

EXPLORING TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF EMI AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL: PATHWAYS TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION IN ALGERIA

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Abstract: Algerian universities have recently adopted English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in their educational context, driven by globalization, the pursuit of international academic alignment, and the increasing demand for English proficiency in the global job market. Although the adoption of EMI is steadily progressing, it has also given rise to a number of significant challenges. The present study seeks to explore university instructors' overall perceptions of EMI implementation in their institutions, aiming to support teachers' professional growth and foster an effective and optimal educational atmosphere within EMI contexts. To achieve this goal, a qualitative study was undertaken during the academic year 2024/2025 using a semi-structured interview. The interview was administered to 17 teachers from the departments of Computer Science, Architecture, Chemistry, Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Economics, and Psychology at Biskra University. Rigorous thematic analysis of the gathered data yielded valuable insights into the participants' views and practices, culminating in the identification of four major categories: teachers' perceptions towards EMI implementation, associated challenges and advantages, effects on students' learning outcomes and academic performance, and measures to mitigate identified challenges. Although teachers acknowledged the potential of EMI to improve educational quality, enhance language proficiency, and promote global competitiveness, they have also identified a set of significant challenges, including language barriers, pedagogical adaptation, and insufficient institutional support. To effectively address and mitigate these challenges, a set of measures was recommended to Algerian policymakers and stakeholders including continuous professional development programs, tailored English language support, targeted pedagogical training, access to digital resources, and institutional mentorship and mobility programs. These measures are essential for overcoming current challenges and promoting the effective integration of EMI in Algerian higher education.

Keywords: English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI); challenges; higher education; language proficiency; professional development

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1. Introduction

English enjoys a prominent global status across various fields and is deemed to be the language of communication, knowledge, and scientific advancement, as well as a crucial gateway to global affairs, including economics and politics. Algeria has recognized the necessity of aligning its educational system to the new international educational standards as a response to the widespread use of English worldwide. Teaching English in Algeria has undergone several phases due to the complexity of the Algerian linguistic landscape. Alongside Arabic, French has historically held a superior status due to the legacy of colonization and substituted Arabic in many areas for an extended period. The Algerian language planning policy has experienced substantial reforms in response to contemporary global demands. Integrating English into the educational system, from the primary through the tertiary level, now appears indispensable for equipping Algerian students with the essential skills needed to engage with international opportunities and to succeed in an increasingly globalized world.

Many instructors from various departments at Algerian universities have begun learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in preparation for teaching their subjects through English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). Initially, the lecturers attended dedicated EFL classes taught by EFL teachers from the English language departments. Later, they joined regular English language classes alongside first-year students in the departments of English. While many welcomed the opportunity and deemed it to be a gateway to global competitiveness, others found the experience challenging and demanding. Hence, the current study was undertaken to explore university lecturers' perceptions towards the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) aiming to unveil the current EMI situation at Biskra University to gain insights into the needs and challenges facing both teachers and students.

This study is significant as it provides an in-depth understanding of university instructors' experiences, perceptions, and challenges concerning the implementation of EMI in Algerian higher education. By examining both the benefits and obstacles of EMI adoption, the research offers insights that can guide policymakers, university administrators, and instructors in developing effective strategies for language policy, professional development and instructional support. The findings have the potential to enhance teaching quality, improve students' academic performance and language proficiency, and strengthen Algeria's integration into the global academic and professional landscape. Ultimately, this study contributes to informed decision-making for the sustained and effective implementation of EMI across Algerian universities. Building on this aim and significance, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do university instructors perceive the integration of EMI in teaching?
2. What challenges do they encounter when implementing EMI in their institutions?
3. What perceived benefits do they associate with the use of EMI?
4. What solution do they suggest to overcome the encountered challenges?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Algerian Language Policy Shift

The Algerian linguistic landscape has long been characterized by its complexity. Prior to French colonization, the use of Arabic and Tamazight, in its various regional forms, was widespread across Algerian society. Arabic, as the language of the Qur'an, held a particularly significant role; it was the primary medium of instruction in religious settings such as

mosques and *kuttāb* (Qur'anic schools) (Miliani, 2012), where learners studied the Qur'an and Islamic *sharī'a* (law).

The French colonization of Algeria, which lasted for 132 years beginning in 1830, sought to suppress the use of Arabic and replace it with French. French was systematically introduced as the language of instruction in schools and became dominant in administrative, legal, and political domains. The French colonial administration aimed to erode Algerian national identity by marginalizing the Arabic language, particularly in educational settings. This policy was part of a broader effort to distance Algerians from their Muslim cultural and religious heritage.

Following independence, the influence of the French language diminished considerably, prompting strong demands for the adoption of Arabic through a movement known as Arabization as a response to the colonial legacy. The Algerian government implemented a policy of Arabization, which mandated the exclusive use of Arabic as the language of instruction in schools (Mostari, 2004). Consequently, French was restricted and replaced with Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) by 1974. Nevertheless, French continued to dominate several functional domains, especially in industry, economy, and written media.

The implementation of Arabization was regarded as a hasty decision that lacked vigilant scientific planning and soon it became a source of tension among Algerians. While many favoured French as the language of education, others viewed Arabic as a major symbol of national identity. However, the dominance of Arabic could not be sustained, and numerous issues began to emerge. This policy faced numerous challenges and was ultimately deemed unsuccessful in achieving its intended goals.

The educational system faced major challenges, resulting in considerable shortcomings. Algerian educators eventually recognized that foreign language instruction was essential and that there was an urgent need to reform and enhance the educational system as a whole. There were increasing demands urging the Algerian government to implement substantial measures in support of bilingualism. As a result, the Algerian government initiated a comprehensive schooling reform.

Given that French was widely imposed to subdue Algerians' native language and culture, it had been perceived as detrimental. Thus, its use in education after independence was not welcomed. English, on the other hand, was not allied to colonization and acquired a better position by Algerians. The incorporation of English into the Algerian educational system was not only a mere response to French colonial dominance, yet, a compelled and deliberate move towards the integration into the international community. English, the global language of communication, served as a vehicle for modernization, and a gateway to development across various sectors (Bendahmane, 2021).

