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Early English Instruction in Primary Education in Algeria

Nadjouia RAOUD*
University of Algiers 2 Abou EL Kacem Saâdallah, Algeria
nadjouia.raoud@univ-alger2.dz

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ABSTRACT: *The initial provision of English in Algeria in the first junior school year up to university level began in the 1960s, but later attempts to introduce it as early as the fourth year of primary school met challenging views. This paper discusses the feasibility of introducing English in Algerian 3rd grade primary education, attempting to shed light on the challenges of English provision in a multilingual context from cultural, psycholoIgical, and educational perspectives. It examines both supportive arguments and opposing viewpoints on early English instruction in three North African Francophone Arabic-speaking countries, with a focus on Algeria. The article concludes with practical recommendations for a less problematic integration of English in Algeria's complex linguistic situation.*

KEYWORDS: Algeria; English; EFL; National Languages; 3rd Grade; Young Learners.

* Corresponding author
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Introduction

The initial provision of English in Algeria in the first junior school year up to university level occurred in the 1960s, but subsequent attempts to introduce it as early as the fourth year of primary school met challenging views. Today, English is on the verge of enjoying the official status of first foreign language in Algeria, as its introduction has known many proponents, namely among parents wishing to have English added to their children's verbal repertoire to ensure better economic opportunities. Also, the 'neutral' character of English, compared to the love-hate relationship with French by many opponents of the maintenance of French in the Algerian educational system makes English a good candidate for the choice. However, the success stories of settings with English instruction in primary schools should not overshadow the discrepancies between countries with healthy educational systems and countries witnessing significant logistical, methodological and financial challenges. This paper attempts to contribute a reflection on the provision in North African Francophone Arabic-speaking countries of English in primary education. The focus will be on the Algerian 'experience', where an already complex multilingual situation faces language planning experts and decision makers in meeting the age of modernity. On the basis of objective arguments as well as on opposing views and attitudes, this paper examines the feasibility of the implementation of English instruction in primary education in Algeria from cultural, psychological, and educational perspectives. It offers suggestions for a smooth and realistic introduction of English instruction to young Algerian children. Prior to this, it may be useful to provide a brief account of Algeria's linguistic situation and the status of the languages in use.

1. Languages in Algeria

Algeria's linguistic landscape displays three languages in use: Arabic, Berber, and French. As to English, it is gradually gaining grounds among Algerians, youths, in particular.

1.1 Algeria's Linguistic Situation

Algeria's linguistic situation is characterised by multilingualism and polyglossia with a speech repertoire of and contact between Arabic, Tamazight, and French. It is difficult to know the exact number of Arabic, Berber, and French speakers. It has been suggested however that up to 85% Algerians speak Arabic while 15 to 30% speak Berber (Leclerc 2014), though the number of speakers of Classical Arabic is not known, and nor is that of the Arabic, Tamazight, and French languages spoken by all Algerians in all situations. The Arabisation process ensuing the Islamic expansion introduced Arabic, which has since become a prominent language serving religious, educational, and administrative purposes, to the extent that in Algeria's 1963 Constitution, Arabic was decreeted as the national language. Following its recognition as the second national langage, as stated in the *Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne Démocratique et Populaire* (JORADP, 2002), Tamazight (or Berber) together with its varieties, such as Kabyle, Tashelhit, Chenoui, was declared Algeria's second national and official language in the 2016 Constitution. French, a foreign language and a linguistic 'spoils of war', according to Algerian francophone writer and playright Kateb Yacine (Soukehal, 2011, p. 50), whose usage was being banned in administration as early as the first constitution, has nevertheless enjoyed until now a prestige position not only as a linga franca but also as the language of the educated francophones and elite, at least until the end of the 1980s. As for English, it is gradually gaining influential status in education, media, and business, contributing to Algeria's global connectivity.

