

The Implementation of English in the Third Cycle of the L.M.D System The Case of Non-EFL Doctoral Students at Skikda University

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Abstract :

The overriding aim of this study is to explore the non-language doctoral students' perceptions of the implementation of English as a condition to obtain a doctoral degree. The study first investigates the doctoral students' opinions about the online training of English and the speaking workshops, shedding light on the hurdles encountered and the possible solutions to render the training more effective. To achieve this, an online semi-structured questionnaire has been distributed to the first cohort (2022-2023) of doctoral students to study English as a new subject. The findings reveal the success of all the participant doctoral students in eventually obtaining B2 level, which proves that the training has been successful. In spite of the positive attitudes towards English, this experience could also bring about a web of hurdles such as the lack of interactivity with teachers and students, the non-practicality of the platform, and English being of a secondary importance compared to the specialty. The findings also demonstrate the utility of the platform if dedicated to English for Specific Purposes. Moreover, the transformation of onsite workshops to online ones, involving native speakers and international students, will offer an easier and a more useful exposure to improve the students' French-influenced pronunciation.

Keywords: English, Higher Education, Non- English fields, Doctoral Studies.

المخلص :

الهدف الرئيسي لهذه الدراسة هو استكشاف آراء طلاب الدكتوراه من غير المتخصصين في اللغات بشأن تطبيق اللغة الإنجليزية كشرط للحصول على درجة الدكتوراه. تبحث الدراسة أولاً في آراء طلاب الدكتوراه حول التدريب عبر الأضربة مودول للغة الإنجليزية والورشات الخاصة بالمحادثة، وتسلط الضوء على العقبات التي واجهوها والحلول الممكنة لجعل التكوين أكثر فعالية. لتحقيق ذلك، تم توزيع استبيان شبه منظم عبر الإنترنت على الدفعة الأولى (2022-2023) من طلاب الدكتوراه المعنيين بدراسة اللغة الإنجليزية كمادة جديدة. تكشف النتائج عن نجاح جميع طلاب الدكتوراه المشاركين في الحصول في النهاية على المستوى (ب2) ما ثبت نجاح التكوين. على الرغم من مواقفهم الإيجابية تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية، فإن هذه التجربة قد جلبت أيضاً مجموعة من العقبات مثل الافتقار إلى التفاعل مع المعلمين والطلاب، وعدم عملية المنصة، وكون اللغة الإنجليزية ذات أهمية ثانوية بالمقارنة مع التخصص. تظهر النتائج أيضاً فائدة المنصة إذا تم تخصيصها للغة الإنجليزية الخاصة بمجالاتهم. علاوة على ذلك، فإن تحويل ورشات التحدث الميدانية إلى ورش عمل افتراضية، بمشاركة متحدثين ناطقين باللغة الإنجليزية وطلاب دوليين، سيوفر تعرضاً أسهل وأكثر فائدة لتحسين نطق الطلاب المتأثر باللغة الفرنسية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية، التعليم العالي، التخصصات غير الإنجليزية، دراسات الدكتوراه

1 Introduction

One of the topics that have recently gone viral on the Algerian social platforms and Algerian press is the implementation of English language as a medium of instruction and research instead of French. As simple as it may seem, it is an ideologically-oriented issue that dates back to the post-war of independence policies and practices. In 2022, it has taken one declaration of the Algerian president, Abdelmadjid Tebboune that “French is the spoil of war, but English is an international language” (Rouaba, 2022, para.1) to have the entire Algerian educational system revolutionized, starting from primary education to university. While so many voices could interpret Mr. Tebboune’s declaration as a decolonial act, all the decrees have stipulated that the main aims are internationalization and better job opportunities (Zekri, 2022). An avalanche of political conditions have been inevitably influencing such drastic changes. That is why a separation between policies and politics is mandatory to be able to effectively boost Algerian higher education (Mami, 2013).

