

Navigating the Transition to English Medium Instruction in Algerian Universities

Keltoum Mansouri*

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ABSTRACT

The growing global interest in teaching higher education courses in English has led to an increasing academic focus on English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). This study explores Algerian university lecturers' attitudes regarding the transition to EMI using a qualitative approach. As part of a larger study that surveyed 1,080 lecturers across Algerian universities, this analysis focuses on 100 respondents who provided open-ended survey responses. Thematic analysis identified five key themes: resistance and challenges to EMI, support for a gradual transition to EMI, the need for capacity building and professional development, the benefits of EMI for research and global competitiveness, and field-specific perspectives on EMI. The findings offer evidence-based recommendations for educational policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to support and facilitate the effective integration of EMI in higher education institutions, ultimately enhancing both teaching and learning outcomes.

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Statement of Publication Ethics

This study was conducted in compliance with research and publication ethics. As per the University of Oum El Bouaghi guidelines, formal ethics committee approval was not required for this type of research. However, all procedures adhered to established ethical standards, including obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality, and respecting their rights throughout the research process.

Authors' Contribution Rate

The author confirms being the sole contributor to this work.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that she has no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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* Associate. Professor, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4117-1936>, University of Oum El Bouaghi, Department of English Language, Algeria, mansouri.keltoum@univ-ueb.dz

Introduction

With the rise of globalisation, English has established itself as the dominant language for international communication. In the past few years, the adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) has gained substantial momentum worldwide, reflecting the language's status as a global lingua franca. EMI is increasingly viewed as a key strategy for enhancing international collaboration, academic mobility, and employability opportunities for students. As universities worldwide embrace the internationalisation process, EMI has gained significant traction as a means to foster global engagement in the form of cross-border academic partnerships, student and faculty exchanges, and participation in international research networks, besides academic excellence, measured through improved global university rankings, research output, and graduate employability metrics.

In line with this global trend, the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) has recently mandated the integration of EMI across all non-English courses in higher education institutions. This policy shift reflects a broader vision to enhance Algerian universities' global visibility, facilitate student and faculty engagement in international research, and improve graduates' competitiveness in the global job market. However, this transition poses significant challenges due to Algeria's complex linguistic landscape. Historically, Arabic has been the dominant language of instruction in the humanities and social sciences, while French has remained prevalent in scientific and technical disciplines. English, by contrast, has largely been restricted to language courses, with minimal presence in academic instruction across fields.

Algeria's linguistic context is particularly distinctive due to its multilingualism and the socio-political significance of language. Arabic, as the official language, embodies cultural and national identity, while French, a colonial legacy, continues to dominate sectors such as business, science, and technology. The introduction of EMI, therefore, is not merely a pedagogical shift but a broader sociolinguistic and cultural transformation. This transition raises critical questions regarding lecturers' readiness, attitudes, and perceived challenges in adopting EMI, as well as its potential impact on academic performance and the broader implications for Algeria's linguistic identity.

While extensive research has examined EMI implementation globally, studies focusing on lecturers' perspectives in Algeria remain scarce. Most existing research has explored attitudes toward EMI in contexts such as Saudi Arabia (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016), Turkey (Karakas, 2016), and European countries such as Austria, Italy, and Poland (Dearden & Macaro, 2016). In the Algerian context, recent contributions from Ouarniki (2023) and Senouci and Gacem (2024) have provided valuable insights; however, critical gaps persist regarding disciplinary differences in EMI adoption and the practical challenges associated with its implementation. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining Algerian university lecturers' perceptions of EMI and the factors shaping their attitudes and preparedness. In doing so, it aims to deepen understanding of EMI's integration in an educational context where English has historically played a marginal role.

Literature Review

English as a Medium of Instruction

The concept of English Medium Instruction (EMI) is primarily applied at the tertiary level to describe the teaching of non-English subjects through EMI (Griffiths, 2023). In essence, it refers to “the use of English to teach university subjects across various disciplines” (Galloway & McKinley, 2022, p. 2). In recent years, EMI has emerged as a pivotal trend in higher education institutions (HEIs) outside the English-speaking world. This growing phenomenon highlights the global dominance of English in academia, often overshadowing national languages, regardless of regional or historical contexts.