1.2 The Status of English in Algeria

The international power of English lies not only in its status as a lingua franca but also in its worldwide use in science, technology, finance, and diplomacy. This linguistic hegemony has led to its provision in the educational system of a great number of countries across the world, among them Algeria, where English has been part of the educational curricculum from the first year of junior school to university level since

1963. In 1995, attempts to replace French by English as early as the 4th year of primary school met strong resistance on the part of parents, who preferrred the secure choice of French for their children (Cordel, 2014, pp. 229-233). The usage of English in the country had priorly largely been encouraged by the installation of oil multinational companies such as British Petroleum (BP), with two major gas developments in the South of Algeria, at Ain Salah from 2004 to 2022 and Ain Amenas between 2006 and 2022, both of which were joint ventures with Sonatrach and Equinor, and later acquired by Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (Eni). That implies that competency in English was already the linguistic requirement for Algerian nationals eligible for recruitment in these companies. Today, globalisation and economic development demanding the acquisition of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has rendered the learning of English even more pressing.

In 1993, attempts to supplant French by English as the first optional foreign language in the third 3rd grade of primary school did not meet much success, and between 1996 and 1998, the number of pupils enrolling in English in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades decreased dramatically from 59007 to 55950 (Cordel, 2014, p. 230). For over a year now (in 2022/2023), English has been taught in Algerian 3rd grade primary schools. A discussion on the feasibility of early English instruction in Algeria may require prior examination of settings where early English instruction has been successfully implemented.

2. The Implementation of English Instruction in Early Education

Because native English-speaking countries have shown immense scientific progress and technological advances, the need for the implementation of early English teaching has met grand enthusiasm from countries across the world.

2.1 Benefits of Early English Instruction

Early English instruction offers several benefits across language acquisition, cognitive development, and cultural understanding.

2.1.1 From a Language Acquisition Perspective

From a language acquisition viewpoint, studies involving international comparisons of English provision in primary schools across Europe have shown that

> … children of primary age can effectively learn [original emphasis] aspect of a foreign language; that the teaching approaches must be appropriate to their age group; that continuity of foreign language into the secondary school is important and that the quality of the teaching must be high. (Martin, 2000, p. 67, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 8)

However, information regarding the English language outcomes is lacking despite the huge investment by one third of the world countries in English early education, as reported by Rixon (2013, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 8). Research by Gika (1997) and Martin (2000) had previously examined primary foreign language teaching in Italy, Spain, England, and Greece, but neither study reported on language outcomes for students, with only teachers' concerns about their own language proficiency. Martin's (2000) research aimed to focus on foreign language provision in the UK but did not evaluate language proficiency.

Conversely, the positive outcome of Abd-Kadir and Hardman's (2007) study of pupil participation and engagement in Kenya and Nigeria marked the need to 'focus on the school as the best level of intervention for improving the quality of teaching and learning' (Abd-Kadir and Hardman, 2007, p. 12). A further need was to 'identify what kinds and levels of English proficiency elementary school teachers need to teach English'. Finally, a better understanding of 'what types of competencies (regarding both knowledge and the ability to use such knowledge) elementary school EFL teachers must have' is emphasised by Butler (2004, p. 269, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 9).

Kaplan et al., (2011) note that the failure in introducing English at the primary level stems from two the 'urban legends' : that early English instruction and lowering its instruction guarantee economic opportunities. Reality is, however, rather different. Firstly, being English-knowing is not a guarantee of an improvement in economic opportunity because English at intermediate school was not sufficient to develop competency. Secondly, early English learning is not a guarantee of near-native English proficiency, as the younger the better is embodied in some countries policies (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Makaysia, and Taiwan) with no positive outcome (Kaplan et al., 2011, as cited in Hayes, 2014, pp. 8-9). Despite costly investment, early English learning in those countries often results in unequal access to English instruction, insufficiently traines and unskilled teachers, and a gap between official programmes and actual pedagogical practices (Nunan, 2003, p. 589).

2.1.2 From a Cognitive viewpoint

From a cognitive standpoint, children's biologically determined abilities make language learning easier and more efficient due to their greater cognitive flexibility and neural plasticity, which facilitate rapid language acquisition (Lenneberg, 1967). This is especially true for achieving near-native proficiency in oral skills and fluency, particularly in pronunciation and intonation (Krashen, 1981). Additionally, children's heightened sensitivity to language structure and patterns contributes to their attainment of structural accuracy (Genesee, 2006). Furthermore, the critical period effect reinforces the plasticity and malleability of their language-learning mechanisms (DeKeyser, 2003, p. 518).

