Objectives and Perspectives of English in Algeria: Reforms and Strategies

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Abstract: The growing importance of English language in Algeria imposes itself as much as the anticipated needs for development and prosperity. Evidently, the gates to development and modernization happen to be through science and technology imported from its western language based-sources. As a sequence, our young students who are doomed to English dependence and pursuing their studies under the "Arabised system" are, more or less, conscious about the utility of foreign languages, particularly English as an international language.
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1- Introduction

Since English has spread in the Third World as the linguistic by-product of economic development and technological advancement, the functional and cultural utility of it cannot be under-valued in any country eager to keep abreast of modernisation and progress in scientific research. Above its prestige, English language as a means of communication between nations is of paramount importance with regard to the field of human relations. Industrialists and scientists alike are increasingly aware of the value of this asset.

This is no less the case of Algeria whose students aim studying for a higher degree or carry out research in science and technology. The present educational system of Algeria tends to favour the use of foreign languages, particularly English. However the standing of French as medium

of instruction is nowadays impairing along with 'Arabisation' enhancement and further more centred roles are steadily covered by English. In the last few years, the student's purpose of language study reflects the mere utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in the profession or travelling for social contact with foreigners. Hence, as a tool of success in the student's career, English status vis-a-vis French has become a foregone conclusion: English is more prestigious than French. (In some other contexts, including even Arabic in question the national language in Algeria). For whatever reasons, however, the presence and increased utility promoting English is being felt at the levels of politics, economic horizons and self-interest.

2- Objectives and perspectives of English in Algeria
2-1- Foreign-Language Policy Implications:

The introduction of English education and the use of English in particular social spheres is a relatively recent phenomenon that is linked with political influences, economic opportunity, development and globalization. This part examines the changing role of English in the Algerian context by highlighting the positive role that English can play in the economic, social, and intellectual development of Algeria as it undergoes major transformations. It also consider the foreign-language policy implications of the changing workplace and economy globally for the teaching-learning, and use of English often with speakers of other languages. This concerns especially the corresponding needs in terms of the professional development of teachers, researchers and students who may require high levels of proficiency in English to take part in international networking-there is no new opportunity, participation, education, or partnership without effective communication. And English is the *sine qua non* of global communication-so much so that it is frequently taken for granted. In the light of such an importance, English education needs to respond to this situation on the changing workplace and higher education by developing adequate programmes (especially, the implementation of education technology) designed to better prepare

students and teachers for these changes and contribute to the implementation of an urgent knowledge economy that will be a factor of economic growth i.e., the integration of the new information and communication technologies into knowledge economy strategy Chris Rose (2005)

At present, the English Language is the dominant international language and the indispensable key to the changing world of science, technology, and communication. It is the primary language of computer software, of the cutting edge in scientific research, of business and management, and of politics and international networking (an increasing number of people learn and use English via global communications and in multilingual workplaces like oil industries). It is also the medium of interaction in countless activities-air-traffic control, world organisations, prestigious higher studies such as MBA, academic conferences, research and publication. Even the international pop music relies on English for boosting its sales and spread just as space sciences and computing games. It is therefore no wonder that English is the national language of a large number of the Commonwealth countries, where English education has a long-standing history, and the first foreign language in many other countries, with different constellations of linguistic, cultural, and political influences. (The British Council Workshop on Language and Development, 2001).

Algeria, like the rest of the world, is well aware of such a key role, especially, the importance of English-dominated communication in development, i.e. seeking and enjoying greater opportunities for realizing benefits in terms of participation, education, and partnership. It attempts accordingly to implement language and educational policies that lay emphasis on the instrumental role of English as is clear in the experimental attempt to make it a first foreign language in the lower levels of education and in prior political decisions like the one in The National Charter.