EMI is increasingly recognised as a key driver of the internationalisation of higher education (Bradford & Brown, 2018). According to Griffiths (2023), HEIs that adopt EMI are seen as more attractive to international students and are better positioned in global university rankings. Moreover, EMI is believed to support international collaborations with foreign universities, foster global research initiatives, and facilitate the broader dissemination of academic publications (Bradford & Brown, 2018). These benefits are often cited as motivations for adopting EMI, particularly in non-Anglophone countries seeking to enhance their global competitiveness (Macaro, 2018).

In the Algerian context, the adoption of EMI marks a significant shift in language policy. Although Algeria embraced the Bologna Process in 2004, facilitating the gradual expansion of EMI (Phillipson, 2013), its full-scale implementation in HEIs has only recently begun. Algeria’s linguistic landscape, where Arabic and French have long dominated educational and professional spheres, makes this transition particularly complex. The government has mandated EMI across all academic disciplines without exception, introducing this policy through a top-down approach without prior consultation or investigation into lecturers’ perspectives. This abrupt transition raises critical questions regarding lecturers’ readiness to adapt, the potential impact on academic quality, and broader implications for Algeria’s linguistic identity. Moreover, the exclusion of key stakeholders, particularly lecturers, underscores the need for further research into the implementation and reception of EMI in Algeria.

Teachers’ Attitudes about EMI

Attitudes, as defined by Allport (1935), are mental or emotional states shaped by experience, which predispose individuals to respond in specific ways to related objects or situations, thereby influencing their reactions and behaviour. Teacher attitudes, conceptualised as psychological constructs by Borg (2006), play a pivotal role in the implementation of educational policies and programmes. Educators who hold positive attitudes toward such initiatives are more likely to engage actively in their execution, exhibit enthusiasm for teaching, foster student engagement, and create a supportive learning environment (Chibali & Mwami, 2022). This active involvement is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of educational reforms.

University lecturers’ attitudes toward EMI have been extensively examined across diverse educational contexts, revealing notable variations among educators (Dearden &

Macaro, 2016). In Europe, for instance, EMI has been widely integrated as part of the Bologna Process, which seeks to harmonise higher education systems across the continent. Similarly, in the Middle East, countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have implemented EMI policies to align their higher education systems with global standards (Al-Kahtany et al., 2016; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). Overall, lecturers acknowledge the significant role of English in facilitating instruction across various academic disciplines and courses (e.g., Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Pramerta et al., 2023; Reilly, 2019). Research highlights several perceived benefits of EMI, including its contribution to the internationalisation of higher education (Huang, 2018; Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011), its potential to attract international students (Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Jensen & Thøgersen, 2011; Pulcini & Campagna, 2015), and its role in fostering social mobility and expanding career prospects (Hu et al., 2014). Additional advantages include promoting intercultural understanding (Earls, 2016; Pulcini & Campagna, 2015), enhancing students' English proficiency (Kim, 2017), and equipping learners with competitive global skills (Zhang, 2018).

Despite these advantages, lecturers have consistently reported challenges and reservations regarding EMI implementation, particularly in relation to pedagogical and linguistic concerns. A key issue is the English proficiency of both lecturers and students, often cited as a barrier to effective content delivery (e.g., Lasagabaster, 2022; Macaro et al., 2018). Lecturers may lack the requisite language skills to teach specialised subject matter effectively, while students may struggle to comprehend complex content in a non-native language. These challenges are particularly pronounced in contexts where English is not widely spoken beyond the classroom. For instance, Bradford (2016) found that university lecturers in Japan expressed ambivalence toward EMI, primarily due to concerns about their ability to convey complex concepts effectively in English. Similarly, Barnawi (2021) observed that while Saudi educators acknowledged the alignment of EMI with global job market demands and international accreditation standards, they remained apprehensive about the negative effects of its rapid implementation on students' deep learning.

Existing research suggests that lecturers' language proficiency plays a crucial role in shaping their attitudes toward EMI (e.g., Dearden & Macaro, 2016; Mansouri, forthcoming; Nadri & Haoucha, 2020), though this relationship remains underexplored. Quantitative findings from Mansouri (forthcoming), based on ANOVA test results, suggest that lecturers with higher English proficiency exhibit more positive attitudes toward EMI. Concerns over the potential impact of inadequate language skills on the quality of instruction in EMI settings are well-documented. For example, Bradford (2016) noted that insufficient English proficiency among both lecturers and students could hinder knowledge transfer, affecting the depth and accuracy of content delivery.

