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Implementing English As A Medium Of Instruction (Emi) In Oran Graduate School Of Economics. Applying Full And Partial Immersion As A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Received: 20/03/2024; Accepted: 02/08/2024 Ideally, English should move from L3 to L2, then to L1 in higher education in Algeria, a former French colony, where French is used as a second language (L2). This study revolves around the use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI). In Oran Graduate School of Economics, we are moving gradually in the implementation of EMI in theory and pedagogical practice. This study attempts to examine the EMI-policy challenges based on teachers' experiences and students' voices. It involves the undergraduate students from level one and the teachers who are engaged in implementing EMI for this level. It adopts the immersion approach; it draws on two different context-based questionnaires to examine the effectiveness of applying the immersion approach in an EMI setting. The questionnaires have been used as main instruments for data collection. The findings reveal ambiguous results within the partial immersion program that unable both students and teachers to overcome transitional challenges.

Key-Words: Arabic; EMI; French; Full immersion; Partial immersion

Introduction

The worldwide spread of higher education globalization has resulted in a growth of English Medium Instruction (EMI) initiatives globally which underlines the key position of English as a universal academic language (Macaro et al., 2018). EMI refers to the practice of using English to instruct subjects in nations where the primary language spoken by most people is not English (Dearden 2014) and it has become increasingly popular, in non native English speaking countries. The rise of this phenomenon can be attributed to reasons like the globalization of higher education and the necessity for international competitiveness. Moreover there is an increasing requirement for proficiency in the language due, to the expanding global job market (references; Cots et al., 2012 and Margić & Vodopija Kristanović 2018).

In Algeria setting as a French colony with a diverse linguistic environment "the implementation of EMI in higher education introduces distinctive hurdles and advantages. The nations historical connections to French, as a language (known as L2) make the inclusion of English more complex; essentially portraying it as a tertiary language (referred to as L3) in numerous academic scenarios (Benrabah, 2014). The language scenario in Algeria is marked by an interaction among Arabic (including Modern Standard Arabic and Algerian Arabic) French and Berber languages; and to a growing extent English (BoudersaN., 2016). This diverse linguistic environment brings added complexity to the integration of EMI, within education settings.

The push for English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education institutions mirrors international patterns but encounters unique hurdles stemming from the nations postcolonial background and present sociolinguistic context. According to Akyüz (2019) the difficulties faced by learners in English literature classes shed light on wider concerns regarding language skills and cultural understanding that could influence the adoption of EMI. These obstacles are further complicated by the requirement, for tailored educator preparation programs, adequate materials and encouraging language regulations. (Cario-Pastor, 2020).

This research aims to examine the process of implementing EMI at the Oran Graduate School of Economics with a focus on shifting English from being a language to a possible primary instruction language. Our study has three goals. Understanding the difficulties encountered by teachers and students during the EMI

integration. Assess the impact of partial immersion methods in an EMI setting. Discover strategies that could improve the effectiveness of EMI programs, in higher education institutions.

The importance of this research is in its ability to add to the existing pool of knowledge on teaching in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in multilingual settings with colonial histories and influences like Algeria specifically highlighted here aims to uncover the challenges involved in introducing EMI where English is not traditionally the dominant foreign language spoken (Bradford 2016 & Vu and Burns 2014). The results of this study could offer guidance for decision makers and educators, in Algeria by suggesting ways to enhance the effectiveness of EMI initiatives. The knowledge obtained from this study could also prove beneficial for nations facing comparable language environments and educational obstacles. This is especially relevant for countries, in the African region. (Belmihoub, 2018).

As the landscape of education adapts to international challenges and possibilities over time it is becoming more essential to grasp the intricacies of implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) in various settings. This research delves into the utilization of EMI at the Oran Graduate School of Economics exploring how transitions from being a third language (L3) to a second language (L2) and potentially ascends to first language (L1) status, within this unique academic environment. The study seeks to examine the hurdles faced in implementing EMI policies through insights from teachers and feedback from students. It specifically looks into how effective using immersion techniques, in an EMI environment.