By 1976, English was introduced as a compulsory subject in both middle and secondary school curricula. Initially, it was taught starting from the third year of middle school using textbooks designed for teaching English in France, but these were later replaced with materials imported from England. In 1993, efforts were made to strengthen foreign language instruction at an early age to foster foreign language learning. Primary school pupils had the opportunity to choose between French and English as a compulsory foreign language. During this period of four years (from 1993 to 1997), a proportion of 0.33% and 1.28% of pupils chose English, an amount that was considered relatively insignificant (Benrabah, 2013).

Foreign language instruction continued to occupy a central role in Algeria's educational reforms. In 1999 and 2000, the Algerian government launched a series of revisions to its educational policies, conducting a thorough evaluation of the curriculum with a strong focus on enhancing the integration of foreign languages. A major national reform was introduced in 2002, aiming to reintroduce French as a foreign language beginning in the second grade of primary school. One of the notable changes brought by this reform was the advancement of English instruction to the sixth grade (intermediate level), two years earlier than before. Furthermore, certain subjects, such as Science and Mathematics, were partially taught in French (Lakhal-Ayat, 2008). In higher education, Arabic was used as the main language of instruction in social sciences and humanities, while French remained the dominant language in technical and scientific disciplines. English, on the other hand, was primarily used for specialized courses within English departments and increasingly served as the language of academic research (Benabdallah, 2023) and publication.

More recently, particularly in 2023, Algeria underwent another significant educational reform making English an officially mandatory subject in primary schools, starting from the third grade, and a medium of instruction at the tertiary level. This policy shift aims to replace French with English across various university disciplines. In support of this initiative, the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has reinforced the adoption of English as an official medium of instruction in Algerian universities. The Algerian government has intensified its efforts to promote the use of English within academic fields, aiming to align Algerian academia with international standards and practices.

2.2. English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI)

English as a medium of instruction (EMI) refers to the use of English as the language of instruction in the context where it is not students' first language (Macaro et al., 2018). In other words, English is used to teach the subject content instead of students' mother tongue. Many scholars attempted to define EMI and emphasized that it involves the use of English as a medium to teach academic content in situations wherein English is neither the teachers' nor the students' first language (Cummins & Davison, 2007; Dearden, 2014; Jenkins, 2014). From a broader perspective, EMI is often implemented as a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing the overall quality of education, increasing employability, boosting academic publications, and promoting international academic exchange, all of which contribute to strengthening the institution's international profile (Tsuo & Kao, 2017).

The course content is usually presented at university level where a high or appropriate level of language proficiency is required for both instructors and students. With regard to content, EMI is sometimes used interchangeably with Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL); though, these terms are different.

CBI can be defined as a teaching method wherein language is learnt/ taught through learning/teaching other content, such as history, science, or math (Genesee & Lindholm-Leary, 2013). In other words, CBI aims to facilitate language acquisition and improve language skills by integrating language teaching with content instruction because people learn language better when they use this language in learning new information (Brinton et al., 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CLIL, on the other hand, is an approach that aims chiefly to develop non-language students' both content knowledge and language proficiency by teaching them language and content simultaneously (Dalton-Puffer et al., 2010).

Despite the fact that CBI, CLIL, and EMI share certain similarities, they differ significantly in their primary focus and in the roles assigned to language and content. In CBI, content serves primarily as a vehicle for language learning; the main goal is language acquisition, and students are assessed based on their language performance. In CLIL, a

balanced emphasis is placed on both language and content with students assessed on language proficiency along with subject knowledge. In EMI, content is central. The focus is on developing subject knowledge and students are assessed on subject content only (Brown & Bradford, 2017). However, this does not entail that an EMI course or program may not support language skills, but its primary focus is on content rather than language itself. For that, EMI courses may have explicit or implicit aims of equipping students with the academic skills needed to function effectively in international contexts, using English as a key component of this skill-set (Bradford, 2015).

In this context, assigning language learning an explicit or implicit role in EMI courses is determined by the specific conditions under which the course is designed. Associating language learning outcomes alongside with content knowledge in EMI program is shaped by institutional language policies, disciplinary norms, and pedagogical practices. The extent to which both content and language development are prioritized depends mainly on contextual factors that encompass EMI instructor's personal attitudes and the specific characteristics of the academic discipline (Brown & Bradford, 2017). As a result, EMI practices can range from purely content-driven approaches to more integrated models that acknowledge the language-related needs of learners.

2.3. Benefits and Drawbacks

Embracing EMI at tertiary level is associated with a number of beneficial outcomes for institutions, instructors, and students. EMI is often regarded as an essential component of higher education internationalization strategies, serving various institutional objectives. It supports the integration of international programs that would promote partnerships with foreign universities, and thus expanding global academic networks and fostering collaborative research initiatives (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018). This, in turn, enhances the institution's attractiveness to both local and international students, creating mobility opportunities and increasing enrolment competitiveness.

Moreover, EMI is also favoured as it makes the academic environment more interconnected because it enables researchers to participate in international research and cross-border academic projects by providing larger access to global teaching and learning resources. Students believe that EMI programs promote their chances of securing employment and improving their social status (Briggs et al., 2018; Soe et al., 2020) as it enhances competitiveness in international job markets (Griffiths, 2013; Wilkinson & Zegers, 2019). In addition to that, EMI promotes cultural diversity, intercultural competence, and the development of English language proficiency as it encourages cross-cultural skills among students and faculty which is increasingly valued in globalized academic and professional environments (Coleman, 2006; Wilkinson & Zegers, 2019). Generally, this would help to elevate the institution's global profile, reputation, and visibility (Coleman, 2006; Margić & Vodopija-Krstanović, 2015).

While the advantages of EMI are widely acknowledged, its challenges and limitations are often less visible. In fact, the implementation of EMI in higher education is accompanied by a range of complex and often foreseeable challenges. It should be noted that, EMI entails more than a mere shift in the language of instruction; it, rather, introduces systematic changes that necessitate substantial adjustments from teachers, students, and administrators throughout the educational system (Li, 2019).