Beyond linguistic challenges, cultural implications have also emerged as a critical concern. Pulcini and Campagna (2015) reported that lecturers in Italy feared EMI adoption might threaten local cultures and languages, underscoring the tension between internationalisation and cultural preservation.

Despite the growing global interest in EMI, research on Algerian university lecturers' attitudes toward its implementation remains limited, primarily due to its recent introduction. The abrupt transition to EMI represents a profound shift in teaching practices, raising concerns about lecturers' readiness to adapt to this new medium of instruction. Ouarniki (2023) conducted semi-structured interviews with ten lecturers to explore their perceptions of EMI implementation, focusing on its perceived benefits and challenges. The study found that lecturers viewed EMI as advantageous across all disciplines, citing opportunities for international collaboration and enhanced access to global academic resources. However, inadequate English proficiency among both lecturers and students emerged as a major obstacle. While this study provides valuable preliminary insights, its small sample size limits the generalisability of its findings.

Similarly, Senouci and Gacem (2024) conducted interviews with university lecturers, though they did not specify participant details. Their findings indicate that teachers were unprepared for the sudden shift to EMI and favoured a more gradual implementation, emphasising the need for extended language training for both lecturers and students. However, the study's lack of methodological transparency raises concerns about the reliability and applicability of its findings to broader contexts.

These studies highlight critical challenges associated with EMI implementation in Algeria. However, neither provides a comprehensive understanding of lecturers' attitudes across different disciplines or regions nor explores EMI's broader implications for academic quality and linguistic identity. Furthermore, the small sample sizes and methodological limitations underscore the need for more rigorous and representative research.

Addressing these gaps, the present study aims to offer a more comprehensive analysis of Algerian university lecturers' attitudes toward EMI. By incorporating a larger and more diverse sample from various disciplines and institutions, this research seeks to examine not only the perceived benefits and challenges of EMI but also the contextual factors shaping lecturers' attitudes, including their linguistic backgrounds, teaching experiences, and perceptions of EMI's impact on academic quality and cultural identity. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute new insights into EMI implementation in Algeria, providing evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and educators to facilitate a smoother and more effective transition.

Research Aim and Research Question

This study aims to investigate university lecturers' perceptions of the transition to an EMI policy in Algerian higher education institutions. Specifically, it seeks to address the following research question:

RQ: How do Algerian university lecturers from diverse backgrounds perceive the transition to an EMI policy in their institutions?

Methodology

Research Design

This study investigates university lecturers' attitudes toward the transition to EMI in Algerian universities. A qualitative approach was selected to facilitate an in-depth exploration of lecturers' perspectives and experiences, which are crucial for understanding the complexities of attitudinal responses to policy shifts such as EMI. Given the study's focus on describing and analysing lecturers' perceptions, a descriptive research design was adopted. This design is particularly well-suited for examining attitudes (Johnson & Christensen, 2016), as it enables a systematic exploration of the "how" and "why" underlying lecturers' perspectives, offering a nuanced and context-sensitive understanding of their responses to EMI implementation. These methodological choices ensure a comprehensive analysis of lecturers' attitudes, aligning with the study's aim of understanding the intricacies of embracing EMI in Algerian higher education.

The study serves as a complementary part of a larger study (Mansouri, forthcoming) that involved 1,080 lecturers participating in an online survey primarily designed to collect quantitative data. While the quantitative study provided a broad overview of lecturers' perceptions and self-efficacy levels, it primarily captured patterns and relationships through statistical analysis, leaving certain underlying motivations and contextual factors unexplored. The qualitative component presented in this study addresses these gaps by offering deeper insights into the reasons behind lecturers' attitudes, their personal experiences, and the broader socio-cultural and institutional factors influencing their attitudes toward EMI.

Publication Ethics

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Participants

This study employed convenience sampling, inviting Algerian university lecturers from various institutions to participate voluntarily via email and social media platforms. The sample included a diverse group of male and female lecturers representing different age ranges, academic ranks, teaching experiences, and specialisations across both scientific and non-scientific fields within public universities. As the data collection took place during the early stages of the ministerial policy's implementation— characterised by a top-down approach and limited institutional autonomy— there was no consensus on the training content. Each university developed its own plan; however, most initially offered only general English sessions for lecturers. For the qualitative component, a subset of 100

lecturers was selected from the larger dataset based on the depth of qualitative input provided, ensuring that the selected participants offered detailed reflections on their attitudes, challenges, and experiences related to EMI. By focusing on in-depth responses, this qualitative component facilitated a more comprehensive exploration of the factors shaping lecturers' perceptions, thereby complementing the broader quantitative findings.