The recognition of English as a factor of economic and intellectual growth has promoted policy makers to make English part of the official curriculum at all levels of education (Primary, Foundation, Secondary-school, and University).   The major goal is to enable the younger generations to develop sound proficiency in the foreign language, to gain access to the huge and inexorable wealth of scientific and technological knowledge stored in English, and communicate effectively in international networking, and/or multilingual workplaces. This vital goal is part of the current Algerian *human capital*   policy which tries to generate greater opportunities for development by building up partnership with English-speaking countries. The latter concept "*human capital"* is the backbone of the Algerian economic concern:

"The concept of human capital witnessed excessive significance and copious attention during these years. Researchers in the field maintain that the gist of the human capital concept is investment in what has transformational effect on the individuals and their location, and other skills and expertise forms"

Beddiaf . A & Ouahmiche. G (2020)

The implications of foreign-language policy may be divided into four main types, educational-scientific, economic, and cultural, which together can be woven into an integrated knowledge economy strategy.

3- Educational and Scientific Objectives:

3-1- Education Technology

The educational objectives consist in preparing learners to develop into responsible, productive members of society by equipping them with personal, interpersonal, thinking, information, academic life skills to both perform and communicate effectively in a variety of situations (social and/or workplaces).   These skills are indispensable to cope with the complex literacy demands of the modern Information Age and

Globalization, and avoid being merely a spectator or consumer. The implication is to learn and use information retrieved skills and strategies in order to benefit the most from the available data bank in almost all vital domains. Whether it is about the synthesis and analysis of information from journals, CD Rom, or the internet, there are bound to be many choices and instances which will require a great deal of thoughtful decision-making and critical reflection.

There is an opportunity now for making major changes in education to foster such critical skills and improve learning with technology as the leading factor. Education Technology is increasingly available to teachers of English at the university level. The spread of computers, network communication, and emerging computational technologies should be expanded to all levels of education to improve the learners' knowledge and information skills and to bring a project-based pedagogy to language classrooms. Curriculum development, especially at the university level, should embed such technology into the everyday experiences of students and teachers. Thus, the challenge is how to take advantage of and exploit effectively this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attain the objectives of English Language education in Algeria and to aim for international standards of excellence: to cope with literacy and information demands, to handle information carefully and critically and to participate in knowledge creation.

Of society's institutions, universities are among the most permeable to the influence of the English-dominated education technology. The Algerian university has regional and international as a declared goal in its policies. That networking takes different forms, with a number of graduate students and lecturers gaining their degrees or continuing their professional development in the U.S.A, or keeping scientific and academic links with British and American educational and cultural institutions. The importance of such networking stems from the awareness that much of modern science and knowledge is accessible largely through English. Researchers in any domain and students of engineering, medicine, management, computing,

and information have all a high state in learning and using English if they ever wish to have access to and take part in the international networking.

3-2- Economic Objectives

The introduction of English education is closely linked with economic opportunity, development, and globalization; it aims at generating greater opportunities for realising economic potential and setting up beneficial partnership. The main economic functions conferred on English can be listed as follows:

To play a significant role in economic development;

To ensure effective communication with foreign partners as a tool for participation and partnership;

To contribute to knowledge economy and its role as a factor of economic growth;

To better prepare future negotiators and business managers and help them become effective economic actors;

To help Algeria diversify its economic and business relations and generate further economic opportunities; and

To ensure access to scientific, technological, and research information.

These objectives are necessary for Algeria to gain a decent place in an increasingly complex and reckless globalization whose rules are fierce competition, right negotiations, and innumerable economic and business contacts. In this respect language dynamics as an economic concern is viewed as:

"One of the fundamental aspects of globalisation is the issue of language diversity. The various languages of the world are pulled closely an different levels and settings. Consequently, this may raise either a fruitful chance or a great challenge especially for work places which operate in different parts of the world and they are supposed to achieve their business goals and satisfy their customers and clients"

Hadef . C & Ouahmich.G (June, 2022)

As the unquestionable world's language, English will by all means contribute to the integration of Algeria in the world economy and enhance economic opportunities with a variety of partners. In fact, such is the importance of English that leading strategic national companies have set up their own language courses (i.e., workplace-oriented programmes) to enable their managerial staff and employees to communicate and interact effectively in multilingual workplaces. As an illustration, Sonatrach (the Algerian State Oil Company), by virtue of multiple contracts with English-speaking oil firms, has had regular work-oriented courses for a number of years. In like manner, the Algerian Institute of Petroleum (IAP) uses English as the medium of instruction to equip future engineers and technicians with a solid background in technical English and an effective communicative ability.