2.1.3 From a Cultural Perspective

Early exposure to foreign languages is argued to enrich cultural understanding and promote intercultural competence, essential in today's globalised world. Learning a foreign language promotes tolerance, empathy and understanding, thus fostering global citizenship (Fantini 2000, p. 27). Early exposure to foreign languages is argued to enrich cultural understanding and promote intercultural competence, essential in today's globalised world. Research by Johnson and Newport (1989, p. 231) indicate that learning a foreign language enhances cognitive flexibility and opens learners to diverse perspectives, fostering a deeper appreciation for different cultures. Multilingual individuals have been observed to show greater tolerance and empathy because they are able to understand and appreciate cultural nuances and viewpoints different from their own (Bialystok, 2011, p. 213). Furthermore, studies by Cummins (2000) show that early language learners tend to develop better problem-solving skills and are more adept at dealing with multicultural environments (p. 35).

2. 2 European Projects Measurements

The ELLiE report in seven countries across 48 state-funded primary schools explored contexts for foreign/second language learning to clarify achievable goals in classrooms with little time devoted to English langage learning. The level descriptors in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe), deemed inappropriate for young learners, were used as ‘targets for language outcomes in the primary cycle, failing to capture the essential features of children‘s early foreign language (FL) learning experiences’ (Enever, 2011a, p. 9, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 12).

Furthermore, the findings reveal ‘variation in the instructional hours and methods across countries’, ‘the importance of teacher-student rapport’, ‘the positive impact of exposure to English media outside school’, and ‘the gap between policy and practice in teacher qualifications’(Hayes, 2014, pp. 12-15).

The ELLiE research project findings were that a complex combination of factors contributed to successful language learning, including in-service teacher training, adequate and appropriate resources, and enjoyable class experiences and school conditions (Hayes, 2014, p. 15). Enever (2011c) concluded that irrespective of out-of-class exposure ‘it was possible to identify good levels of achievement by children in a number of

schools within each region, with well-trained teachers, good resources, lively engaged classes and school environments conducive to FLL' (p. 148).

2. 3 Positive Outcomes of Compulsory Early English Instruction

The introduction of English instruction in primary education has not been unsuccessful in all contexts. Hayes (2014, pp. 16-23) reports on studies conducted by Enever (2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2011d) on success factors underpinning English language instruction in the Netherlands, Finland, and Korea. Each country boasts unique attributes contributing to their achievements in this realm. The Netherlands ranked first in the EF English Proficiency Test from among 113 non-English-speaking countries (EF 2023), with 90 % to 93 % claiming to be able to hold a full conversation in English' (Huetter, 2023, p. 1) and that the Netherlands ranks highly on the EF English Proficiency Index (Hayes , 2014, p. 16). The Netherlands stands out for its high regard for the teaching profession, coupled with extensive exposure to English outside the classroom through various media platforms and workshops. Children are taught English as early as 9 or even 4, with 'many schools starting in Year 1, as 'a foreign language is compulsory from the age of ten and 'organisation of instruction is left to individual schools' (Enever 2011b, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 16). Similarly, Finland's excellence is attributed to its emphasis on quality teacher education and an improved primary school curriculum. Burridge (2010) reports on successful outcomes among very young Finnish school children in English learning due mainly to highly qualified teachers ((Hargreaves et al., 2007, p. 83), 'equality of opportunity', ' lack of high-stakes examinations in basic education', and 'the focus in education on learning rather than testing' (Hayes, 2014, p. 21).

Korea's commitment to education is underscored by substantial financial investments aimed at strengthening teaching and learning conditions. Song reports on education in South Korea as a 'national obsession' (Song, 2011, p. 36), where 'South Korean students typically leave home before 8am [...]and return home well past midnight, with normal and supplementary school work, and private after-school instruction all packed in between' (p. 45). This being said, 'Korea ranks as a country with only 'moderate' proficiency and scores actually declined from the previous year, according the English Proficiency Index (Hayes, 2014, p. 18).

Despite their different settings, the three countries share a common point: the compulsory inclusion of English in primary school curricula. The strategic move aiming to expose children to early English instruction fosters proficiency, vital for their countries' international engagements and transactions conducted in English.