1. Literature Review

a. EMI in Higher Education: Global Perspectives

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has become increasingly popular in universities around the world that do not primarily speak English as their language. This approach is utilized to enhance the reputation of universities and appeal to students from different countries while equipping graduates with skills for the global workforce. Generally seen as a measure in response, to globalization and the worldwide expansion of higher education (Dearden 2014).

EMI has become popular in Europe in nations such as the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries. Universities in these regions provide a range of programs taught in English. In Asia particularly in countries, like Japan, China and South Korea. EMI is viewed as a method to enhance the standard of education and improve global competitiveness. These situations frequently encounter notable obstacles such as differences in English proficiency among students and teachers alike struggles in harmonizing content with language teaching and worries, about upholding academic quality standards.

Studies indicate that although EMI offers students chances to improve their English language abilities and tap into academic materials it also brings about difficulties in understanding the content itself. This struggle, between acquiring language proficiency and grasping subject matter has prompted educational institutions to embrace blended methods that offer language assistance alongside upholding English as the primary instructional language (Macaro et al., 2018).

b. EMI in Algeria: Current State and Challenges

EMI is being gradually introduced in Algeria with the Oran Graduate School of Economics taking the lead by incorporating English into programs at an early stage of development. The language scenario in Algeria poses a challenge as Arabic serves as the language while French is commonly utilized in academia and business sectors. The integration of EMI is viewed as a means to boost internationalization efforts and bring Algeria's framework in line, with international benchmarks (Rahmani 2021).

EMI has encountered opposition in Algeria from students and faculty who prefer French and Arabic languages over English for academic purposes Teachers have expressed challenges in delivering learning materials in English while students often encounter difficulties, in comprehending lectures and grasping important ideas when presented in the English language (Benrabah 2014).

Implementing EMI in Algeria faces a hurdle due to the absence of proper institutional backing; both educators and learners require additional support like English language instruction and materials, in English to smoothly shift to EMI as highlighted by Wilkinson (2010).

c. Implementing EMI in Oran Graduate School of Economics

Much focus and efforts have been attributed to training teachers for communicating and writing in English in order to raise the schools ranking and to cope with the internationalizing of higher education. "Teachers and students view the use of English in instruction in higher education, instead of French, as a necessity as it can positively affect the Algerian universities' ranking and increase the number of published articles" (Rahmani, 2021). "For students, it is regarded as a way to cope with the new digital era. However, teachers rejected the quick shift to English without providing a well-planned training program to support teachers who have little or no knowledge of using English in instruction" (Rahmani, 2021).

In accordance with the instructions sent by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, a meeting with the teaching team of the undergraduate students was held in June 2023 to discuss using English as the language of instruction for the academic year 2023/2024. The main objectives of the meeting were to

highlight the challenges which the teachers would face when teaching in English for the first time, and to identify common time slots and potential areas for adjustment. "Nonetheless, various concerns have been raised in relation to EMI, such as difficulties associated to the English language proficiency of students and professors (Erling and Hilgendorf 2006) and especially about its impact on academic results, as some critics consider that EMI could be hampering students' content learning. (Gisela & al., 2020, 36) Besides, potential solutions to minimize difficulties and ensure efficient time management were stated. The attendees reached a consensus on the revised schedules, which were documented and shared with all attendees for confirmation.

Some of the main manifested constraints declared by the teachers during the meeting are the following. When working on the new teaching support, teachers are concerned with the credibility of the translation of some subjects. The financial accounting module should be cited mainly for the following reasons: The teacher is able to include the use of concepts in English, but the texts of the laws, already written in French, cannot be easily and correctly translated by the teacher who is only at the beginning of learning English. Some teachers have not reached level B2 yet; therefore, the chapters which contain laws will not be translated into English but will remain in French. Receiving translated texts from the oversight authority is manifested consciously. Teachers in EMI settings may face limitations if they lack proficiency in language skills which could hinder their flexibility and confidence in delivering lessons according to Aires study, from 2011. Furthermore, they usually do not view themselves as authorities or educators in English who're qualified to provide feedback on their students' English abilities (referenced in Aireys study from 2011) a sentiment that has been mirrored in other research studies (such as Chapple in 2015 and Dearden & Macaro in 2016). The limited English proficiency of both teachers and students along with access to teaching materials and resources curriculum design and teaching methods and lack of attention, to contextual factors were identified as potential factors that could diminish the effectiveness of EMI programs (as highlighted by Les study in 2012).