3-3- Cultural Objectives

In accordance with the general educational and economic objectives, English education tries to cater for the cultural needs of the Algerian learners by allowing them to enjoy greater opportunities for realising human potential, individually and collectively. New opportunities can only be offered or created as individuals communicate with other people, accept differences, and participate in international networking, cross-cultural dialogue and activities. In this context, Cisar Hood, S. (2000) affirms that *The focus on the 'target culture' is being increasingly supplemented or replaced by a focus on a range of cultures and an emphasis on cross-cultural understanding. The ability to negotiate meaning with other second-language speakers and an awareness of a range of cultural norms are now essential requirements for the English language learner.*

Such a participatory process starts and grows with outward-looking, open-minded individuals, eager to learn and develop as world citizens. This is why, a major objective of English education ought to be cultural awareness and cross cultural understanding with the purpose of encouraging interaction with and empathy towards other people's cultural without fear

of misunderstanding, or cultural shock. More importantly, cultural understanding will likely lessen potential tensions and refine generalisations and stereotypes (Aswnan, B. (2005).

In summary, it may be fair to argue that English, as other foreign languages, is an important factor of development. This importance will keep growing by virtue of the emerging computational and communication technologies. As such, government officials, policy makers, education institutions, and major companies will have to perform a substantial review of the delivery and support of learning to ensure maximum impact on development. The following suggestions on English education should be taken into consideration:

> Developing knowledge economy strategies through education technology,
> Setting up an industry/university collaborative approach to language education and learning by developing workplace-oriented programmes,
> Keeping abreast of worldwide trends in the e-learning market and education technology to enhance the teaching and learning of English,
> Encouraging the use of English via global communications (internet) in education institutions and vocational schools at all levels, and
> Developing adequate language training programmes to better prepare teachers and learners for changing workplaces.

4- E.F.L in the National Educational System
4-1- Reforms and Strategies:

The teaching of English as a foreign language in the Algerian educational system has witnessed a graduate development with regard to its role, curriculum goals, syllabus objectives and teaching methodologies since the last few decades. The major changes have recently been stated in the different levels of education.

At the heart of the reform there has been the proposition that schools ought to prepare students to take their place at the economic integration and international investment. The fact that critical reflections and number of studies have stated the inadequacy of existing curriculum provision and especially its relation with the world of work. The actual planning of English learning and teaching tends to ensure the official objectives as determined in the national educational strategies. For instance, a competency-based curriculum for foreign languages has been adapted in 2005. The latter accepted consensus in methodology states that the use of competing –based approaches in E.L.T is to inter the new language in its spoken form before moving on the written one.

To overcome the difficulties which hinder the efforts made by teachers as well as learners, different programmes have been administered in the educational system so far and various syllabi have been designed for all levels in order to bring about positive changes in the learners' performance at the level of speaking and writing in this language. For these reasons, the study of English is becoming compulsory for all learners without exception. Its integration in the curriculum has helped to increase the number of its users who have become aware of the importance of this language so as to comply with the changes taking place in all fields of life.

The Following recent tables provide statistical information on the number of enrolments by grade, sex, and orientation at the primary and secondary (including the Middle school) levels (UNESCO Statistical Institute, 2003).

Early Strategy Options

Arabisation of the lower levels of education (Arabic as the primary medium of instruction)

Massive Schooling and institution of formal socialisation (compulsory education to all school-age population)

Later Strategy Options

> Arabisation of the higher levels of education
> Algerianisation of the teaching staff
> Introduction of pedagogical orientation
> Implementation of a foreign language policy favouring English

Expected Human Change

> Linguistic change (acceptance of Arabic as the normal means of interaction.
> Successful socialisation
> Personality growth and intellectual maturity (cognitive)
> Human change (lifelong learning and experience)

Planned Objectives

> Increase in literacy rate
> Job promotion
> Economic Participation
> Productivity
> Social Mobility/Modernisation

Diagram: Strategy Options and Objectives of Education in Algeria.

