, there remain possible challenges emanating from the shift to EMI. Moreover, many instructors show limited English proficiency in spite of the training attempts made by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, which effect student comprehension and content delivery. Ouarniki (2023) study findings highlight students' both possible opportunities and challenges in the process of implementing English as medium of instruction and emphasis the need for gradual and flexible approach to the implementation of EMI.

3. Research Methodology:

This section will explain the methodology adopted in the study, by focusing on the community and sample of the study, the methods and instrument of data collection, as well as the statistical methods used in analyzing the data of the questionnaire.

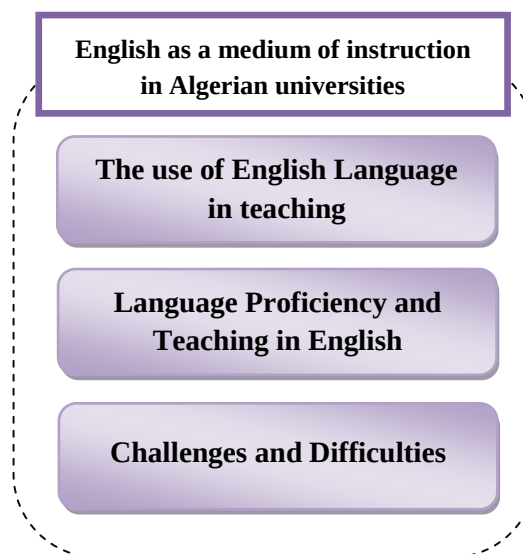
3.1 Population and Sample:

The study aims to examine the current state and the possible challenges encountered when using English as a medium of instruction at the Faculty of Economic Sciences - University of El Oued. The study community was restricted to the professors at the Faculty of Economic, Commercial and Management Sciences – in Eloued University. It is taken into consideration the scientific and professional experience, so that they are able and capable to judge the subject of the questionnaire by answering the questions. The sample number reached 25 individuals. It can be considered an reasonably representative sample of the population of the study as it reflects various characteristics and features of individuals' community.

3.2 Variables of the Study:

On the Basis of the objectives of the study and the posed problem, the study model was based on the following variables:

Fig (01): Study Variables



3.3 Method and Tools:

The method allows us to simplify the subject of research, uncovering scientific facts and identify the causes and consequences. Due to the nature of the topic, the study employed the inductive approach which relies on judging the whole through the part, alongside the descriptive approach to describe and analyze data and information, and then to present and discuss the results.

To achieve the desirable objectives, to address the research problem, and to test the validity or invalidity of the hypotheses, the study relied in its applied part on the questionnaire as a tool for collecting data and information which included two parts:

- The first part contains two questions related to general information and personal data of the study sample, namely (Years of Teaching, educational qualification).
- The second part consists of three axes, which are the following:
 - **The First Axis:** The use of English in Teaching.
 - **The Second Axis:** Language Proficiency and Teaching in English.
 - **The Third Axis:** Challenges and Difficulties.

After distributing and collecting the questionnaire, we relied on Excel to display and analyze the data. In order to be able to process the data we also relied on a set of methods available in the program SPSS V.25.

3.3.1 Testing the Reliability and Validity of the Questionnaire:

The stability and validity of the questionnaire is checked by:

- **Construct Validity of the Questionnaire - Internal Consistency Analysis:** the validity of the scale was verified by calculating Pearson correlation coefficient. The following table shows that:

Table (01): Pearson Correlation Coefficient Testing Results

Model		Pearson Correlation Coefficient	(Sig)
The Axis	Statement		
The Use Of English Language In Teaching	1	0.629	0.000
	2	0.755	0.000
	3	0.742	0.000
	4	0.695	0.000
Language Proficiency and Teaching In English	1	0.762	0.000
	2	0.721	0.000
	3	0.683	0.000
	4	0.706	0.000
Challenges and Difficulties	1	0.621	0.000
	2	0.657	0.000
	3	0.834	0.000
	4	0.792	0.000

Source: developed by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS V.25

The table above indicates that the values of the correlation coefficients are highly acceptable, with statistically significance values less than (0.05%), which confirms that the questionnaire is considered fairly valid to measure.

- **The Reliability of the Questionnaire - Cronbach's alpha Testing:** the stability of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, as presented in the following table:

Table (02): Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient Results

Model	Number Of Phrases	Cronbach's Alpha
The use of English in Teaching	04	0.782
Language Proficiency and Teaching in English	04	0.821
Challenges and Difficulties	04	0.885
Scale (ALL Variables) ALL	12	0.896

Source: Developed by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS V.25

Based on the results of the above table, it appears that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is greater than (0.6), indicating that the study instrument has a high stability coefficient that enables it to meet the objectives of the study and the stability of the results.