Accordingly, both instructors and students encounter various challenges in EMI programs. Key issues include insufficient English language proficiency among both lecturers and students, which can hinder effective teaching and learning. Moreover, lack of motivation, self-confidence along with increased anxiety and unwillingness to engage in instruction or

study through a foreign language further complicates the learning environment (Dioz et al., 2011; Hu & Lei, 2014).

Instructors are often assigned increased workloads that hinder them from dedicating enough time for preparation, while institutions may struggle with organizational, administrative, and resources limitations. The scarcity of qualified subject experts capable of teaching in English, as well as the limited availability of native or proficient English speaking instructors may compromise instructional quality (Dearden, 2014; Macaro et al., 2018).

In addition to that, institutions often find it difficult to find qualified subject experts willing or able to teach in English, or native English-speaking instructors who are keen to adapt to non-native learners. Hence, in such circumstances, the quality of instruction may be compromised. Furthermore, concerns over the availability of teaching materials in English, fair assessment practices, and threats to cultural identity and native languages all represent significant barriers. These challenges are compounded by limited financial resources and institutional capacity (Coleman, 2006; Gürtler & Kronewald, 2015).

A substantial body of international EMI research has documented recurring challenges across diverse higher-education contexts, showing that many of the difficulties faced by institutions are not unique but widely shared including inadequate teacher training, low proficiency levels, insufficient resources, and misalignment between policy expectations and classroom realities (Dearden, 2014; Galloway & Rose, 2021; Macaro, et al., 2018). By comparing these findings with the Algerian context, it becomes evident that Algeria's challenges are not unique but part of a broader pattern observed in rapidly expanding EMI systems worldwide. In the Algerian context, these challenges are particularly salient due to the rapid top-down introduction of EMI policies, the coexistence of multiple languages, namely, Arabic and French in higher education, and varying levels of English proficiency among students and instructors. Consequently, Algerian universities may experience both the potential benefits and constraints of EMI in ways that are influenced by historical, sociopolitical and institutional factors.

2.4. EMI Current Situation at the Tertiary Level

The growing interest in adopting EMI at the tertiary level is principally driven by the goal of internationalization. Institutions aim to attract international students, enhance their global status, rankings, reputation, and visibility, as well as increase local students' opportunities to pursue studies abroad and/or improve their employment prospects.

The Algerian policy shift initiated in 2023 primarily aimed to replace French with English in response to contemporary international demands. This move was intended to align higher education with global job market requirements and enhance the country's international competitiveness. The adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in Algerian higher education reflects a growing awareness of the need to modernize instructional programs and ally them with global academic trends.

This recent shift toward English reflects broader international trends in non-Anglophone countries across Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, where universities increasingly adopt EMI to strengthen global visibility, attract international students, and enhance competitiveness (Dearden, 2014; Wächter & Maiworm, 2014). While many nations introduced EMI gradually, motivated by institutional internationalization, globalization of higher education, and pressures for improving global rankings, Algeria's transition is distinctive due to its rapid, top-down policy implementation, instigated primarily by the state rather than by gradual institutional initiatives (Amara, 2025; Mansouri, 2025). Unlike contexts such as the Netherlands, China, or Gulf states, where EMI emerged through a

combination of institutional and governmental support, Algeria represents a state-led linguistic and educational shift with minimal preparatory phases, reflecting the postcolonial, multilingual, and socio-politically complex nature of its higher education system (Malki, 2025; Tobbi, 2025). This distinctive path makes Algeria an important case in the global EMI literature, illustrating how large-scale language-in-education reforms are enacted in response to internationalization imperatives while contending with historical, cultural, and linguistic legacies.

Although many teachers and students still lack proficiency in English and have not yet acquired the necessary skills for effective communication and knowledge exchange, the decision to adopt English has been widely welcomed. This is largely due to its status as a global lingua franca and its prominent role as the international language of scientific research, technological advancement, and business. Current EMI research similarly identifies proficiency gaps as one of the most common obstacles in newly adopting contexts, yet highlights that stakeholders often support EMI because of the perceived economic and academic benefits associated with English (Lei & Hu, 2014).

Stakeholders believe that the use of English will foster scientific progress among instructors and students, as it connects Algerian universities with international institutions through academic research, scientific publications, and, thus intellectual cooperation and educational mobility which in turn would promote the academic reputation of Algerian universities. This reflects broader evidence that EMI can enhance research visibility and facilitate participation in international academic networks (Jenkins, 2014)

However, the shift from French and/or Arabic to English is challenging for both lecturers and students. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research provided universities with a compulsory program aiming to strengthen the use of English during the academic year 2023/2024. Serious measures have been undertaken to prepare, train and enrol instructors in English language to improve their proficiency level. Lecturers, newly recruited teachers, and doctoral students participated in a mandatory training after being assessed in the four language skills. The training aimed primarily to improve their level in English to reach higher levels equivalent mainly to B2 or C1 (Ben-Yelles, 2024). Similar large-scale language training initiatives have been reported in other EMI-introducing systems, where teacher proficiency is recognized as a prerequisite for effective EMI delivery (Lasagabaster, 2022).

The operation took place initially at the intensive teaching language centres (Centre d'Enseignement Intensif des Langues 'CEIL'). Furthermore, specialized training courses will be delivered online via digital platform developed, particularly in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). According to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 30,000 instructors have been trained in English and are now prepared to teach using English as the medium of instruction (Ben-Yelles, 2024). Following this initiative, the Ministry encouraged lecturers to enrol in bachelor's degree programs in English, and many teachers have chosen to pursue studies in English departments to further enhance their language proficiency. This multi-level training model reflects a pattern noted in international EMI reforms, whereby governments invest simultaneously in teacher training, digital support systems, and long term academic development (Rose et al., 2019).