2. 4 Challenges to Early English Instruction

Several arguments are put forward by opponents of early English as a foreign language. One of them is the Barcelona Age Factor (BAF) project, which challenges the notion that an early start guarantees proficiency (Muñoz, 2009), the results of which indicated that

> ... there was no advantage to an early start to learning English but that, in contrast, older learners (starting at age 14) progressed faster than younger learners (whether starting at age eight or 11) and younger learners did not catch up over the six-year time span of the project. (Muñoz, 2009, p. 9)

Moreover, the failure of some educational language plans highlights the importance of appropriate teacher training, adequate resources, and alignment with national objectives. The challenges of inequitable access to effective English language teaching, poorly trained teachers with limited language skills and officially mandated curricula that did not match with actual classroom practice, or were impossible to implement in the classroom conditions, were all reiterated in this review and are illustrative of many of the '12 reasons for educational language plans sometimes failing' discussed in Kaplan et al. (2011), listed below:

1 The time dedicated to language learning is inadequate.

2 Indigenous teacher training is not appropriate or effective.

3 Native speakers cannot fill the proficiency and availability gap.

4 Educational materials may not be sufficient or appropriate.

5 Methodology may not be appropriate to desired outcomes.

6 Resources may not be adequate for student population needs.

7 Continuity of commitment may be problematic.

8 Language norms may be a problem.

9 International assistance programmes may not be useful.

10 Primary school children may not be prepared for early language learning.

11 Instruction may not actually meet community and/or national objectives.

12 Language endangerment may increase.

[Source : Kaplan et al., 2011, p.106, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p. 9)

Echoing many of the obstacles outlined in Kaplan et al. (2011), Hayes reformulates them as pre-conditions for success in the implementation of English in primary schools. Among the challenges pervasive in the realm of English language teaching are the obstacles posed by inequitable access to quality instruction, compounded by the presence of inadequately trained teachers with restricted language proficiency, discrepancies between mandated curricula and classroom realities (Hayes, 2014, p. 9).

3. Early English instruction in Three Francophone North African Countries

Examination of early English instruction in three francophone North African countries is relevant because these contexts present several common denominators: Arabic and/or Berber first mother tongue, French as a linga franca, and unaccomplished early English implementation attempts.

3.1 Tunisia

The year 1993, Tunisia witnessed a false start similar to Algeria regarding the implementation of English instruction in the 4th grade of primary school (Bellalem, 2014). The project was quickly abandoned due to inadequate quality of teacher education and lack of funds resulting in insufficient teacher training programs and teaching materials (p.1). A decade later, a positive shift was observed by the Tunisians towards English at the expense of French (Bahloul 2001). In 2018, the British Council announced on its Facebook page the 'launching of Teaching For Success with HE minister Hatem Ben Salem', as 'the project will work with teachers, pedagogical assistants and inspectors to give every Tunisian student the chance to learn English' (British Embassy Tunis). Over the years, Tunisia has seen a significant increase in English teachers, attributed to improved cooperation between the Tunisian government and the British Council, leading to recognition of the importance of English for social advancement and academic pursuits, especially among young Tunisians (Kirkpatrick, 2017, p. 19). However, Tunisia is still facing challenges regarding the implementation of English. A study conducted by Abdeljaoued (2023) unveiled that 'teachers lacked adequate mastery of English and the pedagogical training to teach in EMI (English as Medium of Instruction) programs (p.9), as '55.1% of the respondents thought their English was better than that of their teachers, where 'only 26.7% admitted that their content teachers are more proficient in English'(p.8).

3.2 Morocco

Perhaps one of the most obvious ways of observing the status of a foreign language is its use in diplomacy and education but also the attitudes and practices of language users. Thus, the Moroccan Minister Delegate for Investment, Mohcine Jazouli, addressed the OECD ministerial meeting in Paris with a speech in English,

clearly expressing Morocco's official choice to supplant French by English (Kasraoui, 2023). In Morocco, English has been introduced as a foreign language in primary schools, alongside French and Arabic, as part of education reforms aimed at elevating linguistic competencies and preparing students for international communication (Mahmoudi, 2019). English is said to replace French. Several analysts suggest that English will replace French as the first foreign language (Arredondas, 2023) in Morocco in a 7 year plan' in teaching scientific subjects at all primary and middle school levels (El Atti, 2022). Moreover, the news broadcasting Al-Aoula channel will broadcast in English to provide Moroccans and English-speaking citizens around the world with more direct and accurate access to the country's news' but also 'increase the country's attractiveness to tourists and foreign investors seeking an international business environment (Blinda, 2023).