5- ELT in middle school level

The law of January, 2005 concerning the study of foreign languages stipulates that all students beginning in grade first year (Première Année Moyenne), must receive three hours per week of instruction in English. This is stated by the Ministry of National Education in a revised syllabus as follows *'to enable the pupils to acquire a reasonable command of the basic structures of the language'*.   The competency-based approach is recommended. The approach is credited with not just enhancing language acquisition outcomes, but also improving such factors as self-confidence, creativity, risk-taking and a general improvement in well-being and positive

attitudes. The focus is on the formation of correct examples of language, call on explicit knowledge.

The programme is defined entirely in terms of functions, lexis and grammatical structures. The programme introduces pupils to a project work in which they would be expected to work together in groups or teams discussing issues or solving problems and that the intention in these interactions is to give them the opportunity to practice their spoken English and to develop skills in these kinds of activities. The project is a communicative task when carried out, learners engage in the process of meaning, employing strategies such as comprehension checks, confirmation checks, and clarification requests.

6- ELT at Secondary Level

One important reason for the study of English as part of the secondary school curriculum is the recognition that is has an important role to play in terms of contributing to the personal, social cultural, and general linguistic development of pupils in preparation for their adult lives, both for higher education and work. This is explicitly reflected in the (2005 Commission National des programmes) in which the goals of English language study were described into four categories as follows:

Linguistic objectives
Methodological Objectives
Cultural Objectives
Socio-professional objectives

The new objectives emphasise offering insight into the target culture, cultivating the learners' openness, and promoting intercultural understanding and tolerance. Frequently, these objectives also recommend encouraging a positive attitude towards the speakers' of the target language and a sympathetic approach to the target culture and civilisation.

There is clearly an advance in the goals which refer to pedagogical and socio-linguistic aspects in teaching English as a foreign language. But there is still a lack of in the area of the function of the language in intercultural

interactions. Only two goals refer to this subject (encouraging cultural exploration, favouring attitudes towards others).

On the basis of the recommendations of teachers and researchers, the Ministry of Education set up a committee under the pedagogical secretariat and the inspectorate to deal with teaching English in the Algerian schools, and its function was to prepare a curriculum for teaching English and its culture from 1st to 8th grades. This committee was subdivided into subcommittees to deal with the levels of study: a committee for the secondary school, and another for the middle school. Each subcommittee had to formulate goals, write a curriculum, and prepare readers and a teacher's guide.

This new curriculum is different in structure, character and content. Teaching materials were chosen to be close to the world of the student. A wide variety of innovations are included: proverbs and sayings bibliographies, project workshop, and self-assessment. The texts are accompanied by illustrations and appropriate pictures, all attractively printed. Attached to the texts are also explanations of new words.

In the new textbooks there have been signs of interests and a certain willingness on the part of the Algerian general schooling system to promote the teaching of the cultural dimension of language in foreign language classrooms. The new book is distinguished from the old one by a greater concern for content, cultural understanding, and an appreciation of the English people way of life than for the exclusive development of linguistic skills. "Spotlight on English", 1st year middle school course book provides a section in each chapter called "learn about culture". It contains the notions of cultural insight, tolerance and positive attitudes.

7- English among the other official subjects

English is predominantly used in schools, with a limited function in the wider community (business or academic). That is to say, the learners' exposure to E.F.L is essentially confined to the classroom; however, English is becoming a means of efficient acquisition of knowledge which

learners need, mainly for further studies. Yet, it differs from other school subjects in that it is new and foreign and requires much effort from both the teachers' and the learners' sides, relatively more demanding than the other subjects which are taught in Arabic, the mother tongue of the learners. This means that they learn knowledge with already acquired language (Arabic), and thus they may confront no difficulties. Yet, in the case of English, learners are still learning the vocabulary, grammar and phonology to acquire this language and what is more difficult is that they should learn it through context to ensure its acquisition. This means that learners are initiated to learning the social and cultural meanings of the English words and expressions which might be different from the ones of the mother tongue, i.e. they are learnt in the classroom (a social and linguistic reality that differs enormously from the ones of the learners' environment.)