2. Methodology

The literature review explores the theoretical foundations, practical implementations and effectiveness of the Immersion as an approach. Students are taught in English but receive support in Arabic and French. There are various levels of immersion, from partial to full. In partial immersion, the overall plan of the lesson is in the target language and the class discussion and explanation are either in Arabic L1 or French L2. French is a dominant means of communication because the syllabi are in French, and the teachers were previously trained and educated in French. In full immersion, students are taught in English only; teachers of mathematics assert they do it since the language of mathematics is precise, concise and abstract; it does not need literary interpretations. The success of immersion programs depends on factors such as teachers 'proficiency, curriculum design and students' motivation.

Krashen suggests that the language acquisition occurs when learners are exposed to comprehensible input slightly above their current proficiency level. When EMI has come into practice, a challenging situation emerges: neither the teacher nor the students feel able to debate fluently the content of some economic subjects in English. The use of the latter is little. The result prevails in the answers of both teachers and students to the question about fulfilling teaching in English and about the favorite language which the students prefer to use in class

a. Research Design

This research project uses a methodology to investigate how English is being used as the language of instruction, at the Oran Graduate School of Economics. The choice of an approach allows for a deeper understanding of the viewpoints and experiences of teachers and students involved in the English Medium Instruction program. Considering the intricacies involved in implementing this program in an environment the study seeks to examine the practical obstacles and advantages encountered by those involved. Data is gathered using questionnaires tailored to the context for teachers and students alike in order to delve deeply into their experiences (as mentioned by Suter in 2012). This method highlights the significance that participants attach to their experiences, with EMI and offers valuable insights that surpass what quantitative measures alone could reveal.

b. Setting: Oran Graduate School of Economics

The research was carried out at the Oran Graduate School of Economics in Algeria's higher education system. An institution in the country's education landscape undergoing a transition to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). This shift aligns with a strategy aimed at boosting internationalization and keeping pace with global education trends. The move towards EMI at the Oran Graduate School is indicative of the changes happening within Algerian higher education system where traditionally French has been the dominant language for instruction, at universities but there is now an increasing adoption of English to improve competitiveness on an international scale (Rahmani 2021). The school caters to a range of students with varying language skills; some excel in French or Arabic more than English. This creates an environment, for exploring the hurdles and adjustments needed for implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI).

c. Participants

The procedure for applying teaching in English must go first through a transitional stage: preparing one's teaching support in English, but the explanation will be in French / Arabic. Going slowly in applying EMI will suit both teachers and students as long as only students in the first year of the undergraduate cycle are concerned. Teachers also worry about internships; students compete in work areas that use 100% French. Furthermore, the teachers need distant and face to face training in the four skills and basically in communication to ensure better quality of teaching. When evoking an approximate percentage of the application of the Ministerial policy, the teachers assert having already started implementing EMI through partial immersion approach.

- Macroeconomics: 70%
- Statistics and probabilities: 80%
- Philosophy: 70%
- Law: 60%
- Analyses 1 and 2: 60%

Table one shows that the number of registered teachers in distant learning is bigger than in the face-to-face learning.

Table 01: Overview of Teacher Training Programs for EMI Implementation

Type of Training	Number of Registered Teachers	Reasons
DUAL Platform: Distant Learning	66/95	Acquiring the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing
Face-to-Face Learning: American Corner	30/95	Communicating in English
Face-to-Face Learning : UFC (Université de la Formation Continue)	33/95	Three years of study to obtain a new diploma: A university degree in English

This format provides a clearer representation of the data, with the type of training, number

To ensure smooth implementation of programs and overall coherence in teaching, the attendees have suggested that the arrival of content books in English, at the school library, is recommended. Linguistic problems can make it difficult for teachers to deliver content effectively through lectures (Wilkinson 2010). They need to be assisted in communication skills too. Cummins' BICS and CALP differentiates between Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), emphasizing the need for both in immersion settings effectiveness.