Table 1. Lecturers' Demographic Information

		Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	36%
	Female	64%
Field	Science, technology, and Architecture	60%
	Economics and Law	19%
	Human and Social Sciences	21%
Language of instruction	Arabic	55%
	French	45%
Academic Rank	Professor	13%
	Assistant Professor	61%
	Associate Professor	26%
Years of teaching	0 to 10	26%
	11 to 20	56%
	21 to 30	12%
	Over 30	6%
Age	30 to 40	32%
	41 to 50	42%
	51 to 60	22%
	Over 60	4%

Data Collection and Analysis

The participants provided responses to an open-ended question in the survey, where they were encouraged to share their personal perspectives on the transition to EMI in Algerian higher education. To ensure that language did not act as a barrier to expression, participants were given the option to respond in the language they felt most comfortable with, either Arabic or French. Their responses were later translated into English for analysis. To ensure the accuracy and fidelity of the translations, an expert review was conducted by a multilingual colleague (proficient in Arabic, French, and English) from the Department of Translation. This colleague is an associate professor with extensive expertise in academic translation. No significant discrepancies were identified between the two translations, aside from slight formality variations that did not affect the overall meaning or coherence of the excerpts. Non-substantive responses, such as 'thank you' and 'nothing to add', were excluded. The qualitative data provided in-depth insights into participants' views, complementing the quantitative findings from the broader study. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely recognised qualitative method for

identifying patterns and themes related to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This method focuses on the content of participants' responses rather than their mode of expression, adopting a descriptive approach to qualitative research. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach, the analysis involved familiarisation with the data, initial coding, theme identification, theme refinement, theme definition, and the final report production. First, participants' responses were read multiple times to ensure thorough familiarity with the data. Initial codes were then generated using the software NVivo, capturing key patterns within the responses. The coded data were subsequently grouped into potential themes, which were iteratively reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and distinctiveness.

To enhance reliability, the initial codes and themes were shared and discussed with a colleague experienced in thematic analysis. No significant discrepancies were identified, except for the distinction between the codes *Parallel Training for Professors and Students* (see Theme 1) and *Tailored Professional Development* (see Theme 2). Initially, these were grouped under *Integrated Training for Professors and Students*; however, further discussion led to a consensus that they presented distinct concepts. The former refers to preparatory language support for both lecturers and students, whereas the latter pertains to professional development for lecturers beyond language proficiency, aimed at facilitating the successful implementation of EMI in their institutions. The study adhered to all ethical guidelines and standards for research involving human participants. Ethical approval was obtained, and participants provided informed consent before completing the survey.

Results

This section presents the key findings derived from analysing lecturers' comments and notes collected through the survey. This study complements the quantitative findings and provides a comprehensive perspective on EMI implementation in Algerian universities by offering a more nuanced understanding of lecturers' experiences. The analysis identified five main themes, each accompanied by relevant sub-themes. These themes capture lecturers' perspectives on the transition to EMI policy in higher education institutions.

Theme 1: Resistance and Challenges to English Medium Instruction (EMI)

The transition to EMI in Algerian universities faces considerable resistance due to various challenges, expressing concerns about their ability to teach in English and the potential impact on the quality of education. It was evident that both professors and students were often unprepared for this transition, particularly in terms of English language proficiency. Additionally, the speed of implementation and the cultural implications of adopting English further complicate the process, raising broader questions about its effects on educational practices and national identity.

Insufficient English Proficiency

A key concern highlighted by participants was their limited English proficiency, which they viewed as a significant barrier to effective teaching. About 80% of professors admitted feeling unprepared, citing their minimal exposure to English and reliance on translation tools. One lecturer noted, *“Teaching in English feels very challenging after years of relying on translation sites”*. Others emphasised the need for more time to develop both linguistic and subject-specific terminology, with one stating, *“I need more time to effectively use both the language and scientific terms to communicate information”*. These reflections underscore the challenges faced by educators in transitioning to EMI, particularly when sufficient time and resources for language training are not provided.