Although certain challenges continue to arise, such as lack of sufficient technological resources and appliances needed for the effective implementation of EMI in classrooms, and the pressing need to produce high-quality English-language instructional materials aligned with international academic standards and practices. Nevertheless, Algerian higher education institutions continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to integrating English as a medium

of instruction, driven by a strategic vision to enhance global academic engagement and improve long-term educational outcomes.

These challenges mirror those identified in EMI research globally, which consistently highlights resource limitations, material development, and technological resources as key barriers in early phases of EMI implementation (Galloway, 2017). By situating these issues within the broader EMI literature, it becomes evident that Algeria's experience aligns with wider international patterns while also reflecting local linguistic and institutional specificities.

At the same time, Algeria's rapid transition to EMI reflects a pattern observed in other non-Anglophone systems where governments introduce EMI as part of broader modernization and internationalization agenda. In such contexts, EMI reforms often outpace institutional readiness, resulting in persistent gaps in teacher training, resource availability, and pedagogical support (Erling et al., 2017; Probyn, 2018). These global trends suggest that when EMI implementation is accelerated through top-down policy decisions, universities commonly encounter heightened pressures to adapt despite limited resources and linguistic preparation. Situating Algeria within this broader landscape emphasizes the need to examine how instructors negotiate EMI expectations amid evolving policy demands and constrained institutional capacities.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach to investigate teachers' perceptions of the implementation of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in higher education. This approach was deemed appropriate, as it allowed for a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences. In order to attain insightful information, the study adopted an exploratory descriptive research design, which enabled an in-depth exploration and detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation (Brink & Wood, 1998). The choice of this design was guided by the study's attempt to uncover instructors' perceptions towards the implementation of EMI at university, their professional development needs, the challenges they encounter, and the benefits they associate with the use of EMI aiming to support teachers' professional growth and foster an optimal educational atmosphere. The design, therefore, enabled the researcher to capture teachers' lived experiences and context-specific interpretations during a period of active transition.

3.2. Participants and Setting

The study was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2024/2025, at Biskra University. Lecturers were selected through purposive sampling to participate in interviews. Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants who were expected to provide useful and relevant information aligned with the aims and objectives of the study (Kelly, 2010). This strategy is particularly appropriate when certain individuals are believed to hold diverse and meaningful perspectives on the issues under investigation and should therefore be deliberately included in the sample (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014). Therefore, a total of 17 teachers, 12 male and 5 female, were selected from 7 different disciplines to ensure a diversity of opinions and a range of experiences. Specifically, they were affiliated with the departments of Computer Science, Architecture, Chemistry, Biology, Mechanical Engineering, Economics, and Psychology, where the primary language of instruction is either Arabic and/or French, with English being introduced gradually at varying levels.

The participants were purposefully selected based on their experience integrating English into teaching their subject content at Biskra University, ensuring their familiarity with EMI practices and contexts. Their teaching experience ranged from 5 to 19 years, with

varying academic ranks, including professors, assistant professors, and associate professors. In addition to their teaching responsibilities, the majority of participants were enrolled in English language classes offered by the Department of English as part of the ministry initiative aimed at improving English proficiency among academic staff.

Ethical procedures were rigorously observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and written consent was obtained prior to each interview. All interviewees were informed of the study's purpose, their right to withdraw at any point, and the ways in which their data would be used. To protect participants' privacy, pseudonyms were used and all identifiable information was removed during transcription. Data were securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. These measures ensured that the study was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for qualitative research.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

The study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews to address the previously stated research questions. These interviews were carried out in person, and lasted approximately 40 to 50 minutes. The interview prompts explored four key themes including: teachers' perceptions of the implementation of EMI in higher education, the challenges they encountered along with the benefits associated with integrating EMI in teaching subject content, the impact of using EMI on students' learning and achievement, and the measures proposed to effectively address and mitigate these challenges.

The interview protocol consisted of an introductory briefing, warm-up questions, core thematic questions, and follow-up probes designed to elicit depth, clarification, and concrete examples. The same guiding questions were used for all participants to ensure consistency, while allowing flexibility for spontaneous elaboration. Pilot testing with two instructors helped refine question clarity, sequencing, and duration.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Subsequently, they were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis which allowed the researcher to identify key issues, analyze, report recurrent patterns (or themes) and provide a comprehensive interpretation of the participants' responses. The thematic analysis followed the six-step framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of transcripts; (2) systematic generation of initial codes across the entire data set; (3) organisation of codes into potential themes; (4) review and refinement of themes to ensure internal coherence and alignment with coded extracts; (5) definition and naming of themes to capture their essence; and (6) production of the final analytical narrative supported by illustrative quotations.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Teachers' Perceptions towards EMI Implementation in their Institutions

Teachers were asked about their perceptions and overall attitudes regarding the implementation of EMI in higher education in general and their institutions in particular. They expressed significant views on the usefulness of using EMI in teaching subject content. All the participants (17 teachers) emphasized the significance of connecting with the global academic community and becoming part of the internationally successful scholarly landscape. Teacher 4 (Mechanical Engineering) stated:

"Teaching in English is crucial because most of the research in my field is conducted and published in English. Without it, students are cut off from the global academic conversation".

Similarly, teacher 17 (Computer Science) emphasized:

“English opens doors to international conferences and journals. It is a gateway to collaboration with researchers worldwide”

The majority of participants reported that English serves as the global language of communication, particularly in academia, where most scientific publications are produced in English, making it the primary medium for research dissemination, knowledge exchange, and academic advancement. Teacher 2 (Chemistry) claimed:

“Even though I sometimes struggle with my own English, I see its value. My students need English to read the latest journal articles and stay updated”

These perceptions align with findings from Airey (2011) and Kuteeva and Airey (2014) who reported that lecturers in STEM disciplines across Europe viewed EMI as essential for maintaining research competitiveness and engaging with international academic communities. All teachers acknowledged the importance of English as an international language and its potential to enhance university internationalization; however, they expressed reservations about their own readiness to begin teaching in English. Five teachers described their English proficiency as only moderate, and explicitly, admitted feeling anxious and worried to use it in teaching, suggesting a generally low level of preparedness for EMI implementation. Lecturer 9 (Architecture) admitted:

“I understand the importance of EMI, but I sometimes feel insecure explaining complex concepts in English. I worry students might not fully understand me”.