3.1. Qualitative approach

To understand the perspectives and the experiences of both teachers and students, a qualitative study is required. Anonymous collection of data through two questionnaires; one addressed to the teachers and the second one to the students. The questions are tailored to the context where English is used as the medium of instruction. In an approach like this the focus is on understanding the perspectives shared by participants rather, than manipulating variables or imposing definitions onto them (as outlined by Suter in 2012). Researchers utilize research to delve deeply into a problem or issue aiming to grasp variables that are challenging to quantify. (Alhamami, 2023)

3.2. Data collection

The data collection focuses on gathering responses from teachers and students regarding their preferred language for classroom use particularly examining their favorite and most practical language choices for instruction purposes. Graph one illustrates the teachers feedback, to this inquiry: In which language do you fulfill your teaching?

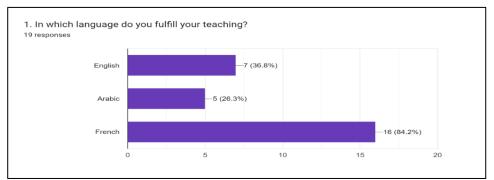


Figure 01: Teacher Responses on the Primary Language Used for Teaching in EMI Classrooms

Notice that the responses reveal a linguistically complex environment of learning. Both full and partial types of immersion are used. In the partial immersion two different languages besides English are used. In full immersion 7/28 teachers use English in class as a medium of instruction; full immersion. In partial immersion we find 5/28 teachers design the lesson plan in English but use Arabic as a medium of communication.16/28 teachers address the students in French to explain the lesson.

The students receive instruction in three languages where lessons are presented and discussed in these languages as well. In the past to the introduction of EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) their education was solely conducted in French. Imposing the task of mastering new vocabulary and language skills under the EMI system may pose challenges for struggling students in North Africa. This shift in teaching medium could potentially hinder their advancement and success according to a source from Wenr website in 2019. In the figure you can see how the students answered the question about their preferred language, for classroom use.

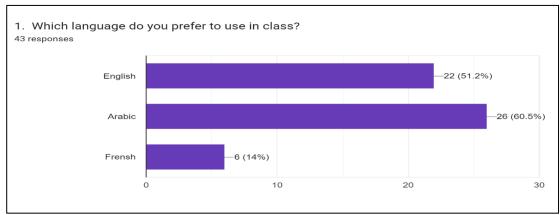


Figure 02: Student Preferences for Language Use in Class During EMI Implementation

Table 02: Comparison of Teachers' Use of Full and Partial Immersion with Students' Language Preferences in EMI

Teachers' Use of Full and Partial Immersion		
7/28 teachers use full immersion (English only) for EMI.		
5/28 teachers use Arabic to explain lessons written in English.	26 students prefer Arabic for oral explanations.	
16/28 teachers use French as the medium for oral explanation in class.	6 students prefer French for debating and explaining the subject.	

The whole ambiguity resides in the conflict of interest when fulfilling the perspectives of implementing EMI in Oran Graduate School of Economics. Nearly half the students and few teachers tend for applying a full immersion. The remaining ones who prefer going through a partial immersion are divided in two categories: in the first situation most teachers use French (L2) as a medium of communication in class; a situation that is welcomed by few students only. In the second situation, only five teachers use Arabic (L1) to explain the content subject written in English (L3); many students welcome this type of partial immersion; using L1 as a supporting aid to immerse gradually in EMI.

II. Deducing that the teachers have found it difficult to shift from French/Arabic as a medium of instruction, they have been asked to argue their answers for the following question: Did you find it easy to shift from French / Arabic into English?

