

The English Language Teaching in Algeria

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Abstract

This work aims to shed light on the English language teaching in the Algerian ELT departments. It tries to bring an overall view of Higher Education in Algeria including the reforms, the gains, and the systems. More importantly, it highlights the syllabus, the methods, and the objectives of ELT in Algeria. Besides, it states challenges and the needs that put new demands on the Algerian state in the field of higher education.

Key words: The English Language, ELT, Higher Education.

ملخص

يهدف هذا العمل إلى تسليط الضوء على تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية لغير الناطقين بها. كما يحاول تقديم نظرة شاملة للتعليم العالي في الجزائر بما في ذلك الإصلاحات والمكاسب والأنظمة. والأهم من ذلك أنه يسلط الضوء على مناهج وطرق وأهداف تعليم اللغة الانجليزية في الجزائر. إلى جانب ذلك فإنه يذكر التحديات والاحتياجات التي تضع متطلبات جديدة على الدولة الجزائرية في مجال التعليم العالي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الإنجليزية ELT التعليم العالي.

1. Introduction

The majority of the Algerian students either at secondary or university level are aware of the fundamental roles that the English language plays in all domains including the academic, professional, and social ones. Most of these students believe that learning this language opens new doors and gives them abundant opportunities in their professional life.

In order to meet the aforementioned interests, English is taught as a foreign language almost in all faculties as many English departments have been opened in many universities. Research surveys show that university students prefer English to any other foreign language because they believe that this language is their gate to the world of globalization.

2. English in the World

Due to the globalization, English has become the most attractive and useful language in the world. It is the language of communication, medicine, technology, research, science, business, and many other domains (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987). In this respect, Burshfield (quoted in Louznadji, 2003: 78) views: "*Any literate, educated person on the face of the globe is deprived, if he does not know English*". That

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is to say, English has become a substantial language that affects all aspects of life. Certainly, it is the gate to the world's knowledge and modern literacy.

The English language has gained special place in the world and is playing central roles in Africa, India, China, and the Middle East. It has been given educational priority as the language of world knowledge and skill transfer. In many countries, English is considered as an official language and used as a medium of communication in courts, in media, and in academic meetings (Crystal 1997). It is important to say that English is the world's language not because it is widely spoken as a native language, but because it is largely spoken and taught outside the native countries either as a second or a foreign language. According to Kitao:

English is the major language of news and information in the world. It is the language of business and government even in some countries where it is a minority language. It is the language of maritime communication and international air traffic control, and it is used even for internal air traffic control in countries where it is not a native language. (Kitao, 1996: 1)

In other words, English is now used as an international language since it is used as a means of communication in the international conferences, in the commercial deals, and in media influence. Actually, the dominance of English over the other languages is due to the power and success of its speakers in all domains.

3. ELT in Algeria

Since the independence (in 1962), Algeria has been trying to set an effective educational system which responds to the national needs in all domains. Because of the scientific and economic challenges of a globalized world, Algeria has tended to respond to the new demands by attributing additional roles to the English language in different fields. Indeed, the government has introduced basic reforms whose goals revolve around the improvement of the teaching corps, the reformulation of the pedagogic approach, and the implementation of specific measures to support the scientific research.

The Algerian educationalists have tried several teaching methods and approaches as far as the English language teaching is concerned. The Structuralist Approach, the Communicative Approach, and the Competency-based Approach are the main approaches which have been used in ELT.

After 1990, the Algerian government set new policy in the field of foreign language teaching and more importance has been given to English at all levels. Until 2004, EFL learners had been learning English from the eighth level in the middle school to the third level in the secondary school. However, during this period, the English language teaching and learning did not give the expected results due to pedagogical, economic, political, and social factors. Moreover, the Algerian learners did not show interest in learning English and focused only on the scientific subjects. EFL textbooks were not motivating as they included long and boring subjects or topics. Still, the teachers of English did not respect the syllabus

given to them by the Ministry of Education and taught in their own ways. All these reasons led to mediocre outcomes.

With the beginning of the year 2000, the Algerian state began radical educational reforms and a significant expenditure was devoted to education. Of course, ELT has been given much more interest as many procedures have been taken to present English as an alternative to the French language as a foreign language. This new educational situation was imposed by the new national policies and by the global status of English. From 2004 until now, with the educational reforms, students start their early English courses from the 1st grade in the middle school and end up with a seven-year study of English when they come to pass their baccalaureate (final) exam.

4. Higher Education and Scientific Research in Algeria

The Algerian Constitution reads that the state organises the educational system at all levels and recommends that all Algerians have the right for free schooling. The higher educational system is set, organised, and governed, and financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In this respect, many executive decrees and regulatory laws have been enacted to regulate the organisation and functioning of the Algerian universities.

The system of higher education in Algeria is still in a progressive change. According to the European Commission (2012), the process of reform in the field of higher education in Algeria includes the following main elements:

- Setting a new university system which is based on three cycle degrees; Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate.
- Updating and adapting the teaching programs. This involves the generalisation of information technology, scientific laboratories, modern languages, especially English, and research methodology.
- Introducing optional and interdisciplinary modules.
- Implementing a semester system.
- Engaging students in practical projects and encouraging trainings.