Teacher 14 (Economics) added:

“When I lecture in English, I need more preparation time. It’s stressful, but I see it as necessary for future opportunities”.

Although the participants demonstrated a notable openness to adjust their instructional methods to incorporate EMI, they admitted that prior to the Ministry’s decision; the use of EMI had not been a significant consideration in their teaching plans. Drawing on their classroom experience, they also observed that students face substantial difficulties with English, which further complicates the effective implementation of EMI.

These statements reflect findings observed in other studies from Algeria, where teachers’ attitudes toward EMI are generally positive, yet their readiness to implement it effectively is constrained by language proficiency gaps and limited prior training. For example, Benhamlaoui and Benzadri (2024) found that while Algerian university teachers support the adoption of EMI, many reported feeling insufficiently prepared to teach in English, highlighting a gap between policy expectations and actual teacher readiness. Similarly, Boukhetala et al. (2024) emphasized that subject-specific instructors often receive limited training and support, which affects their ability to integrate EMI into their teaching practices successfully. These findings resonate with international studies as well; Airey (2011) noted that Swedish university lecturers valued teaching in English but experienced challenges due to insufficient preparation and lack of discipline-specific language support. Likewise, Bradford (2016) and Dalziel et al. (2016) reported that teacher readiness and access to resources are critical factors influencing EMI implementation in Japan and Italy, respectively.

The similarities between the Algerian context and other international experiences suggest that challenges in teacher preparedness are not unique but reflect broader observations in EMI adoption globally. Differences in outcomes, however, may be influenced by the rapid adoption of EMI in Algeria, where implementation often precedes extensive professional development, contrasting with more gradual, institution-led EMI integration observed in

European contexts as noted by Airey (2011) and Dalziel et al., (2016). This highlights the importance of considering both contextual factors and teacher-specific needs when designing EMI policies and training programs, ensuring alignment between institutional goals and instructors' capacities.

Nine teachers lecturing in the departments of Computer Science (3 teachers), Mechanical Engineering (3 teachers), Chemistry (1 teacher), and Biology (2 teachers) emphasized that using EMI is essential in their fields, viewing it as a key factor for staying connected to progressive global scientific research and enhancing international competitiveness. For example, teacher 12 (Biology) highlighted:

"If my students don't learn in English, they will miss out on key scientific advances. This affects their academic growth and job prospects".

In the same respect, teacher 5 (Mechanical Engineering) stated:

"Learning in English prepares students for postgraduate studies abroad. It's not just a language; it's a skill tied directly to their careers".

Mastering English in these disciplines provides students with access to the latest professional and academic developments, prepares them for pursuing studies at international universities, and significantly enhances their employment prospects in the global job market. These views support findings by Galloway (2017) and Dalziel et al. (2016), who noted the predominance of English in high-impact journals and the importance of EMI for students' professional path. Therefore, for students to remain current with developments in their disciplines, they should learn in English.

Participant teachers from the fields of Architecture (2), Economics (4), and Psychology (2) also highlighted the benefits of implementing EMI in their disciplines. Nonetheless, their emphasis was not on employment outcomes. Instead, they accentuated the role of English as a lingua franca that enables Algerian academics, both teachers and students, to connect with the international scholarly community to share their ideas and research at international academic events. Their focus was primarily on the advantages of conducting and publishing research in English, which they viewed as essential for academic visibility and contribution on a global scale. Thus, EMI would facilitate publishing in high-ranking journals which would contribute to their academic development. Teacher 3 (Economics) explained:

"Using English allows us to publish internationally and participate in global debates. It increases our academic recognition".

In the same vein, teacher 15 (Psychology) reflected:

"English is a tool for sharing our research at conferences. It allows Algerian academics to be visible and contribute to knowledge production".

These findings show that EMI is valued for its contribution to scholarly visibility and international engagement, particularly in non-STEM disciplines, which echo results of previously undertaken research studies (Amara & Hanifi, 2024; Benmansour-Benyelles, 2025). The difference in emphasis across disciplines may be attributed to the immediate applicability of English in accessing cutting-edge research in STEM fields versus its strategic role for networking and publication in social sciences and humanities (Kuteeva & Airey, 2014; Macaro, 2018).

Findings revealed an overall positive perception and attitudes towards EMI among participants. All teachers acknowledged the growing role of English in academia and emphasized its critical importance in advancing their research careers. This perception

appears to be shared globally, as numerous studies from various contexts have reported positive attitudes toward EMI within the academic community (Cots & Guerrettaz, 2012; Dornyei & Csizér, 2002; Hariyanti, 2023; Panthee, 2020).

The variation in respondents' perceptions toward EMI implementation appears to stem from the underlying differences in their epistemological beliefs, particularly concerning academic advancement, pedagogical approaches, teaching practices, language proficiency levels, and the importance of teacher training. Teacher 10 (Architecture) explained:

"I think EMI is valuable, but without targeted training, we can't fully implement it effectively".

Similarly, teacher 16 (Psychology) added:

"Support from the university is crucial. Otherwise, teachers' willingness may not translate into successful teaching".

These insights align with Benmansour-Benyelles (2025) and Kaid and Labeled (2025), who emphasize the importance of teacher training in EMI adoption. The findings revealed overall positive attitudes toward EMI among participants, with English widely recognized as essential for academic advancement, as highlighted by teacher 2 (Chemistry):

"Despite challenges, EMI is the future. Our students cannot compete internationally without it".

Comparisons with prior studies suggest that while Algerian teachers share global awareness of EMI's benefits, the rapid implementation in Algeria, combined with varied English proficiency and limited institutional support, creates unique contextual challenges not observed in countries with more gradual EMI adoption (Amara, 2025). The divergent perspectives highlight the necessity for empirical research following EMI implementation in order to assess its practical impact and to address the uncertainties surrounding its effectiveness. Understanding teachers' perceptions, beliefs and attitudes play a key factor influencing the overall success of its implementation as a language policy (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2009).