This new social and cultural behaviour may pose certain problems to learners who very often feel a sense of anxiety to learn the different skills taught in the classroom.

By the way, in front of these critical situations and so far as the inability of students in achieving the expected levels delineated by the present syllabi, one can state that this dissatisfaction is due to various reasons: cultural, linguistic and pedagogic. Besides, we cannot ignore other pertinent matters which impair the teaching-learning process in our classroom setting. Some of these impediments are thought to be the cogent reasons that stand as a barrier to reaching the aims stated in the syllabi, on one hand. On the other, they are viewed as demotivating students' expectations. These problems areas which manifest in the deterioration of students' motivation and teachers' tasks are enrolled in the ensuing subheading.

8- Problems Areas in the Teaching/Learning Process
8-1- Teachers Profile:

Truly, it seems questionable then if we bear in mind the objectives in both university studies and that of the secondary level, particularly English:

does teachers knowledge go in hand-in-hand with the objectives drawn in the teaching of foreign language?

Or, do teachers of English respond to criteria required in secondary education? If so, is there any relevance between teachers' feedback and that adapted to the school curriculum?

In any of these broad areas, it is best to elucidate the existing situation by probing a fully understanding of the main components of secondary teachers' profile.

Is competent linguistically for both general and specific English language skills, and is able to handle classroom language.

Can cope satisfactory with the major types of discourse at both levels of comprehension and production.

Has a fairly good knowledge of the mechanisms of the language he is teaching through phonetics, phonology, syntax and morphology.

Has an accurate understanding of the linguistic theories underlying the various teaching approaches.

Has appropriate insights in the culture related to the target language (literature and civilization).

Has a good theoretical pedagogical knowledge for both the methodology of general English and (E.S.P/E.S.T).

Has a solid practical pedagogical knowledge for both general and specific English.

Has a deep knowledge of adolescent's psychology, psycho pedagogy and the various learning/teaching strategies.

Is aware of the socio-economic situation of his country and of his learners' short term and long term needs.

Grasps the ethics of teaching and with a sound professional conscience.

From official documents (Ministerial Publications (2001)

Ideally, backing up the above straightforward criteria with relevance to the objectives stated in the English curriculum, it appears theoretically quite so. But somewhat worryingly happens when applying these to

teachers of English. A noticeable reality is that most of our English teachers ignore (or neglect) history of E.L.T and its different schools of thoughts. Besides, some teachers do not do their job properly, perhaps they do not like it or they are imposed to do it under socio-economic circumstances. In both cases, teachers are more or less participating in the mediocrity of pedagogical processes. Parallerally, learners of English are not provided with the linguistic environment that enhances the learning of the target language and induced them to natural fluency and accuracy. Yet, teachers relatively fail to enlighten their learners with flashes of cultural information appropriately selected and presented.

For countless reasons, a discrepancy is well felt between what is taught at the level of university and that dealt with teachers' daily tasks at the secondary level. Consequently, an epistemological gap is obviously sensitised with those who join the University, particularly those who inscribe in English departments after completing their secondary education.

So, the influence makes it difficult for the teacher to cope with neither learner's language weakness, nor develop adequately a real mastery of the English language as well. The extent to which Algerian English teachers, pedagogical environments, the students as an inevitable product and so forth have influenced each other. Thus, decay is put forward and matters within three parts of a whole educational system flowing in a circular continuum.

However skilled teachers endeavour to do their best to cover the requirements of their students' need. They are faced with human and material difficulties: Human is seen with students who are eventually the by-product of the communicative approach, and material is seen at the level of suitable resources, as well as, efficient documentation for both learning and teaching are being rather scarce.

9- E.L.T as a subject area in Higher Educational: macro-level analysis
9-1- The LMD structure: a newly adopted system

In response to the urgent need for economic growth and rapid progress in science and technology, the Algerian government has actually undertaken a reform process of the universities system; which goal is to integrate them in a modernisation process and in a progressive internalisation.