Cultural and Linguistic Concerns

Beyond language barriers, about 25% of participants expressed concerns about the cultural implications of transitioning to EMI, particularly regarding the diminished role of Arabic in higher education. Some feared that adopting English could undermine Algeria’s linguistic and cultural identity, with one participant asserting, *“The university must reflect the identity of the country to which it belongs; Algeria is a Muslim country whose official language is Arabic”*. Others viewed EMI as a threat to national heritage, with one stating that it felt like *“providing a cultural service free of charge to others, to the detriment of our identity”*. Despite recognising the necessity of English for academic advancement, participants strongly emphasised that its adoption should not come at the expense of Arabic or Algeria’s cultural heritage.

Theme 2: Support for Gradual Transition to EMI

A significant number of participants agreed on the necessity of a gradual transition to EMI, advocating for a phased implementation rather than an abrupt shift. Many emphasised the importance of preparing both students and professors through parallel training programmes to build their English proficiency before the full-scale transition to EMI. This viewpoint suggests that a careful, gradual approach is essential to ensure that both faculty and students are adequately equipped for the demands of teaching and learning in English. A bilingual or parallel approach, integrating English with Arabic or French in the early stages, was frequently recommended to minimise disruptions to the learning process and ease the transition.

Parallel Training for Professors and Students

Participants widely agreed that parallel training for both professors and students is essential for a successful transition to EMI. About 70% of lecturers emphasised that sufficient preparation time and structured training programmes are critical, with one lecturer stating, *“Transitioning to English in teaching requires sufficient time and specialised training”*. Some suggested a phased approach, recommending at least two years of preparation before full EMI implementation. Others highlighted the importance of professional development, advocating for international exposure through overseas training

and internship, in addition to the involvement of native English speakers to enhance instructors' proficiency. These perspectives underscore the need for long-term investment in capacity building to ensure both faculty and students are adequately prepared for this transition.

Bilingual Approach to Teaching

Almost 35% of participants supported a bilingual approach as a transitional strategy for EMI, allowing professors to use Arabic or French alongside English to ease the shift for students and educators. One lecturer noted, "*Teaching in English is useful, but only gradual implementation will ensure success*", reflecting concerns over the risks of an abrupt transition. Others emphasised that integrating English gradually —using native languages for explanation while reserving English for technical terms, practical work, and academic discourse— would facilitate comprehension and adaptation. Overall, participants viewed this approach as a balanced method to support learning while ensuring a smoother and more effective transition to EMI.

Theme 3: Need for Capacity Building and Professional Development

The data revealed a strong emphasis on the necessity of professional development to prepare both faculty and students for the challenges associated with English Medium Instruction (EMI). Participants underscored that training programmes and resources must be tailored to specific academic disciplines to effectively address the unique needs of each field. A recurring theme in the responses was the need for extensive capacity building among professors, emphasising the importance of targeted training programmes, internships in English-speaking countries, and the availability of resources such as textbooks and technical tools in English. This focus on discipline-specific training is seen as essential for equipping educators to teach effectively in English and to engage with the demands of EMI. Participants agreed that the transition to EMI should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a broader reform effort within the Algerian higher education system. They emphasised that implementing EMI requires not only changes in language use but also improvements in teaching quality and curriculum development. Addressing issues such as curriculum quality and student preparedness is essential for the successful integration of EMI. This theme highlights the view that language reform alone is insufficient to achieve improved educational outcomes without accompanying systemic changes.

Tailored Professional Development

Approximately 45% of lecturers stressed the need for professional development programmes tailored to specific academic disciplines. They emphasised that training should build on lecturers' existing language skills and be designed to meet the linguistic and technical demands of each field. One participant noted, "*It is advisable to teach English to professors according to the specialisation because some already possess the basics of the language*". Others advocated for immersive opportunities, such as overseas

training in English-speaking environments, to enhance both language proficiency and pedagogical effectiveness. Overall, participants highlighted that discipline-specific training is essential for the successful and sustainable implementation of EMI, ensuring educators are well-equipped to integrate English into their teaching.

Access to Resources and Infrastructure

Beyond professional development, an estimated 25% of the participants highlighted the need for adequate resources and infrastructure to support EMI implementation. Essential tools such as English textbooks, technical documentation, and language labs were identified as key facilitators of this transition. One lecturer emphasised, *“Language labs are needed for teaching English, particularly speaking and listening”*. Others stressed the importance of specialised books and re-equipping libraries with English-language materials. Additionally, participants called for a careful transition that integrates appropriate language, technology, and pedagogical methods. These insights underscore the necessity of high-quality, discipline-specific resources and modern infrastructure to ensure a smooth and effective shift to EMI.