4.2. The Challenges and Benefits

Interviewed teachers agreed on the numerous potential advantages of implementing EMI such as greater access to international academic resources, enhanced prospects for global academic collaboration, and openness to worldwide scientific advancement. Although all participants held positive perceptions and attitudes towards EMI, the majority expressed concerns about several challenges associated with its implementation. They can be categorized into these main areas: language proficiency, teacher-related challenges, student-related difficulties and institutional barriers.

Despite their positive perceptions, most participants (14 teachers) highlighted challenges, particularly linked to language proficiency, regarding it as the primary impediment to the successful adoption of EMI. Several interviewees (8 teachers) reported experiencing difficulties in delivering lectures, engaging in discussions, and communicating effectively in English. Some expressed even feelings of anxiety or fear about making mistakes while speaking in English. Additionally, three participants admitted that they had never attempted teaching in English due to their limited language proficiency. For example, teacher 6 (Economics) claimed:

“I often struggle to explain complex concepts in English. I feel anxious about making mistakes, and sometimes I revert to Arabic or French to ensure clarity.”

Additionally, teacher 2 (Chemistry) admitted:

“I have never taught fully in English. My background is in French, so I feel more comfortable lecturing in French rather than risking misunderstandings in English.”

Teacher 8 (Mechanical Engineering) explained:

“Even when I try to teach in English, I notice that students struggle with the terminology, and I end up simplifying or switching languages to ensure understanding”

The respondents, rather, preferred using French only because they felt more linguistically secure when lecturing or when discussing with students. They attributed this preference to their own educational and professional background, which had been predominantly conducted in French. Despite their awareness of the importance of English and their expressed positive attitudes towards EMI, they still found the transition to English challenging because it was difficult for them to shift from Arabic and/or French to English. The results revealed that EMI implementation is often hampered by the linguistic competence of teachers and students. The majority of respondents noted that their English language proficiency might not be adequate to start teaching entirely in English which negatively affected their instructional delivery as well as students' comprehension and academic performance. They reported feeling unprepared to teach in English, especially in subjects requiring specialized vocabulary and academic discourse.

Such observations are consistent with global EMI studies (Hu & Lei, 2014; Wilkinson & Gabriel, 2021) and local Algerian research (Ghouali & Haddam-Bouabdallah, 2024; Touahmia & Bakar, 2024), confirming that language proficiency remains a significant factor affecting both teaching and learning. However, the degree of challenge differs. In Algeria, rapid policy implementation and heterogeneous English proficiency levels amplify these issues compared to contexts where EMI has been gradually integrated over years

Such difficulties align with the findings of Doiz et al. (2013), who emphasized that effective EMI requires the integration of disciplinary, pedagogical, and language competence. Likewise, Kuteeva and Airey (2014) demonstrated that teachers' linguistic limitations directly influence instructional decisions, disciplinary communication, and the overall quality of student learning. The Algerian case appears particularly complex due to time limitation for preparatory teacher training (Amara, 2025; Mansouri, 2025).

Beyond language proficiency, respondents also reported difficulties tied to pedagogical practices that are essential for the successful implementation of EMI in institutions. A significant number of teachers were not sufficiently trained in EMI-specific instructional strategies, which hampered their ability to engage students effectively and to integrate subject content with language learning. Teachers claimed that existing training programs were inadequate for developing the necessary language skills to effectively shift to EMI. This indicated that the quality of the supporting training needs to be ameliorated to effectively cater for their different needs, including discipline specificity/particularity; individual proficiency level, effective EMI teaching methods and strategies (Benmansour-Benyelles, 2025; Boukhetala et al., 2024). Lack of pedagogical preparation was also reported to hinder effective EMI delivery on the international level (Bradford, 2016; Dalziel et al., 2016). Teachers who lack formal training in EMI-specific pedagogical techniques tend to rely on traditional methods that may not suit an English-mediated context. Correspondingly, more specialized training programs need to be developed. These may encompass guiding workshops, tailored support mechanisms, focused language classes, discipline-specific

language courses, ongoing professional development programs, high-quality language resources, and effective pedagogical materials. In this vein, teachers emphasized the need for enriched pedagogical practices and innovative instructional methods. As argued by teacher 13 (Computer Science):

“To engage students fully in English, I think I must change my teaching style completely using more examples, visual aids, and interactive methods. It’s not just about speaking English; it’s about teaching differently.”

Although teachers might possess adequate language proficiency, they were still expected to master additional critical components, including curriculum design, course content, difficulty level, subject-specific terminology, expert knowledge, teaching methods, and instructional goals. As emphasized by Doiz et al. (2013), effective EMI delivery requires the integration of disciplinary, pedagogical, and language competences. Language proficiency remained a challenging aspect for both teachers and students which might lead to other subsequent obstacles. The findings highlighted the importance of enriching teachers’ pedagogical practices and instructional methods to appeal to students’ needs. Implementing EMI, thus, requires not only linguistic competence but also broader pedagogical skills, including curriculum design, content adaptation and student engagement strategies (Doiz et al., 2013).

Lecturing through EMI indicates teachers’ ability to demonstrate fluency, accurate pronunciation, and a strong command of syntax and lexis in both spoken and written English. The findings have emphasized that implementing EMI necessitates the use of instructional methods that teachers might have not used when teaching in Arabic and/or French in order to increase motivation and engagement, to promote knowledge exchange and to enhance teacher-students interaction. Undoubtedly, teaching in one’s first language significantly influences pedagogical practices, instructional methods, classroom performance, and consequently, the students’ learning achievement (Breeze & Sancho- Guinda, 2017).

These findings mirror those reported by Coyle et al. (2010) in CLIL contexts, where simultaneous language and content acquisition require additional support and collaboration between language instructors and subject specialists. The comparison suggests that Algeria’s EMI implementation faces unique constraints, including limited preparatory time, heterogeneous student language skills, and insufficient institutional resources, which may explain why challenges appear more acute than in countries with phased or institutionally-supported EMI programs (Airey, 2011; Dalziel et al., 2016).