3.3.2 Distribution Normal Testing:

Based on the results of the normal distribution testing to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov coefficient, it was found that the data of the study variables follow the normal distribution, which is indicated on the basis Sig> 0.05 and the following table shows that:

Table (03): Distribution Normal Testing (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)

Model	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Coefficient	(Sig)
The use of English in Teaching	0.434	0.260
Language Proficiency and Teaching in English	0.364	0.213
Challenges and Difficulties	0.425	0.213

Source: Developed by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS V.25

4. Results and Discussion:

To convert the respondents' answers into quantitative data, the Likert Scale was employed as it gives wider areas for the answer, as shown in the following table:

Table (04): The Data Collection Tool Based on the Five-Point Likert Scale

Response Category	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Scores	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Prepared by the researchers based to the five-point Likert scale

- The Weighted Mean is then calculated, following these steps:

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- Calculate the range which is equal to the largest value of this scale - the lowest value of it: $5-1=4$;
- Calculating the length of the category by dividing the range by the number of categories: $4/5= 0.80$, the first category is: From 1 to 1.8 i.e.: $1+0.8 = 1.8$ and so on ...⁴
- Determine the general direction of the answers, as shown in the following table:

Table (05): Estimated Value According to the Five-Point Likert Scale

Trend Direction	Weighted Mean
Strongly Disagree	1.00 - 1.80
Disagree	1.81 - 2.60
Neutral	2.61 - 3.40
Agree	3.41 - 4.20
Strongly Agree	4.21 - 5.00

Source: Prepared by the researchers according to the five-point Likert scale

Accordingly, for each axes of the questionnaire the results of the arithmetic mean and standard deviation will be reported, followed by assessing the general direction of the respondents' answers.

4.1 The First Axis: The Use of English in Teaching

The following table shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of each statement from the first axis, specifying the general direction of the respondents' answers

Table (06): Data of the First Axis

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Results	
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency				
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent				
1	1	3	4	10	7	2.24	1.128	4	Disagree
	4	12	16	40	28				
2	6	10	1	5	3	3.40	1.411	2	Agree
	24	40	4	20	12				
3	4	9	3	7	2	3.24	1.268	3	Neutral
	16	36	12	28	8				
4	20	4	1	0	0	4.76	0.523	1	Strongly Agree
	80	16	4	0	0				

Source: Prepared by the researchers based on the outputs of SPSS V.25

According to the table above, it becomes clear that:

- Statement (01): I use English entirely as the medium of instruction.

This statement yielded an arithmetic mean of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.128. The results indicate that 17 individuals disagreed with the statement (representing 68%), of whom 10 disagreed and 7 strongly disagreed. In comparison, 4 individuals agreed with this, while 4 individuals answered "neutral". Based on the general trend of the respondents' answers, the English language is not used totally in teaching.

- Statement (02): I prefer using a mixture between Arabic and English during lectures to facilitate students' understanding.

This statement achieved an arithmetic mean of 3.40 and a standard deviation of 1.411. The results showed that 16 participants agreed with the statement, among them 10 agreed and 6 strongly agreed. Together, they constitute 64%, while 8 individuals disagreed. These results indicate that an accepted number of professors use a combination of Arabic and English during their lectures, while others rely entirely on Arabic during their explanation to facilitate understanding for students.

- Statement (03): I struggle preparing teaching materials and lectures in English.

This statement recorded an arithmetic mean of 3.24 and a standard deviation of 1.268 . The results show that out of 25 participants, 13 individuals agreed with the statement, 9 individuals disagreed and 3 individuals had "neutral" answers. The result indicate that while number of teachers use English language in preparing their lectures more number rely on the Arabic language for that.

- Statement (04): The transition to English instruction should be gradual rather than being immediate and mandatory.

This statement achieved an arithmetic mean of 4.76 and a standard deviation of 0.523 . Where out of 25 participants, 24 individuals (96%) agreed with the statement, including 20 individuals who strongly agreed with it. The result indicates that there is a strong consensus among respondents that the shift to English as Medium of Instruction at the Algeria universities should be gradual and not mandatory, and what confirm this is that this statement ranked first in this axis.

4.2 The Second Axis: Language Proficiency and Teaching in English

The following table shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of each statement from the second axis, specifying the general direction of the respondents' answers.

Table (07): Data of the Second Axis

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Results
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency			
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent			

1	7	3	5	10	0	3.28	1.275	1	Neutral
	28	12	20	40	0				
2	1	3	4	10	7	2.24	1.128	3	Disagree
	4	12	16	40	28				
3	2	5	6	6	6	2.64	1.287	2	Neutral
	8	20	24	24	24				
4	0	1	2	9	13	1.64	0.810	4	Strongly disagree
	0	4	8	36	52				

Source: Developed by the researchers based on SPSS V.25 outputs

According to the above table, it is clear that:

- Statement (01): I have a good level of English that allows me to teach my courses effectively.

This statement recorded an arithmetic mean of 3.28, and a standard deviation of 1.275. The general trend of the respondents' answers towards this statement was "neutral". Among the study sample (25 individuals), 10 individuals (representing 40%) agreed with the statement, while 10 individuals (representing 40%) disagreed with the statement, in addition to that 5 individuals whose answers were neutral. Based on the results, a significant number of professors consider their level of English does not qualify them to teach courses entirely in English.