Curriculum and Teaching Quality

Similarly, nearly a quarter of the respondents emphasised that EMI implementation must be accompanied by broader educational reforms to enhance teaching quality and curriculum development. One lecturer noted, *“The quality of education at the university does not start with changing the language”*. Others stressed the importance of aligning education with societal and economic needs, arguing that integration with the labour market is more crucial than the language of instruction. Additionally, participants highlighted the need for meaningful, high-quality content that serves both academic and societal goals. As one remarked, *“The decision requires restructuring at all educational levels as a preparation for university”*. Overall, participants viewed EMI as part of a larger strategy to improve the quality and relevance of higher education in Algeria.

Theme 4: Perceived Benefits of EMI for Research and Global Competitiveness

Despite the challenges associated with EMI, participants acknowledged its potential benefits, particularly in enhancing research capabilities and improving global competitiveness. Participants recognised that EMI could provide Algerian universities with increased access to global academic resources and foster international collaboration, thereby positioning both students and institutions more competitively on the global stage. The transition to EMI was viewed as a strategic move to foster greater openness and engagement with the international academic community, helping to elevate the university's academic profile and research output.

Enhancing Research Capabilities

Approximately 40% of the lecturers highlighted EMI's potential to enhance the research capabilities of universities by improving access to international academic discourse. One lecturer stated, "*The English language is essential in scientific research; thus, researchers need to master it*". Others emphasised that English proficiency facilitates access to scholarly resources, research publications, and global collaborations, ultimately expanding the reach and impact of academic work. These perspectives underscore the role of EMI not only in teaching but also in strengthening research engagement within the global academic community.

Increasing Global Competitiveness

An estimated quarter of the lecturers recognised EMI's potential to improve the global competitiveness of Algerian universities by increasing visibility and fostering international collaboration. One lecturer noted, "*The shift to English will open great prospects for the Algerian university*", while others emphasised that EMI could strengthen global partnerships and institutional recognition. Overall, participants viewed EMI as a means to elevate Algerian universities on the international academic stage, improving research opportunities and expanding global engagement.

Theme 5: Field-Specific Perspectives on EMI

The relevance of EMI varied significantly across academic disciplines. While participants from technical and scientific fields generally viewed EMI as beneficial, particularly for engaging with international research and specialised terminology, those from the humanities and social sciences expressed reservations about its feasibility and relevance. This theme underscores the importance of tailoring EMI policies to the specific needs and characteristics of different academic fields, as the transition to EMI may not be equally effective or necessary across all disciplines.

EMI in Technical Disciplines

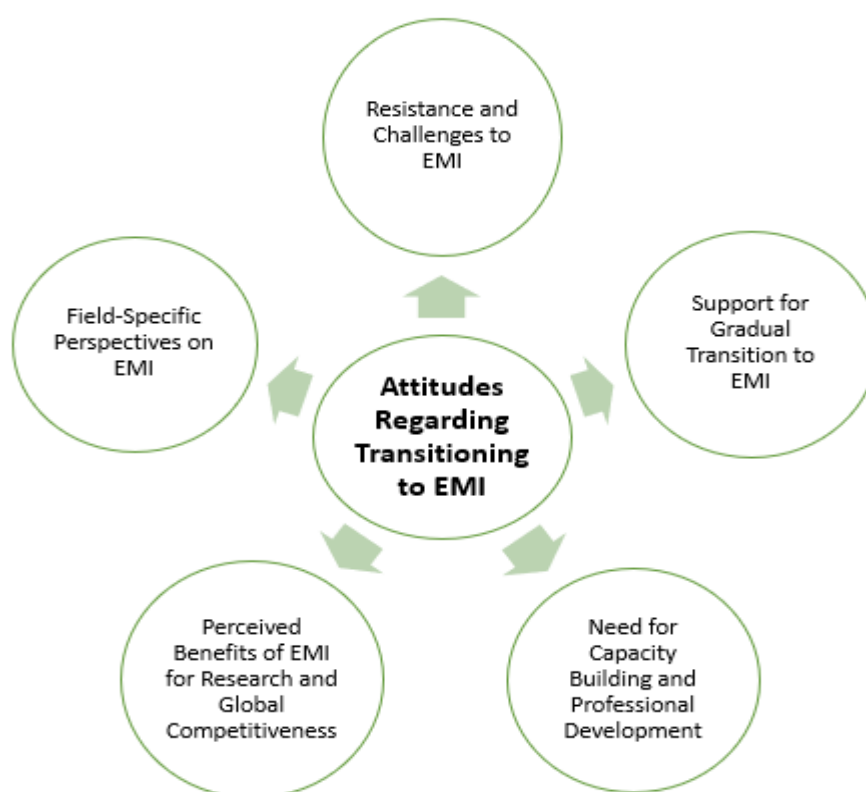
Participants from technical disciplines expressed strong support for EMI, highlighting its importance for engaging with international research and accessing global scientific terminology. One participant noted that in technical fields, professors must be able to access and benefit from English-language research, emphasising the necessity of EMI to stay current with global developments. Another lecturer in the sciences pointed out that disciplines such as computer science particularly benefit from English due to their reliance on cutting-edge research. These views reinforce the critical role of English in technical disciplines, where proficiency is essential for keeping up with global research and innovations.