To better understand the dimensions of the issue prior to 2022, a look into the Algerian Landscape is needed. The status of English in postcolonial Algeria has always been controversial. While the French-speaking Algerian elites urged the use of French as a language of science and technologies, others were in favor of standard Arabic to preserve the Algerian national identity. The use of French in Algerian universities is so deep-rooted that users of French assume a sense of superiority that they feel inferior using Arabic. In other words, French is the main language of instruction, publication and administration. Ironically, France has used the tool of language as a colonial strategy to assimilate Algerians and thus to erase Arabic, but some postcolonial Algerians still brag about their mastery of it (Kada, 2025). Due to the new relationships between Algeria and the United States of America, English started to be implemented in middle and higher schools. Through time, English is now an essential subject that is being taught at all levels starting from primary education (Sarnou et. al., 2012).

Until recent years, replacing French with another foreign language seemed impossible; however, the French language seems to lose its ground in the sociocultural and educational environments of the country (Miliani, 2000, as cited in Mami, 2013). The surge of implementing English has rapidly grown as a magic solution to all economic, technological and education problems (Miliani, 2000, as cited in Mami, 2013). In line with this, Khenioui and Boulkroun (2023)

contend that the language policy in Algeria is becoming, “pragmatic in terms of adopting a language of instruction that leads to higher rates of visibility for local research and also to contribute in improving the Algerian universities' rankings on the international scale (p. 60). The Teachers' training in English in CEIL and Departments of foreign languages, rewarding research written in English, teaching scientific and non-scientific subjects in English are not the only measures taken to synchronize with the new policy. Programs like Study in Algeria which opens door for non-Algerian students to pursue their studies in Algerian universities further proves that Algerian pragmatism is not superficial as it may sound, targeting only visibility and ranking. The issue of English is promptly developing, transforming the role and the visions of Algerian education.

The Algerian higher educational experience has not been confined to introducing English to replace French, but also to a prior radical move from a classical system to a new LMD system in 2004. The latter best harmonizes with global experiences, ensuring more mobility and coordination. This system entailed three main phases based on a number of semesters. Each semester consists of four main units, which are the fundamental, the methodological, the discovery and the transversal. The third phase, namely the doctorate, which is the concern of this study, allows access only to the laureates of the entrance exam. The doctoral phase used to be limited to the writing of a thesis related to the field of interest and the publication of a research paper in, at least, a peer-reviewed journal. The last decision that regulates the doctoral training establishes doctoral schools that give five fundamental courses namely didactics, artificial intelligence, programming, philosophy and English. English, as the focus of this paper, has been one of the subjects in 2022 decree. According to this decree, the doctoral students must fulfill B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The research problem of this study lies in the compatibility and the efficacy of the new Doctoral English training program with the non-English fields of sciences, mathematics, technology and Arabic language. Instead of delving deep in the field of research, the doctoral students cohort (2022-2023) find themselves compelled to study English as a separate subject and required to obtain B2 level in a very short period of time. This results in a high sense of pressure and confusion towards the training itself.

This problem leads to raise the questions hereunder:

1. How do non-language doctoral students perceive the compulsion of B2 level in English to be able to defend the doctoral thesis?
2. What are the most outstanding hurdles to the success of such a training?
3. To what extent is the training helpful in writing the doctoral thesis and other research papers? And what can make it more useful?

2. Research Aims

The overriding aim of this study is to explore the non-language doctoral students' perceptions of the implementation of English as a requirement to obtain a doctoral degree. The study, first, investigates doctoral students' opinions about the online training of English and the speaking workshops. Second, it moves to shed light on the hurdles encountered during the training. Eventually, the study uncovers the factors that can make the training more effective.

3. Literature Review

A wide array of researchers have already grappled with the issue of English implementation in a historically Francophone Algeria, exploring the different students' perceptions of the reform and the challenges encountered throughout. Every field has had a distinct experience with implementing English, with various specificities and particular hurdles.

To begin with, despite the fact that a majority of teachers have been positive about this new step, they have expressed an inevitable fear of its failure (Brahmi, 2025). Their concerns stressed the lack of pedagogical resources, low student language proficiency, and the absence of solid ground on which English as a medium of instruction is implemented (Brahmi, 2025). This study further highlights the dichotomy between the idea and reality. In other words, the idea of implementing English is brilliant, but the application is hard to achieve that quickly; comprehensive teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructural support are a few factors that can help its success (Brahmi, 2025).