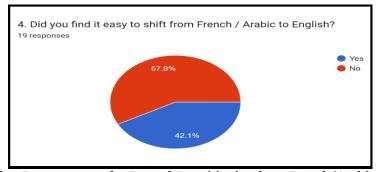


Figure 03: Teacher Responses on the Ease of Transitioning from French/Arabic to English in EMI

3. Results

The teachers 'arguments are reported as they were written -with grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakesby the teachers after few months of learning English. Since the teachers of mathematics think they do not face serious problems for they use a standard language, their arguments are not included below.

Table: Key Insights from Teacher Responses on EMI Implementation Challenges and Practices

	Table: Key Insights from Teacher Responses on EMI Implementation Challenges and Practices			
Category	Teacher Responses	Key Insight		
Code-Switching	- "I think code switching hampers such a task."	Teachers find that switching between languages disrupts the flow of instruction and can hinder students' language acquisition and concept understanding.		
Lack of Experience in EMI	- "I have not taught in English yet."	Some teachers have little to no experience teaching in English, further complicating the transition to EMI.		
Comfort with English	- "I read and publish in English, so I had no problem."	A few teachers who are comfortable with English, particularly those involved in academic publishing, report fewer issues with the transition to EMI.		
Struggles with Practice	- "In general, I find it easy but sometimes I face a few struggles, because recently I don't practice the language always (reading, speaking)."	Even teachers who are more comfortable with English admit that lack of regular practice makes teaching in English challenging.		
Inherent Difficulty in Switching	- "Switching languages is always difficult, it needs no explanation, it's a fact of life."	Language switching between French, Arabic, and English is inherently difficult, and teachers acknowledge this as a natural challenge in EMI.		
Communication Challenges		Teachers struggle to communicate effectively in English, especially when explaining complex academic concepts, which impacts student understanding.		
Gradual Implementation	- "It has to be done gradually."	Teachers emphasize the importance of a gradual shift to EMI to allow both teachers and students time to adapt to the new instructional language.		
Challenges of Language Transition	present challenges for many reasons: linguistic differences,	Teachers note multiple challenges in transitioning to EMI, including language differences and motivation, which need to be addressed for successful implementation.		
Student Unpreparedness	made the effort, but students really aren't. We waste a lot of time	Teachers are concerned that students are even less prepared for EMI than they are, leading to inefficiencies in the classroom, as time is spent on language explanations rather than content.		
Similarity Between Languages	- "They are similar."	Some teachers perceive similarities between languages (possibly referring to shared concepts in French, Arabic, and English), but this view is not universal.		
Low English Proficiency	- "My level in English is poor."	Many teachers openly admit that their English proficiency is insufficient for effectively delivering content in an EMI setting.		

Category	Teacher Responses	Key Insight
	- "Sometimes, we lose the interpretation when we are translating."	Teachers note that translation from French or Arabic to English can lead to loss of meaning, affecting the quality of instruction and understanding.

In 2011 the German university leaders (known as Hochschulrektorenkonferenz) published a study examining the ten-year trend of adopting English in higher education institutions. The findings indicated a negative impact (HRK 2011). The study specifically highlighted the level of English proficiency among instructors as a major concern. Additionally, Usuniers research at Lausanne University, in 2010 identified challenges related to information loss during the exchange and understanding of knowledge. Class engagements. Students exhibit more passiveness. This situation prompts inquiries, about teaching methods.

4.1. Teachers' Experiences with EMI Implementation a) Challenges Faced

The switch to EMI at the Oran Graduate School of Economics brought about a number of obstacles for instructors. In terms of language skills proficiency. A considerable number of teachers encountered difficulties in transitioning from French or Arabic to English language instruction according to data presented in Figure 4. Where 57. 9 % Reported challenges with the shift to English due to reasons like practice the inherent complexity of changing languages and difficulties in effectively conveying intricate academic concepts, in English. Some educators openly acknowledged their English proficiency which added another layer of complexity to the adjustment process.

b) Strategies Employed

To tackle the obstacles linked to EMI in classrooms m teachers used methods. Class switch was a mentioned approach where educators switched between English Arabic and French to help students grasp the content. However, some teachers saw this method as disruptive to both learning languages. Delivering course material. Others opted for simplifying the language using visuals and repeating explanations, in Arabic and French to make complex subjects clearer. Educators with a command of the English language and a focus on academic writing mentioned facing fewer difficulties, in their work.