Commissioned by the British Council and conducted independently by Omnibus Marketing Research & Consultancies, a 2021 survey on 1,211 urban young Moroccans aged 15-25 unveiled that 65% of them were for English; 62% for Arabic and 47% for French (Omnibus, 2023, p. 11). Another part of the survey reported that that out of the two languages, English and French, 40% of Moroccans consider the former as the most important while only 10% consider the latter the most important one, in additon to the further results that 82% of respondents have positive associations with English, and 59% with French (Omnibus, 2023, p. 11). The survey also unveiled that ' the large majority of Moroccan youths see English as an invaluable tool to improve their social conditions' (Kasraoui, 2023). Despite the increasing demand for English proficiency in Morocco, many educators lack the necessary skills and training. Elimadi (2024) identifies several problems, such as 'the scarcity of qualified teachers, highlighting the need for an increased number of instructors with the necessary expertise to teach ESP courses effectively', proposing 'understanding the goals of the curriculum and the specific needs of the students' and ' a collaborative learning environment'(p. 10).

3. 3 Early English Education in Algeria

It may true that the neutral character of English compared to the love-hate relationship with French by many opponents to the maintenance of French in the Algerian educational system makes it the most suitable choice. There are, however, several arguments in defavour of the implementation of early English instruction in Algeria.

Findings presented in Merzougui (2019) make it apparent that both state primary school teachers and students hold a favorable disposition towards the English language. Some students perceive English as a crucial language and recognise the inevitability of acquiring proficiency in it, influenced by their parents' position regarding its significance. While some teachers do not oppose the integration of English into the curriculum during the 4th/5th year, they contend that the existing program is already burdened with numerous subjects, posing challenges for students. Furthermore, teachers generally express concerns regarding such issues as overcrowded classrooms, inadequate instructional materials, insufficient teacher training, and lack of government support in the education sector. These recurring characteristics are prevalent in the literature pertaining to primary education within the Algerian context.

Countries where the implementation of English has been successful are those with favourable existing conditions. For example, Sweden's success story with English may be due to the proximity between English and Sweddish but more so to the healthy educational (and social) programmes. In many former British colonies, English serves as the primary language of science and technology due to its historical presence, similar to the role of French in Algeria; in countries with no colonial linguistic history, the transition was easier due to well planned and well organised transition and because those countries were less linguistically and culturally tormented.

3.3.1 Educational Challenges

Implementing English in primary education requires an organised framework for the training and qualification of proficient educators in the English language. The quality of instruction may be negatively impacted by the addition of a foreign language in an already complex multilingual and diglossic situation. When considering the use of English in early education in Algeria, one must not lose sight of problems associated with introducing a foreign language to young children. English is a foreign language for Algerians, and as such, it lacks the assets of total immersion that characterises French in Algeria. Many teachers of English do not have the competency in English to speak about the most simple events and matters of everyday life, let alone the scientific and/or academic register required for education. The same applies regarding the requirements for highly qualified teachers of English as a foreign language to children who have had neither linguistic nor cultural exposure to English. If we draw a parallel with the teaching and acquisition of French among pupils and even students, we see that accuracy and even fluency in the French language is also generally gradually receding despite continuous and almost natural exposure. As paradoxically as this might seem, there has been 'a gradual loss of writing competency among a great majority of high school pupils'[translation mine] (Miliani, 2002, p. 3). For those expecting an improvement due to the introduction of English in primary education, it is noteworthy to state that it is not the choice of a language that will solve the problem but the choice of an adequate educational policy which takes into account the linguistic and cultural diversity of the country. Regarding the question of language planning, "Algeria remains one of the small number of countries where language planning is at its most extreme"[...]and where the "state-led reforms have frequently taken sides with lobbies...instead of a resolute approach to one of the greatest challenges the country has to face" (Miliani, 2005, p. 138).

3.3.2 Consequences of Early Implementation of English in Algeria

The question relating to the implementation of early English education extends beyond pedagogical factors to include broader cultural, social, and cognitive considerations. These are briefly described below.