The key purpose of implementing English is to get the younger generations more engaged with learning English and be able to access to a wide array of scientific and technological knowledge originally written in English (Bouabdesselam, 2022; Younes & Dekhakhena, 2025). This also allows students

to communicate more efficiently in international contexts such as conferences, congresses and study days. Tobbi (2025) divulges exceptional factors related to the Algerian context and experience and sheds light on a number of cultural and academic challenges and solutions that enhance teachers' performance (Tobbi, 2025). This actually means that replacing French with English transcends the linguistic to the cultural dimension especially in a polyglot country like Algeria.

In line with what has already been said, Amara (2025) too elucidates that even if the implementation of English in higher education can be fruitful, yet it is so dependent on a plethora of factors, the most outstanding of which lies in university teachers' readiness to keep pace with this shift. To succeed, learners must develop disciplinary competence and disciplinary literacy in English, attained via active participation in EMI classes by understanding and employing discipline specific terminology, genres, and registers, besides acquiring the skills required to (Khenioui & Boulkroun, 2023; Saidani & Afkir, 2023).

Studies that have put under scrutiny the teachers' and the students' perceptions have stressed that their attitudes are so relative. Human sciences seem to be the fields that suffer more as their streams are intrinsically connected with the cultures and nations unlike other sciences, which are universal, and their key concepts are technical not carrying any cultural dimensions. The significance of this study lies in its discussion of English implementation in the third cycle of LMD system in the non-language fields. The focus of all the papers that discussed the issue was on the first years and master studies. The doctoral studies have never been the case of study of any of research work. especially in the light of the new changes, a look into this case in particular is so important.

4. Research Methodology

The study is descriptive that adopts the questionnaire, as a means of data collection. A semi-structured questionnaire that was developed using Google forms has been distributed to 80 doctoral candidates as the first cohort of doctoral students who are compelled to study English in the supplementary training of doctoral studies where the level B2 is required. Platform moodle is home of the doctoral training in English. It entails four different levels A1, A2, B1 and B2 with different topics and activities. The platform is designed to get the students familiar with a topic through videos, followed by series of questions

and quizzes. Along with the online training, students are supposed to give presentations of fifteen minutes about different assigned topics. These workshops are held onsite under the supervision of Lecturers of English class A at Skikda University.

5. Results and Discussion

Only 45 doctoral students out of 80 have actually responded to the questionnaire. Some of them failed to access to the link, some did not know how to answer and some have replied too late to the questionnaire.

1. As a doctoral student, what is your field of study?

ما هو تخصصك كطالب دكتوراه؟

45 réponses

 Copier le graphique

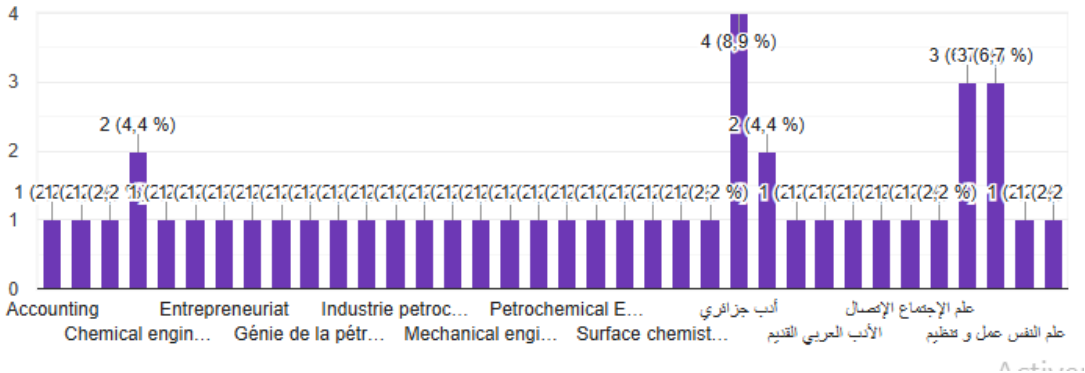


Figure 1: Students' Fields of Studies

The above graph demonstrates the number of disciplines the participant students belong to which have nothing to do with English as a field of study. This means that studying English is confined to the training dictated by the ministry of higher education.