EMI in Humanities and Social Sciences

In contrast, participants from the humanities and social sciences expressed reservations about the feasibility and effectiveness of EMI in their fields. Approximately two-thirds highlighted the linguistic and thematic complexities of disciplines such as law, sociology, and history, which are deeply embedded in local and historical contexts. One lecturer commented, “*Not all specialisations need to be taught in English; history requires French more*”, likely referring to the historical ties between Algeria and France in the context of studying local history. This highlights the unique challenges faced by fields deeply rooted in local and historical contexts, where native or regional languages may be more effective for teaching and understanding. The perspectives emphasise the linguistic and pedagogical difficulties of implementing EMI in disciplines such as law, sociology, and history.

The findings of the study are summarised in the following figure.

Figure 1. Themes Emerged from Data Analysis



Discussion

Five main themes emerged from analysing the data. The first theme highlights challenges related to inadequate English proficiency, the pace of EMI adoption, and concerns about national and linguistic identities. A common concern among lecturers was the lack of English proficiency, as reported in the quantitative findings (Mansouri,

forthcoming), both in terms of language skills and academic terminology, which hindered their ability to teach effectively in English. Many lecturers expressed a lack of confidence in their English abilities, reflecting broader issues of limited exposure and insufficient language training. This lack of preparedness undermines the potential effectiveness of EMI as a pedagogical approach, as language proficiency is critical for successful implementation (Jiang et al., 2016; Lasagabaster, 2022; Macaro et al., 2018; Ouarniki, 2023). Additionally, lecturers expressed concerns that the widespread adoption of English might threaten the status of Arabic and undermine national identity, reflecting a broader global debate on the balance between linguistic globalisation and cultural preservation (Li, 2013; Pulcini & Campagna, 2015).

The second theme emphasises the need for a structured and gradual transition to EMI, underscoring the importance of preparation. A key aspect of this transition is parallel training for both students and professors to equip them with the necessary language skills before full EMI implementation. Research has consistently highlighted the effectiveness of phased EMI adoption models that integrate bilingual approaches and language support mechanisms (Macaro et al., 2018). Without concurrent training, the transition risks disproportionately burdening one group, leading to frustration and resistance. Participants also suggested international exposure and immersive experiences as complementary strategies to enhance language skills and teaching methodologies. The adoption of a bilingual approach during the initial phases of EMI was seen as a way to bridge comprehension gaps, ensuring that students can still access course content while gradually adjusting to English. Such transitional approaches reflect broader best practices in multilingual education (Rose et al., 2023).

The third theme underscores the role of capacity building and professional development in sustaining EMI implementation. Beyond basic language training, discipline-specific professional development was highlighted as essential. Participants emphasised that generic training programs may not sufficiently address the linguistic and technical demands of different academic disciplines. Instead, tailored EMI training, incorporating immersive experiences and international collaborations, was viewed as a means to refine pedagogical approaches and enhance research output. These insights resonate with global perspectives that stress the importance of customised professional development as a driver for the long-term success of EMI (Macaro et al., 2018). The provision of adequate and sufficient resources, such as English-language textbooks, digital materials, and well-equipped language laboratories, was also identified as a crucial factor in ensuring a smooth transition (Rose et al., 2020). Moreover, EMI should be integrated into broader educational reform strategies aimed at aligning curricula with global academic and economic needs, an approach widely advocated in EMI policy discussions (Rose et al., 2020).