- Language Attrition and Cultural Erosion

While proponents of early English instruction emphasise economic opportunities and international competitiveness, critics caution against national language attrition and cultural erosion. The introduction of English may overshadow Algeria's national languages, Arabic and Tamazight, leading to language shift, erosion, and even loss, hence negatively affecting Algerians' pride in their cultural heritage. Pride in one's cultural and linguistic heritage is crucial for holistic development, so a hegemonous position of English among young learners may disconnect them from their identity and cultural roots. Several instances of language attrition have been observed, particularly in countries such as China and India, where native languages like Mandarin and Tamil are being supplanted by English, which has deeply penetrated the hearts of households (Baldauf et al., 2011, as cited in Hayes, 2014, p.9). Another noteworthy example is the contemporary dominant position of English as a foreign language in Finland, to the extent that it is threatening the status of the mother tongue in Finland in several domains (Leppänen et. al, 2011, p. 168). More than that, with the addition of English to the already existing three languages -Arabic, Berber, and French- the author of this paper has noticed that the phenomenon of pidginisation has reached unprecedented levels among Algerian youths.

Also, instead of teaching an additional language at too early an age, it may make more sense to organise nature classes, where children can play and learn, in their native language, the names of flowers, plants such as *tasselgha*, *timersat*, and *magraman* (lobularia eriocephala Pomel, inula viscosa, and mentha silvestris, respectively, and geographical features such as hills, mountains, lakes, and rivers, or *oued* and *sagya*. Additionally, elderly individuals could play a crucial role in preserving the country's tangible and intangible heritage, including distinguishing between toxic and edible plants, as well as preserving stories, folklore, and music in their national languages.

- Economic, Social, and Educational disparities

Among the negative effects of early English introduction is the economic disadvantage of learners from unfavouraed backgrounds regarding access to English learning resourses, which may lead to further discrepancies and inequalities among students seeking job opportunities. In rendering knowledge and science accessible mainly to those at the top of the social ladder, with little hope of social mobility among the unpriviledged, social disparities are reproduced across generations, with the school perpetuating this inequalilty (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243 ; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977, p.116).

- Mental load on primary schoolchildren

English instruction at an early age may exacerbate the cognitive load already imposed on them by the great number of subjects in the curriculum: Arabic, French, Technology, Natural Sciences, Civic and Islamic Educations, Mathematics, History, and Geography (Third-Year Primary, 2018). This results in challenges for their critical thinking development and diverting attention from other subjects and skills. Worse, it could lead to adverse effects on their mental and physical health. It is true that in countries with healthy educational systems introduce English as early as the 3rd grade, but their linguistic situation is not made problematicx by the presence of an already multilingual context, Algerian early school children already have a repertoire of Arabic, standard and non standard, Berber, and French. The addition of English at this early stage may only add to the confusion in managing linguistic, logistical, and pedagogical challenges.

4. Arguments in Favour of Early English Education in Algeria

Despite some adverse effects, there are, however, arguments in favour of early English education in Algeria : the power of English as an international language, the function of Algeria's national languages, the recession of French in Algeria, and the generalisation of English in Arabic-speaking Countries.

4.1 English as an International Language

One of the aims of countries implementing early English instruction is to integrate their populations into the English-dominated global world of communication, technology, and science. A 2006 ministerial report, conducted under the Ministry of Education and the National Algerian Curriculum Commission , outlined the objectives of teaching English as a second foreign language in these terms:

> The purpose of teaching English is to assist our society in harmoniously integrating into modernity by actively and entirely participating in the linguistic community that uses this language for all types of interactions. Thus, everyone will have the opportunity to access
> science, technology, and universal culture while avoiding the pitfall of acculturation.
> (English Curriculum, 2006, p. 3)

4.2 The Function of Algeria's National Languages

It may be true that neither *Algerian* Arabic nor Berber can currently fulfill educational and scientific needs, but Standard Arabic still serves as an effective medium for education and scientific advancement in Arabic-speaking contexts. Despite a prolific production of literary works in Standard Arabic by outstanding writers such as Wassiny Laaredj, Tahar Ouattar, Rachid Boudjedra and many others, Algeria's national languages, Algerian Arabic and Tamazight, have not been sufficiently promoted and standardised. They have remained confined to everyday communication, folk literature, poetry, and music. Nonetheless, Standard Arabic is the language of instruction for all subjects at primary and secondary levels and to a great extent at tertiary level in the humanities, in particular. Standard Arabic is also used in subjects such as natural sciences, history, philosophy, literature, and religious studies. As the language of the Quran and classical Islamic scholarship, it has a deep cultural and historical significance that underpins much of the intellectual tradition in and out of the Arab world.