2. What was your level of proficiency in English at the beginning of your doctoral training?

ما هو مستواك في بداية التكوين؟

45 réponses

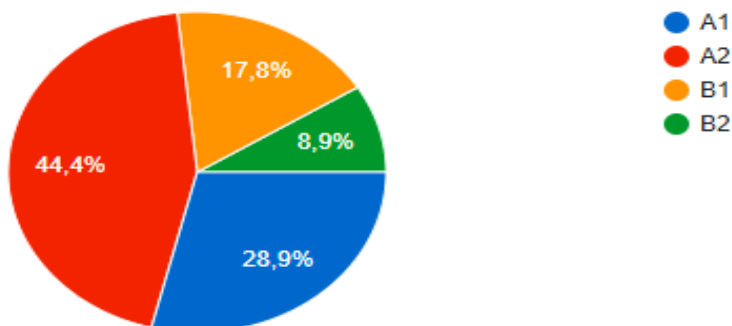


Figure 2: Students' Level at the beginning of the training

According to the results, a majority of 73% goes to A1 level with 28.9% and A2 level with 44.4%. This actually means that almost all students in non-English fields are beginners and unready to use the language adequately and hence the training is a necessary step in their training. A look into the fields of B2 students does not show any pointer to the relation between their level and their fields which stands for the failure of the non-language disciplines to improve students' linguistic skills. Thus, the implementation of English in the doctoral training program of non-English students bridges the gap that the disciplines have long been creating.

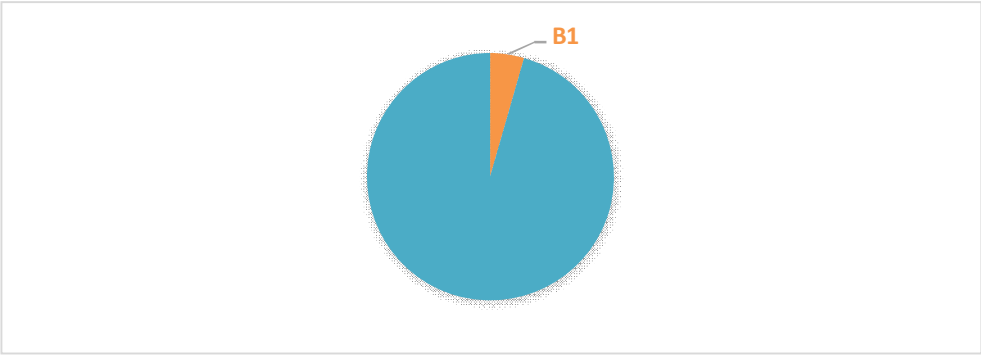


Figure 3: Students' Level at the end of the training

After a year of studying English online and presenting in workshops, a majority of the students could get B2 level. The minority who failed to achieve that most of them have dropped the training and only two students could not cope with the training, as they are personal excuses. The latter does not directly relate to the training, so, this minority cannot be a defining factor of the training success.

4. Do you find the online English training beneficial? هل وجدت التكوين مفيداً؟
45 réponses

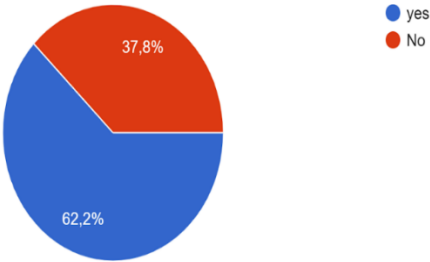


Figure 4: The candidates' attitudes towards the training

The collected data show that 62.2% positively perceive the English online training as find it fruitful. 37.8 agree that it was not that useful. A difference of 24.4% is not that remarkable, raising questions about the students who could obtain B2 level and still find the training unrewarding.