Accordingly, instead of focusing solely on subject content and teaching methods, teachers found themselves caught in a continuous cycle of responsibilities. They were required to prepare subject matter, adapt and develop pedagogical strategies suited to the EMI context, and simultaneously work on improving their own language proficiency. Moreover, they were expected to balance content instruction with students’ comprehension of both the subject matter and the language of instruction which proved to be particularly challenging in specialized, complex disciplines. These demands made teaching considerably more challenging as it involved an overwhelming workload, extensive preparation outside the classroom, the need for diverse pedagogical skills and teaching methods, a heavy teaching schedule, and additional pedagogical responsibilities as reported by teachers:

Teacher 2 (Chemistry) claimed:

“When I teach in English, I spend double the time preparing. I have to revise the content, search for terminology, and make sure I can explain it clearly. It feels like I am doing language learning and teaching at the same time.”

Teacher 4 (Mechanical Engineering) argued:

“It’s not only preparing the lesson; it’s preparing myself. I revise vocabulary, pronunciation, and even sentence structures before every class. It becomes an extra layer of work that we never had when teaching in French.”

Teacher 9 (Architecture) reported:

“The most difficult part is balancing everything: teaching the content, monitoring students’ understanding, and making sure my English is accurate. It’s like doing three jobs at once.”

The participants have also acknowledged some obstacles related to their students. As previously mentioned, language proficiency posed a challenging issue for both teachers and students. All respondents agreed that students’ varying levels of English proficiency made instruction particularly difficult creating difficulties for comprehension, classroom interaction, and engagement. Teacher 15 (Psychology) commented:

“Some students simply cannot follow lectures fully in English. They struggle with discipline-specific terms, and this slows down the entire class.”

Students are not only required to learn new academic content in a foreign language, but they should also improve their language proficiency. This includes acquiring discipline-specific terminology and becoming familiar with the specialized registers of their academic field. As several studies in the Algerian EMI context have shown, students often struggle with unfamiliar academic vocabulary and technical terminology which limits their ability to follow lectures and grasp abstract concepts (Benhamlaoui & Benzadri, 2024; Boukhetala et al., 2024; Khenioui & Boulkroun, 2023). In such situations, teachers admitted they could not ensure in-depth understanding and successful comprehension as they would do if the lectures were transmitted through Arabic and/or French. This obstacle has also been reported in other studies wherein EMI was found to reduce the clarity of explanations and force teachers to simplify content or rely on code-switching to facilitate comprehension (Amara, 2025; Mansouri, 2025; Ouarniki, 2023). It has been noted by Doiz et al. (2013) that these difficulties might be better mitigated through the implementation of the CLIL approach rather than EMI alone, as CLIL simultaneously targets both content mastery and language development. This is consistent with recommendations in Algerian research advocating for stronger integration between content and language instruction, arguing that EMI cannot succeed without structured linguistic scaffolding and collaboration between subject specialists and language instructors (Benmansour-Benyelles, 2025; Bouguebs, 2025). However, adopting this approach would necessitate the integration of additional resources and close collaboration between subject-matter experts and language instructors, which in turn would increase workload and require more intensive coordination between faculty members.

4.3. The Impact of Using EMI on Students’ Learning and Achievement

Teacher expressed varied views on the impact of EMI on students’ learning and achievement. While some participants acknowledged a range of difficulties their students faced during the implementation of EMI and raised concerns about the challenges students encountered, the majority highlighted several advantages.

The findings revealed that EMI not only enhances students’ language proficiency, but it opens up the doors for accessing international academic resources, promotes interaction, collaboration and engagement with international faculty members, as well as prepares them for global employment prospects (Airey, 2011; Breeze & Sancho-Guinda, 2017). Teacher 2 (Chemistry) remarked:

"EMI allows students to access international articles and research materials they wouldn't otherwise encounter. It also motivates them to engage with academic communities beyond Algeria."

However, participants noted that these advantages are largely contingent on students' pre-existing English proficiency. Yet, four teachers insisted that these advantageous impacts are mostly related to students who are primarily proficient in English. In contrast, the majority of students who struggle with English proficiency face difficulties in both language learning development and content mastery (Hu & Lei, 2014; Margić & Žeželić, 2015). Teacher 4 (Mechanical Engineering) observed:

"Students who are already comfortable with English tend to benefit the most. They participate actively, ask questions, and engage with complex concepts much more confidently".

Due to language barriers, students struggle to participate actively in EMI courses, which affected their overall learning experience and results. For these students, EMI is found to have a negative impact on their learning performance and academic achievement (Benhamlaoui & Benzadri, 2024; Boukhetala et al., 2024). Teacher 15 (Psychology) explained:

"Some students simply cannot follow the lectures fully in English. They struggle with discipline-specific terms, and it slows down the entire class".

The discrepancies in outcomes may stem from differences in students' prior language exposure, motivation, and familiarity with academic registers. The majority of participants noted that EMI implementation is accompanied by considerable challenges. They identified limited English language proficiency, of both students and teachers, as the most pressing issue, affecting comprehension, knowledge construction, communication, and teaching learning effectiveness. Teacher 4 (Mechanical Engineering) commented:

"Even if I explain clearly, some students cannot grasp the technical vocabulary. I have to slow down, repeat, and sometimes code-switch to French, which reduces the efficiency of the lesson".

Institutional constraints further complicate the effectiveness of EMI. Furthermore, they noted a lack of significant institutional support, such the absence of EMI-specific instructional materials, advanced technology, technical support, effective pedagogical model practices, specialized resources, limited access to EMI-focused professional development programs and training, as well as resistance to change within universities complicate the adoption of EMI in Algerian higher education and critically undermine the effectiveness of its implementation (Benmansour-Benyelles, 2025; Bouguebs, 2025; Dalziel et al., 2016).