The fourth theme highlights the perceived benefits of EMI for enhancing research capabilities and global competitiveness. Participants acknowledged EMI as a strategic move to improve academic profiles, research output, and international collaboration. English proficiency was seen as a gateway to accessing global scholarly resources and engaging in cross-border research partnerships. This perspective reinforces the broader

academic consensus that EMI can elevate the quality and impact of research, positioning universities more competitively in the global academic landscape (Dafouz & Smit, 2016; Griffiths, 2023). However, successful implementation requires a well-supported transition strategy to mitigate potential challenges and maximise EMI's benefits.

The fifth theme reveals significant disciplinary differences in attitudes toward EMI. While participants from technical and scientific fields generally supported EMI for its potential to enhance access to international research and specialised terminology, those from the humanities and social sciences expressed concerns about its feasibility and relevance. The transition to EMI may not be equally effective across all disciplines, as some fields rely heavily on local linguistic and cultural contexts. In humanities and social sciences, where deep engagement with local languages is often necessary, EMI may pose challenges in conveying complex theoretical concepts and cultural nuances. These findings contribute to ongoing global discussions on the differential impact of EMI across academic disciplines, reinforcing the need for context-sensitive EMI policies that consider disciplinary and cultural specificities (Dearden, 2014; Phillipson, 2009).

By synthesising these findings, this study contributes to the broader EMI discourse by highlighting the interplay between language training, professional development, research competitiveness, and disciplinary differences. Rather than viewing EMI as a one-size-fits-all solution, a phased and contextually adapted approach emerges as a more sustainable strategy. This study reinforces global arguments advocating for flexible EMI models that balance linguistic preparedness, professional development, and academic inclusivity, ensuring that EMI adoption aligns with both national educational priorities and international academic standards.

Conclusion

This study qualitatively investigated Algerian university lecturers' attitudes toward the transition to English Medium Instruction (EMI), uncovering both resistance and cautious optimism shaped by linguistic, cultural, and discipline-specific factors. While lecturers in technical fields viewed EMI as a means for global competitiveness and research advancement, those in the humanities and social sciences questioned its feasibility and relevance. Despite these differing perspectives, there was a shared consensus on the need for phased implementation, capacity building, and alignment with the local linguistic and cultural contexts.

The findings align with global trends, where tensions between internationalisation and local realities persist. Research from non-English-speaking countries in Europe and Asia reveals similar disciplinary divides in EMI perceptions. While many institutions embrace EMI to enhance academic reputation and global engagement, challenges related to linguistic proficiency, curriculum adaptation, and national identity remain. Institutional readiness and policy approaches vary; some European countries have successfully implemented bilingual or transitional EMI models, while others face resistance due to sociolinguistic and political factors. Effective EMI adoption necessitates balancing global aspirations with local educational realities through tailored, context-sensitive strategies.

Emphasising. Policymakers should move beyond a one-size-fits-all approach, implementing phased and discipline-specific models. This may include preparatory language programmes to enhance lecturers' and students' English proficiency before full EMI adoption. A bilingual instructional model, where content is initially delivered in both English and the native language, can ease comprehension challenges. Additionally, discipline-specific training is crucial—STEM lecturers may require targeted technical English instruction, while humanities and social sciences educators might benefit from EMI methodologies that preserve engagement with local languages and cultural contexts.

Beyond its sociolinguistic and cultural implications, this study makes significant theoretical and methodological contributions to EMI research. It highlights the need for EMI frameworks that balance globalisation with local linguistic and cultural realities, challenging models that prioritise language acquisition and internationalisation at the expense of contextual relevance. Sustainable EMI implementation requires policies that integrate sociolinguistic considerations, ensuring alignment with both global aspirations and local educational traditions. Methodologically, this study highlights the value of qualitative inquiry in capturing nuanced perspectives often overlooked in large-scale quantitative research, particularly regarding disciplinary and cultural concerns. Future research should apply these frameworks across diverse contexts and examine their long-term impact by tracking shifts in lecturers' attitudes, teaching practices, and student outcomes. Incorporating perspectives from students, policymakers, and other stakeholders will provide a more comprehensive understanding of EMI's role in shaping higher education.

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