5. if your answer of question 4 is No, would you please explain why? لماذا؟ اذا كانت اجابتك لا

45 réponses

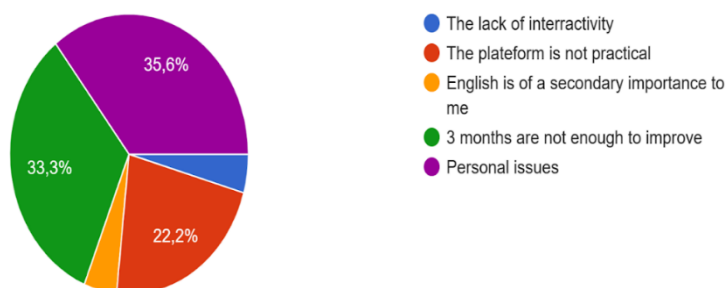


Figure 5: Reasons why the training is not beneficial

Exploring the reasons why B2 students find the English training program fruitless, the highest scores go to personal issues, time is not enough and the platform is not that practical. As a coordinator of English and the head of the speaking workshops' board, what could be noticed is that a good number of students are middle-aged, married and live far from work. All these factors could hinder their learning as they failed to focus on English along with working on their doctoral research and publishing. This set clear the second high score as well, which relate to the insufficiency of time. To improve in a matter of three months, the student must be devoted to learning English only which is impossible for non-English candidates as they have other skills to improve in their proper specialty. The unpracticality of the platform lies in its irrelevancy of the content with the students' fields, which could be enhanced through the integration of ESP courses and activities. Lack of interactivity is another reason why B2 doctoral students find the training dissatisfying. Teaching English to doctoral students through using it could be more useful than just teaching its grammar, vocabulary and phonetics. Having a whole platform based only on skills that could be developed using similar platforms is a waste of time and energy. To make the implementation of English more effective, the platform should be more interactive, allowing oral and written feedback to the students for example. The last factor is English being of a secondary importance to some. The latter are majorly students of Arab studies whose focus on Arabic language, its fiction, poetry and criticism is irreplaceable.

6. What impact has this online training had on you? ما هو أثر هذا التكوين عليك؟

45 réponses



Figure 6: The impact of the training on the students

The impact of the training of English on the doctoral students is twofold: a majority of 75.6% feel satisfied and determined to learn English and use it more in future occasions. A minority of 24.4 are rather afraid and refuse its usage. What explains such a refusal are the fields to which these doctoral students belong. A look into that reveals that all the students who are so hesitant to use English are enrolled in human and social sciences like Algerian literature, sociology and communication, clinical psychology and classical Arabic Literature. in line with these results, Laddada (2024) contends, “Implementing EMI in the social sciences and humanities presents unique challenges. SSH disciplines tend to be more deeply rooted in local culture, history, and language, making the shift to English more complex and controversial” (p.33).

7. Has this online training helped you in developing your doctoral research thesis? هل ساعدك هذا التكوين في كتابة رسالتك؟