Interestingly, teachers asserted that students' academic performance and language proficiency should not be expected to improve immediately following the implementation of EMI. Instead, they described the transition as challenging, particularly in its early stages. They stressed that, like teachers, students require sustained practice, adequate resource support, and sufficient time to gradually adapt to the new situation. Above all, participants insisted that students should, initially, be motivated to learn the language in order to make the shift thriving, otherwise, the transition is unlikely to yield meaningful outcomes. Teacher 9 (Architecture) reflected:

"Students need to be motivated and supported continuously. Otherwise, just changing the language of instruction does not automatically improve understanding or performance".

Overall, the findings highlight the dual role of EMI in Algerian higher education. While EMI offers significant benefits for language development and global academic engagement, its effectiveness is strongly mediated by students' prior language competence, institutional support, and gradual adaptation processes (Airey, 2011; Coyle et al., 2010). These findings suggest that successful EMI implementation requires not only linguistic and pedagogical preparedness but also targeted strategies to support students with lower proficiency levels.

4.4. The Measures Proposed to Effectively Address and Mitigate these Challenges

The findings indicated that implementing EMI, successfully, necessitates a holistic rethinking of the procedures being undertaken and a serious consideration to the key challenges raised by participants. Acknowledging these challenges entails efficient development of language policies and effective adoption of targeted educational practices.

As suggested by participating teachers, effective mitigation involves engaging teachers in professional development programs, providing English language support and resources, and offering appropriate pedagogical assistance to facilitate the integration of EMI into instructional practices (Amara, 2025; Benmansour Benyelles, 2025; Boukhetala et al., 2024). This concern was strongly voiced by several participants. For instance, Teacher 2 (Chemistry) emphasized:

“We cannot deliver EMI courses effectively if we ourselves are not supported. We need continuous training, not just one workshop, and real language support to teach confidently”.

Teacher 12 (Biology) similarly stated:

“Without institutional training in EMI methods, we rely on trial and error, which is not sustainable”.

The findings indicated that the lack of institutional support aimed at promoting both language and content development was deemed a critical barrier to the effective implementation of EMI. The Participants noted that EMI professional development programs can be enhanced if institutions offer English language support tailored to improve academic and disciplinary contexts to help teachers navigate course-specific language demands with greater confidence and precision (Benabdallah, 2023; Touahmia & Bakar, 2024). This institutional gap was described clearly by Teacher 3 (Economics), who explained:

“We are expected to teach in English, but nothing is provided in terms of materials or language development”.

In the same vein, teacher 7 (Computer Science) echoed this problem, noting that:

“The institution wants EMI, but they don't offer the tools. We need guidance on both content and language, not just a decision imposed from above”.

Moreover, teacher 13 (Computer Sciences) claimed:

“Digital platforms could help us update our teaching, but we lack access to quality online EMI materials”.

Moreover, teachers need to engage in targeted pedagogical training in EMI content delivery focusing on active learning construction, and clear communication strategies which can be developed in form of institutional training programs including sustained workshops, and seminars. Institutions should implement comprehensive training programs that cater for both language development needs and EMI pedagogy. This can be achieved through constant institutional support by establishing long-term professional development opportunities, instead of one-off workshops, to ensure that teachers are well-prepared to meet the ongoing

challenges associated with EMI instruction (Amara & Hanifi, 2024; Benmansour-Benyelles, 2025; Boukhetala et al., 2024). Participants emphasized that EMI pedagogy requires more than translating content. As teacher 5 (Mechanical Engineering) noted:

“Teaching in English is not the only challenge. We need to learn how to simplify concepts and check comprehension in new ways”.

Similarly, teacher 11 (Biology) added:

“EMI requires a different pedagogy. Translating content is not enough; we need proper training on how to scaffold learning in English.”

In addition, institutions should provide better technology-based services such as webinars, online courses, and digital resources to encourage flexible and accessible training prospects. Further, higher education institutions need to support teachers with more intensive mobility programs to promote mentorship and peer-support networks that would foster a culture of collaboration, expertise and international cooperation (Airey, 2011; Bradford, 2016).

Teacher 9 (Architecture), explained:

“Mobility programs would expose us to real EMI contexts. Seeing how other institutions manage EMI would help us adopt better practices.”

Teacher 7 (Computer Science) also claimed:

“We need mentorship and collaboration with colleagues who have experience in EMI. Working alone makes the process much harder.”

5. Conclusion

The implementation of EMI in Algerian higher education holds significant potential to improve the quality of education, enhance students' global competitiveness and employment prospects, foster the development of globally relevant competencies, boost language proficiency, and promote greater international integration. Although the findings of the study acknowledged the benefits associated with the adoption of EMI, they also raised concerns about a number of significant and pressing challenges that must be addressed to ensure its effectiveness. The participants proposed several recommendations and key measures to respond and alleviate these challenges, emphasizing that EMI implementation cannot succeed without overcoming both linguistic and pedagogical obstacles. These recommendations are particularly deemed significant because they are proposed directly from field-practitioners and subject-matter experts who are closely engaged with EMI-related teaching experiences. Accordingly, Algerian higher education institutions are invited to take strategic and well-informed actions in order to foster an environment conducive to effective EMI instruction and, ultimately, improved student learning outcomes.

Beyond its empirical insights, this study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the argument that EMI implementation must be examined through a situated, context-responsive lens rather than through universal models of adoption. It demonstrates that linguistic readiness, institutional culture, and pedagogical preparedness operate as interdependent variables shaping EMI success in the Algeria higher education context. Practically, the study offers policy-makers, stakeholders, and teachers concrete, evidence-based directions for designing effective EMI professional development, language-support programmes, and pedagogical training pathways tailored to teachers' real needs.

Nonetheless, the study has certain limitations that should be acknowledged. Its qualitative scope, although believed to be rich and insightful, is based on a limited number of participants, which may not fully capture the diversity of EMI experiences across all Algerian

institutions. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported perceptions may be influenced by participants' personal experiences and institutional conditions. Future research could expand the sample across regions and disciplines, incorporate classroom observations to triangulate reported practices, and examine students' EMI experiences in parallel with teachers' perspectives. Longitudinal studies are also recommended to explore how EMI readiness and implementation evolve over time as institutions progressively adopt the reform.

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