In accordance with the European standardisation programme, the Algerian university degree structure is being adapted to the '3-5-8' or LMD system, of BAC+3 (licence), BAC+5(master), and BAC+8(Doctorate). This new system is being introduced progressively. It is encouraging to note that, as LMD is a new experience, new proposals for a national curriculum for feign languages are expected.

To study English for a licence degree, students are required to complete the modules given below plus a short period training and / or presenting a dissertation.

9-2- Teachers' Roles and Strategies

In the present context, most teachers are fairly autonomous and are relatively free to make decisions concerning module goals, content, teaching materials and methods. There is little, in fact no, monitoring of what teachers actually teach and how they teach it. The students, too, have very little choice over the content and methodology of the module. Nevertheless, the kinds of responsibility that teachers ought to hold in the current teaching setting are shown in the following context.

Type of Responsibility
Identifying students' needs (needs analysts)
Selecting and grading syllabus content (curriculum developers)
Grouping learners into different groups according to ability
Selected and/or creating materials and learning activities (materials developers)
Monitoring and assessing learners' progress
Evaluating module content and instruction (researchers)
Counselling and helping individual students with serious difficulties
Collaboration and team action (observation, teaching together)
Assisting less experiences teachers with professional growth
Continuing development through critical and reflective practice

Teaching/Learning Context:
Teachers' Roles

As the table clearly shows teachers, whether full-time or part-time, enjoy a wide range of responsibilities, especially in the area of needs identification, content selection and teaching methodology. Except for learners' grouping according to ability, most teachers determine their students' needs and use the information obtained for module planning; they develop their own classroom materials; and few ones conduct research related to language learning and teaching.

In contrast, the following desirable teacher roles may be said to be absent: counsellors, team members, mentors, and professional. First, some teachers are not encouraged, or perhaps unwilling, to offer extra help to individual students with severe difficulties through developmental activities such as conferencing; second, rather than working together as a team and taking part in collaborative activities (e.g., peer observation) to improve one's teaching, a number of teachers teach in isolation from each other, perhaps because of fear of evaluation or just a result of a teaching habit; third, due to lack of communication or request for assistance, experienced teachers rarely assist less experienced ones with their professional development. finally, except for few ones, most teachers seem reluctant to

continue their professional development by taking part in research, seminars, conferences, joining professional organisations, and publishing articles in professional journals (i.e., they see themselves only as classroom teachers with the sole task of passing on knowledge or practising language forms). The absence of such vital teaching roles and responsibilities constitutes a serious contextual weakness that ought to be urgently remedied if teachers really aim at having their teaching skills and bringing useful change in their students' learning.

9-3- Assessment

The current teaching methodology of English as F.L is, in reality, task-based and oriented towards "the learning-by-doing approach". Pupils are constantly in classroom activities around specific themes in which language forms and words is introduced in a linear way and is rarely reintroduced. Contextual constraints of time and examinations militate against a recycling of taught items. What is again noticeable at this scope of inquiry is a kind of discrepancy between the syllabus designers' own theoretical perception and knowledge of L2 learners 'cognitive and linguistic capabilities and the actual pupils' abilities and needs. In other words, there is a clear incoherence between the syllabus objectives, teaching methodologies and contextual realities which is bound to affect the learning process and outcome.

The syllabus objectives, though important and desirable, their actual application inside the classroom needs to be based on empirical verification and measured evaluation; otherwise, it may become a far-reaching goal due to the available time, overloaded curricula, examination pressures and the pupils' reluctance and growing demotivation to spend extra effort on skills whose tangible utility belongs to the long term rather than the short one. Moreover, it seems that the syllabus designers and textbook writers have a strong faith in the learners' motivation and ability to shift from a lower proficiency level to a higher one.

In addition to other contextual constraints, (lack of teaching aids, question of time and intensity, lack of practice out-of-school) teachers are

constantly hard pressed to complete the programmes and attain the syllabus objectives, regardless of the pupils' real abilities to comprehend; let alone use and practise the taught items in the foreign language.

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