45 réponses

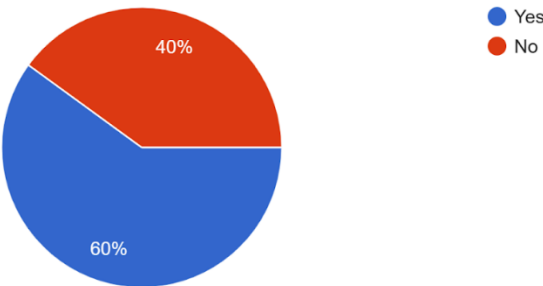


Figure 7: The training and doctoral thesis writing

8. Does this online training help you elaborate a research paper? هل ساعدك هذا التكوين في كتابة مقال؟
45 réponses

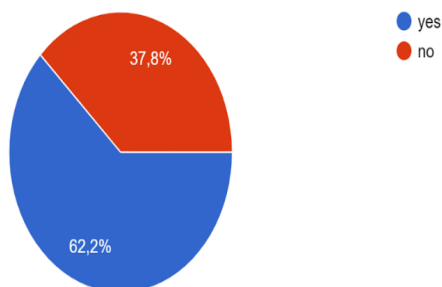


Figure 8: English and Research paper writing

The implementation of English in higher education is primarily for more visibility to Algerian universities and scientific production. To compel doctoral students of non-English fields to have B2 level is to urge them to write not only their publications in English, but also their doctoral thesis. Despite the fact that 60% find the training helpful in the writing of the thesis, 40%, which is a high score too do not. The latter illustrates the failure of the platform to achieve one of the ministry prime objectives. The thesis is a self-contained monograph that defines a research problem, puts under scrutiny the already-existing body of knowledge related to the area of research, critically evaluate the theoretical and the methodological data collected, sheds light on new contributions to knowledge and advances the discipline through a set of suggestions for Further research. (Younes & Dekhakhena, 2025, p. 940). The process itself is highly complex and demanding and what complicates it more is academic writing. To write a good and academic paper, the student must adhere to the writing conventions and the grammar rules of English. Apart from the criteria of objectivity, precision, diction, and critical justifications, the student must also maintain a good sentence structure, correct use of tenses and connectors, coherence and cohesion. To have a good command of these, students ought to study extra subjects on academic writing and research methodology in English.

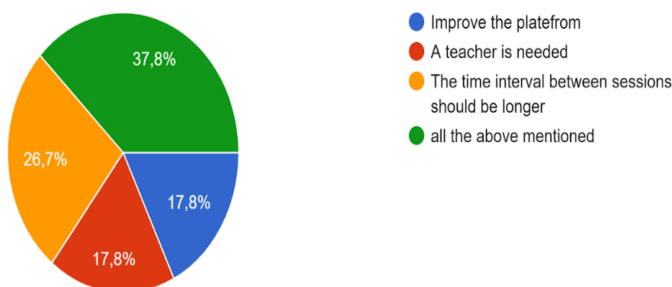
The problem that may arise especially for this cohort is that the implementation of English was still at its early stages. In other words, there is a

remarkable chasm between the prior training and the new one. Younes and Dekhakhena (2025) argue, “this proficiency gap is particularly problematic given that these doctoral students were instructed primarily in French throughout their previous education, making English their third or fourth language of academic engagement” (p.956). Even if they are determined to learn it, moving from theory to practice is hard to achieve. Language becomes not only a medium, but also an aim; learning its rules, conventions and styles are inevitable and integral to any research work. this questions the accuracy of the studies that assume that if the platform were more ESP-oriented, no student would have failed to use English as a language of research.

Another precise question about the usefulness of the English training relates to the writing of the research paper. Writing a research paper is identical to the writing of a doctoral thesis in terms of systemic and recursive methodology. The research paper too is actually the product of a highly involved and engaged process of research, critical thinking, sources evaluation, and composition, which must be done in English. Students who have the advantage of having their university classes in English, they will find it easier to write research papers in English than those whose training has always been confined to French or Arabic. In line with this thought, a study conducted on chemistry students at Mentouri University reveals that Science postgraduate students need to learn English with an emphasis on scientific English characteristics and most frequent syntactic and lexical aspects in scientific contexts. Therefore, the way English is taught in science departments should be reconsidered to fit students’ needs” (Boudjedmaa & Labeled ,2021).

9. What do you think could improve this online? training ما الذي سيجعل هذا التكوين احسن؟

45 réponses



Figures 9: The factors that contribute to the training's amelioration

The results show that the category of a teacher is needed and the platform needs improvement got identical scores. This explains the surge of a new content that directly connects to the language of every specialty instead of a Standard one. The training has numerous advantages, first, it is free; students are not supposed to any pennies to learn. Second, students can learn at their own pace for the availability of the content 24h/7. Third, the platform offers scripts of lessons, activities, and videos to watch, which means that it is entraining and rich in material at the same time. Uploading the courses to moodle without the guidance of a teacher however, renders the training less effective. A teacher will ensure discipline, deeper understanding and better feedback. Face-to-face interaction with a teacher is more effective than any sort of human interaction; any daily practice without a teacher can be unproductive and slow.

10. Based on your experience as the first cohort to study English online, do you have any suggestions for improving this type of training?