- Statement (02): I can efficiently explain scientific concepts and terminology in English.

This statement scored an arithmetic mean of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.128. Among the study sample 4 out of 25 participants (representing 16%) agreed with the statement, 10 individuals (40% representing) expressed their disagreement, in addition 7 individuals did not respond strongly to the statement. These results reflect a tendency among participants to disagree, which means that the majority of professors see difficulty in simplifying scientific concepts and terms in English and explaining them efficiently.

- Statement (03): Using English in teaching makes it easier for me to convey information clearly.

The statement achieved an arithmetic mean of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 1.287. Among the study sample (25 participants), 7 participants agreed with the statement, 12 individuals disagreed (6 disagreed and 6 strongly disagreed), which together constituted 48%, and 6 individuals had "neutral" answers. These results indicate that using English for teaching is a challenge for professors, hindering them from conveying information clearly.

- Statement (04): Students have a sufficient level to understand the lectures offered in English.

This statement recorded an arithmetic mean of 1.64 and a standard deviation of 0.810. The results indicate that among 25 participants, one individual agreed with the statement, 13 individuals strongly disagreed, while 9 individuals disagreed. Based on the results 88% of the respondents believe that students have a weak and very limited level of English, this of course hinders them from understanding the lectures presented in English.

4.3 The Third Axis: Challenges and Difficulties

The following table shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of each statement from the third axis, specifying the general direction of the respondents' answers

Table (08): Data of The Third Axis

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. Deviation	Results	
	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency	Frequency				
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent				
1	12	12	1	0	0	4.50	0.511	2	Strongly Agree
	48	48	4	0	0				
2	8	8	6	3	0	3.84	1.028	4	Agree
	32	32	24	12	0				
3	12	9	4	0	0	4.32	0.748	3	Strongly Agree
	48	36	16	0	0				
4	20	4	1	0	0	4.76	0.523	1	Strongly Agree
	80	16	4	0	0				

Source: Developed by the researchers based on SPSS V.25 outputs

According to the table above, it is clear that:

- Statement (01): There is a lack of continuous training of teachers to use English in teaching.

This statement achieved an arithmetic mean of 4.50 and a standard deviation of 0.511 . in the study sample, 12 participants agreed with the statement, in addition 12 individuals who strongly agreed, together they constitute 96%. These results indicate that there is a lack in teachers' continuous training to use the English language in teaching. This is considered a major challenge for the shift to English as medium of instruction in the Algerian University. This is confirmed by the fact that this phrase is ranked second in this axis.

- Statement (02): Current curriculum and course materials are not designed for teaching in English.

The statement scored an arithmetic mean of 3.44 and a standard deviation of 1.028. The results indicate that 16 individuals agreed with the statement (representing 64%), among them 8 agreed and 8 strongly agreed. While 3 individuals disagreed and 6 individuals answered "neutral". Based on the general direction of the sample's answers, the respondents agreed that the current curriculum and school materials are not designed for teaching in English.

- Statement (03): There is no supportive learning environment for the transition to teaching in English.

This statement achieved an arithmetic mean of 4.32 and a standard deviation of 0.748. The results show that among 25 participants, 12 individuals strongly agreed with the statement, and 9 individuals agreed with it. This means that 84% of the respondents consider the educational environment in the Algerian university is not supportive to the shift to teaching in English.

- Statement (04): the is a Lack of training and development of the English language among students, particularly specialized English.

The statement recorded an arithmetic mean of 4.76 and a standard deviation of 0.523 . the result show among the study sample (25 participants), 24 individuals (96%) agreed with the statement, among them 20 individuals who strongly agreed with it . This indicates that the lack of the training and development of the English language among students, in particular specialized English, is the most prominent challenge towards its adoption as a language of instruction, and what confirms that, this statement ranked first in axis of challenges and difficulties.

5. Conclusion:

After studying the use of English as a Medium of Instruction in Algerian universities: realities and challenges - case study of Eloued university (faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences), we reached the following results:

- English is not fully used as a medium of instruction in the institution under study. Instead, some instructors adopt a mixed approach, combining both Arabic and English; others rely entirely on Arabic during instruction to facilitate students' understanding and comprehension.
- Many instructors face difficulties in teaching, preparing lectures and instructional materials in English, while others believe it is possible to do so in English; nevertheless, they prefer to teach and write their lessons in Arabic.
- Students' limited proficiency in English hinders their understanding and assimilation of scientific content, and it weakens their engagement with the lessons during instruction. Hence, discourages instructors from preparing their lectures in English and pushes them to deliver and explain the material in Arabic instead.

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- There is a lack of teachers' continuous training to use English as medium of instruction. In addition, the development of English language among students, particularly specialized English, is of paramount importance.
- Current curricula and course materials are not designed for teaching in English. The learning environment is not supportive to such transition to teach in English.
- The shift to English as a medium of instruction should be gradual rather than immediate or mandatory. To achieve scientific and academic objectives, continuous training must be ensured for both key stakeholders in the educational process: the teacher and the learner.

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