4. Discussion

The results of this research provide an insight into how English is used as the medium of instruction at the Oran Graduate School of Economics (OGSE). The difficulties encountered by students and educators mainly stem from their proficiency in the language. Educators exhibit levels of ease in instruct ng in English; however, a notable number encounter challenges in effectively conveying information due, to their restricted English proficiency. Students often struggle to understand content, in English because they may not be proficient enough to participate effectively in an English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) setting.

There is a challenging situation when applying the partial immersion as an approach for the implementation of EMI. Most teachers use French and a few of them use Arabic as a medium of communication in class. The teaching written materials are in English though. On the other hand, the majority of the students would like to immerse partially in EMI through Arabic and not French (Figure Two). The students prefer using the dominant language at home to better understand the economic texts. English and Arabic occupy a dominant position in students 'interest. They contend that they prefer to use Arabic for translating new English words The use of translation and interpretation, even if it is not free, remains more effective and more reasonable than a monolingual diet based on the English language alone" (Wilkinson, 2024, 112).

Determining the right balance between French and Arabic in the classroom as a medium of instruction for paving the way to a future full immersion does not seem to be an effective technique. It leads to cognitive overload and stress that impact their overall learning experience and academic performance. It creates ambiguous learning settings for the students. If extensive professional programs and high-quality resource materials such as textbooks, and teaching aids are acquired, the students may not find it difficult to adjust to learning in three languages. Integrating EMI in the curriculum should be emphasized to planning and requires developing dual language instructional strategies and assessment methods.

In northern European nations that have been leading in adopting English as a primary language influence are now contemplating language modifications in Finland for example has developed a notion of 'lingual parallelism' (Cabau 2014 page 66) which involves encouraging the use of other languages, alongside English whenever feasible. In 2008 in Denmark's University of Copenhagen a Centre for Internationalization and Parallel Language Use (CIP) was set up to provide English and Danish language programs for both international students. According to belief among the public majority is that English should be the primary

language used for teaching in academic fields. It is widely accepted that due to globalization and the economic influence of the United States in particular English has become a dominant language, in business sectors as well. (see also Chaplier, 2014).

5. Recommendations

Improving teaching context materials in English and enhancing collaboration between the teachers of content subject and the language instructors could constitute an immersion program where content knowledge and target language are pursued. More courses need to be offered to teachers for gaining better proficiency in English, and to the students to develop their reading and writing skills in English.

When it comes to incorporating EMI (English as a Medium of Instruction) in the education of Masters students' various outcomes could arise from this decision. A study conducted in France suggests that current data reveals a preference towards English in Masters programs in cantonal universities and federal institutes. In these institutions English is either the language used in teaching or is allowed alongside national languages in bilingual programs. This shift towards using English at the Masters level implies that there is an emphasis on education in national languages, during undergraduate studies. (Studer & Siddiqa, 2021).

6. Conclusion

The empirical research which provides evidence of EMI effectiveness in Algeria is still scarce due to its late adoption. There are concerns over the transitional challenges faced by the teachers and mainly the students, mainly at the linguistic level.

The out of class exposure to English helps the students to develop higher degree of comprehension skills and fluency, but not the accurate linguistic features of the academic English. Speaking skills are used for interactions and remaining active in communication.

In the partial immersion approach, there are French dominant environment and an Arabic dominant setting that necessitates going gradually to a full immersion in English. In these cases, the explicit reference to the language of instruction, English, in "English as a Medium of Instruction" signals that the use of English is marked practice - a novel phenomenon. (Coleman & al. 2018)

In partial immersion setting, a split in EMI implementation is witnessed between Arabic and French. Since the questionnaires are anonymous, it is not possible to check if this phenomenon is witnessed within the same module between the lecturer/course instructor and the tutorial instructor/the teaching assistant. This situation contains confused code-switching habits due to the ways communication and arguments are introduced in class between the teachers and the students. When it prevails, it affects the quality and the outcomes of implementing EMI.

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