At the end of the questionnaire, the participant students have been asked about their suggestions to make the English training more effective and they have recommended very interesting and practical ideas, such as:

1. **Resources Supply:** some students suggest the uploading of the useful academic and different types of materials, namely, books, movies, and pieces of music. Learning through such resources will facilitate language acquisition via the use of suitable contexts.

2. **Speaking practice:** Students could also highlight the utility of creating a small virtual space in moodle platform itself where they could chat freely and anonymously. According to their answers, the lack of practice owes origin to the absence of a community of learners who share same aims and visions. Being involved in such a training should be seized to learn English collaboratively. The idea of anonymity is interesting, as it will help diminish shame and minimize anxiety and fear of committing mistakes.
3. **ESP under the supervision of a teacher:** learning English as a separate subject to the doctoral horizontal training and thesis writing adds pressure that hinders an appropriate use of English. English for Specific Purposes, matching with the research arena permits students to fulfil the requirements of the doctoral degree and learn English simultaneously. What matters is the use of English in relation to a specific domain to be able to publish and develop courses in English. Learning English should be integral to the research work. The presence of specialized teachers will even enhance language acquisition as they could shed light on key concepts, familiar and outstanding topics, and fluency. More importantly, it would instill confidence in the language use in subsequent contexts.
4. **Time and frequency:** According to the students, confining the English training to the first theoretical year of the doctoral program is a failure. In so doing, English is becoming an activity that students need to get rid of instead of being a skill and a tool that can be improved through time and support. Learning English should hence be extended to the final year of thesis submission. In this same vein, the workshops should not be held once by session; a ten-minute presentation every three months renders improvement so slow.
5. **Workshops:** these are the best part of this training as they offer opportunities to the students to speak in front of an audience, discussing topics related to their fields in English and in the presence of a teacher. What makes these workshops less effective is basically irregularity.
6. **English at home:** another issue that the doctoral students aspired to solve concerns students who live far from Skikda University.

Travelling to learn English along with other tasks that they must fulfil is troublesome. To solve this, doctoral students, first, asked for a permission to study English at home universities. Second, to transform onsite workshops to online workshops, involving native speakers and international students. Such a virtual space will offer an easier and a more useful exposure. Worth noting, one of the remarkable flaws in the doctoral students' performance at workshops is their French-influenced pronunciation of English words. Such online workshops then should target this problem. Is a B2 student on Moodle inevitably a good speaker? The answer is no. unfortunately, the B2 level reflects students' ability to read, understand and practice in writing. Nearly all B2 holders hold an equivalent of A1 or less in spoken English. What explains the ineffectiveness of the training as whole is hence the short-time training, repeated exam questions, a rigid platform with basic content and a few workshops. In moving from one level to the other, students must improve all skills together otherwise a huge gap between written and oral performances will rise. The Algerian move towards Anglicization of higher education requires teachers who deliver classes in English. Since these doctoral students are future teachers, they must accomplish the training in its two forms.

6. Conclusion

The doctoral students of non-English fields who study English as part of the new program of the third cycle of the L.M.D system and who began their training as beginners could all eventually obtain B2 level. In spite of the doctoral students' positive attitudes towards English, this experience could bring about a web of hurdles such as the lack of interactivity, non-practicality of the platform, English of a secondary importance, and few personal issues. The findings demonstrate that if the platform were dedicated to English for Specific Purposes content, none of the students could have failed to use English as a language of research. What can further enhance the English training are: the guidance of a specialized teacher, time span, ESP- focused and frequency of speaking workshops. One of the studies conducted by Malki et. al. (2025) reveals a significant gap between

expectations and the realities of implementing English among instructors. The findings shed light on a number of obstacles that hinder the efficiency of this bold move specifically a difficulty of choosing appropriate courses and strategies for “a heterogeneous group of teachers with varying levels of English proficiency, disciplinary backgrounds, age, and professional experience (Malki et. al. 2025, p.191). The same gap and identical obstacles apply to the group of doctoral students whom what unites them is only English. While most of the recommendation revolve around developing more ESP English and EMI, this research underscores the urge of add even new class of academic writing and research methodology to enhance the students’ research skills.

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