4.3 The Recession of the French Language

The recession of the French language and its replacement by English and the more positive attitudes by a number of the schoolchildren and their parents towards English will certainly make the implementation of the latter much easier. This being said, refraining from denigrating the French language and recognizing its significant contribution to nurturing an intellectual elite in Algeria is crucial for several reasons. Algerian francophone intellectuals and writers such as Assia Djebbar, Kateb Yacine, and Mohamed Dib, among numerous figures, who produced outstanding works in the French language and often advocated for Algerian independence and cultural identity, also engaged with a wide range of international issues such as countries' right for autonomy and independence.

4.4 English in Arabic-speaking Countries

English has been successfully implemented in Arabic-speaking contexts, serving as the primary language of instruction. Aided by governmental support, high quality education relying on the most modern methodologies and logistical means, as well as international collaboration with English-speaking institutions, the Gulf States have attracted not only huge economic benefits but also 'the rise of female attainment' (Ridge, 2014, p. 1). Nevertheless, these countries do not face the multilingual complexity observed in Algeria.

5. For a Less Problematic Implementation of Early English Instruction in Algeria

The successful execution of early English education in Algeria requires the observance of practical yet rigorous conditions relating to educational resources and logistical means.

5.1 Educational Resources

Access to a vast range of educational resources in English, including books, online courses, and teaching, learning, and research materials, can significantly enrich the learning experience for Algerian students. English language resources can supplement the curriculum, providing diverse perspectives and up-to-date information. Also, of paramount importance is the availability of well-trained educators, particularly those specialised in *early* foreign language education. Giannikas (2014) insists that 'language educators need to be aware of the suitable teaching methodologies and have a good command of the langage to feel comfortable within the classroom, and positively affect their learners (p. 23) because 'a teacher who lacks confidence and fluency in the language is unlikely to be able to set up the occasions for genuine interaction (Giannikas 2013, as cited in Giannikas, 2014, p. 23).

5.2 Logistical means

Ensuring the availability of equipment and technological resources appears to be the primary logistical challenge in early education, particularly due to the necessity for young learners to engage with non-written and unconventional teaching methodologies. Computers and data projectors are deemed more suitable for young learners than traditional writing methods. For instance, during their visits to primary schools, the author of this paper encountered dedicated and energetic teachers and school administrators, who, nonetheless, deplored the lack of equipment and logistical means in classrooms.

5.3 Promotion and Maintenance of National Languages

Perhaps the most crucial factor for children in recovering or maintaining pride in their mother tongue(s) would be for educators to value the heritage languages and not discard their use or downtone their importance under the only English use traditional methodologies. For this reason, it may be suggested that occasional (and indeed indispensable) reminders for mother tongues in class would serve as a symbolic appreciation of linguistic and cultural identity. This may be achieved by creating teaching and learning materials and resources reflecting the heritage culture.

Conclusion

The addition of a foreign language such as English brings undeniable benefits to Algeria, fostering global connectivity, scientific progress, and cultural exchange. However, its implementation at an early age represents several challenges, namely the attrition of national languages, the aggravation of social disparities, and a cognitive load on young schoolchildren. Implementing early English education in Algeria requires a number of practical recommendations. First and foremost is a well-developed, thorough, and effective language planning policy specifically designed for the Algerian context. This policy should outline clear objectives and methodologies for integrating English into its educational curriculum. Also, educators face the challenge of balancing the introduction of English with the preservation and promotion of national languages and cultural identity. They must, therefore, ensure that English instruction intensifies rather than diminishes the development of critical thinking, creativity, and a strong sense of Algerian heritage among young learners. Adequate resources are equally essential, subsuming not only teaching materials but also technological and logistical means to facilitate learning. Furthermore, the training and professional development of teachers play a central role. Educators must be equipped not only with proficiency in English but also with pedagogical skills suited to *early* childhood education. Continuous support and training programs are necessary to maintain high teaching standards and adapt to evolving educational needs. Sustained commitment from educational authorities and stakeholders is another indispensable factor. Long-term investment in early English education demonstrates a dedication to preparing Algerian youth for global citizenship and competitiveness. If these challenges are anticipated, Algeria can make the most of the full potential of early English education to empower its future generations in an increasingly interconnected knowledge-driven world.

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