There are several types of institutions in the field of higher education. They are either academic or vocational institutions under the control of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. They involve universities, university campuses, institutions, national tertiary schools, university annexes, research centres, university centres, preparatory schools, teacher training colleagues, and continuing education universities (European Commission, 2012).

The role of Higher Schools and institutions is to train engineers, professionals, experts, and teachers in different disciplines. Among these institutions, one can cite the National Institution of Veterinary Studies which belongs to the University of Tiaret and the Higher School of Secondary Teachers in Algiers.

5. ELT at University Level

English has been given a great importance by the Algerian authorities. Since 1990, the government has been trying to give place to English in the Algerian institutions, particularly in the universities. Indeed, the authorities realised the importance of English as a global language and became aware of its role in developing the national know-how and in attaining the modern science in all fields. In this respect, Milliani views:

In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the sociocultural and educational environments of the country; the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills-including economic, technological and educational ones. (Miliani, 2000: 13)

In other words, English is gaining much more importance in Algeria. It is taught in all universities in order to upgrade the economic, scientific, and technological fields.

In the Algerian ELT departments, students are submitted to a comprehensive programme which involves different modules such as; morpho-syntax, Reading Comprehension, Aural Comprehension, Written Expression, Oral Expression, Phonetics, TEFL, American Literature, British Literature, American Civilisation, British Civilisation, General Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Sociolinguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Research Methodology. In the third year, the students are required either to make a short research which should be presented in the form of an extended dissertation or to go through training sessions in schools and write their training reports.

After finishing this program successfully, students obtain a diploma of the English language. The majority prefer to carry on their studies to get the Master degree. Many of these become teachers of English in schools, some work as translators, and a few of them make doctoral studies.

6. The LMD System and the English Language Teaching

The LMD system is a result of an international system imposed by globalization. Therefore, Algeria was obliged to cope with this new system by introducing innovations in all fields including its educational and university policies. The goal of this system is to provide skilful practitioners including teachers, experts, researchers, and field workers. Most of the Algerian scientists, researchers, and the avid backers of the LMD system have been stimulated by the global change in this world. They have often praised this system for the reason of introducing new teaching strategies, applying modern methods, creating new professional degrees, and inculcating new spirits in the Algerian university.

As far as the Algerian ELT departments are concerned, ESP is seen as the key element to complete the LMD exigencies. Indeed, professions in tourism, media, business, shipping, aviation and many others put new demands and gave new responsibilities to ELT departments. In fact, they are now required to prepare the students for a successful life and to form and train skilful tutors to teach in different departments.

Therefore, a number of EFL teachers have been recruited in other departments such as physics, sociology, and biology. In this regard, ESP courses have been introduced to meet these growing needs and many post-graduate research opportunities have been raised. As a result, many ESP teachers have been specialized in teaching English for other specialities such as medical sciences, mathematics, and economics. However, EFL teachers still have problems and challenges such as:

- Lack of knowledge in the subject area.
- Lack of the teaching material written in English.
- Lack of students' knowledge of the English language in other departments.
- Absence of consented programmes.
- No cooperation among ESP teachers.

In addition, most of EFL teachers have not been well trained to teach in different areas and eventually failed to offer convenient instruction to their learners. Therefore, experts need to reassess the application of this system in order to improve the teaching-learning process and to reach better professionalization.

As for students, most of them focus on marks and grades in their learning without giving importance to the amount of knowledge they should gain. Indeed, this decreases their intrinsic motivation and leads to lower achievements. Focusing on marks and grades makes our graduate students read few books and do not push a lifelong learning (Travis & Wade, 1997).

7. Challenges and Needs

The Algerian universities are facing new challenges imposed by the advance of science and technology, the economic and social growth, and knowledge upsurge. Therefore, the government should afford the human resources and the means to improve the quality of the higher education. Besides, the main challenge is to train the academic staff in large numbers in order satisfy the needs of the Algerian universities. The state should provide the necessary pedagogical, scientific and recreational facilities for students in order to help them carry out their studies at higher standards.

Moreover, there should be a radical innovation in order to eliminate the bureaucratic practices at the level of the different services in the Algerian universities. A new administrative system should involve both teachers and students' participation in the management of the universities. Another important challenge is the creation of a decentralised system to enforce autonomy and help skilful teachers, students, and researchers.

In addition, challenges such as the availability of classroom facilities, professional teachers, financing, supervising, training programmes, timing, and large classes seem to have not been carefully taken into account. For example, in some Algerian universities, classrooms are generally composed of 40 to 60 students. In such a situation, foreign language teaching can be very difficult and

the learning achievements will be at lower rates. This could cause students' demotivation because they cannot get enough time to practice English in the classroom.

8. Conclusion

This work aimed to bring a clear view about ELT and in Algeria with reference to EFL classes. Apparently, the intricate global change and the revolutionary improvements in information and science have inspired the Algerian State, the scientists, and the educational experts to ponder over the appropriate procedures and methods to elaborate a comprehensive plan that endorses the English language teaching and learning.

It is worthy to note that the Algerian state has extended the university network in all over the country. Thousands of university teachers, researchers, and administrators have been trained to achieve the assigned objectives. However, the ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is still required to continue the efforts and to introduce new reforms so as to increase research and training opportunities and to improve the status of teachers and researchers in the field of ELT.

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