Teaching English in Algerian primary schools from the perspective of English teachers (A pioneering experiment or a risky adventure)

Chikhaoui Ettayib [1], Falkat Cheikh [2]

[1] Department of Social Sciences, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University Center Nour El Bachir, El Bayadh, Algeria. Email: tayibchikhaoui@gmail.com

[2] Department of Social Sciences, Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla, Algeria. Email : falkatcheikh02@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aimed to reveal the reality of English language teaching in Algerian primary schools from the perspective of English teachers, given its introduction as a recent pedagogical experiment. The study employed a descriptive-analytical approach, utilizing a questionnaire designed by the researcher and distributed to a sample of 30 male and female primary English teachers. The data were then statistically analyzed using means, standard deviations, and a one-sample t-test. The results indicated significant difficulties faced by students in acquiring basic language skills, a relative weakness in teachers' pedagogical competencies, and a clear lack of supporting educational resources. This makes the current experiment more akin to a risky educational adventure, stemming from the apparent haste in the decision to introduce English into primary education.

Keywords: English language teaching, primary education, pedagogical competencies, Algeria.

Research Problem:

The reforms witnessed by the Algerian education system in recent years represent a qualitative shift and a very significant leap forward. Anyone following the educational landscape in Algeria throughout its historical stages can observe the rapid pace of reforms and efforts to keep up with global developments. The introduction of the English language at the primary level is a clear indication of this orientation. However, this experience faces numerous difficulties and obstacles that hinder the achievement of its intended objectives. A study by Guerin & Benzagha (2021) confirmed that learning a foreign language at an early age is difficult without adequate linguistic preparation, particularly in the third year of primary education (around 8 years old) in Algeria, which is considered relatively "early" in the local context, especially since most curricula do not provide sufficient prior exposure to English sounds.

Similarly, the study by Soumia Boukhenfis (2020) shows that starting English instruction in the third year is not biologically or cognitively premature, but rather premature within the framework of the current curriculum, which lacks intensive phonetic preparation units before introducing reading, writing, and accompanying oral activities. Other studies, such as Gherabi & Kellal (2022), point to a gap in pedagogical training,

as 78% of the surveyed teachers confirmed that training programs at the Higher School for Teachers (ENS) or at universities focused more on the theoretical and literary aspects of the language than on methods for teaching oral communication. In addition, weak personal oral language competence was noted, with 65% of teachers expressing a lack of confidence in their own fluency or pronunciation, which leads them to avoid organizing interactive conversational sessions.

Moreover, there is a strong reliance on traditional teaching methods, as most lessons are conducted in Arabic or French, with an emphasis on translation and memorization of grammar rules, and a complete absence of activities such as role-playing, simple debates, or interactive listening tasks. In addition, the study by Benabid et al. (2019) indicates a clear shortage of technological equipment in Algerian primary schools, weak integration of digital and audio-visual tools in the teaching process, limited teacher training in educational technology, and a heavy dependence on traditional methods, all of which have negatively affected the quality of education and pupil engagement.

The Algerian experience in teaching English at the primary level is relatively recent and aims to prepare a multilingual generation. It is a bold and revolutionary initiative; however, its actual implementation faces a range of challenges. From this perspective, the following main research problem emerges:

• **What is the reality of teaching English at the primary level in Algeria, and what are the factors affecting its effectiveness from the perspective of English teachers?**

Research Hypotheses:

- There are no difficulties facing pupils in acquiring basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

- Teachers possess the pedagogical and professional competencies that enable them to develop pupils' basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

- Teaching materials and educational resources (the textbook and audio-visual aids) are adequately available and contribute effectively to developing pupils' basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Objectives of the Study:

- To diagnose the reality of teaching English at the primary level in Algeria.

- To identify the difficulties facing the teaching of English at the primary level in Algeria.

- To propose suggestions and recommendations to improve the quality of English language teaching at the primary level in Algeria.

Significance of the Study:

The theoretical significance of this study lies in enriching the body of literature related to teaching English at the primary level in Algeria. As for its practical significance, it lies in providing data and indicators that may assist decision-makers in improving and developing English language teaching at the primary level in Algeria.

Operational Definitions:

- **Teaching English:** Refers to all pedagogical activities carried out by the teacher inside the classroom to teach pupils the basic skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).

- **Primary Level:** Refers to the school years from the third year of primary education to the fifth year of primary education.

- **Basic Skills:** Refers to listening, speaking, reading, and writing as the

fundamental skills for acquiring the English language.

Research Methodology:

The descriptive method was adopted in this study. This method aims to describe the phenomenon as it exists in reality or to describe existing conditions as they actually are. It involves describing the current situation, analyzing and interpreting it, conducting comparisons, and identifying relationships (Mohsen Ali Atiya, 2010, p. 61).

Study Limits:

- The field study was conducted in primary schools in the city of Aflou, Algeria, which number (60) primary schools.

- The study was carried out within a time frame extending from September 2025 to November 2025.

Study Sample:

The sample was selected using a purposive sampling method by directly targeting all primary schools distributed across the city of Aflou (see Table No. 01).

Table No. 01: Educational Institutions Targeted in the Study

| District	Educational Institutions
08	Cherfi Issa Primary School, Ben El Sassi Mostafa Primary School, Mouissat Ben Taleb Primary School, Abane Ramdane Primary School, Ammari Bahloul Primary School, Ennoui Cheikh Primary School, 1st November Primary School, Badawi sliman ← correction needed: no Arabic → Badawi si man Primary School, Abdelhamid Ben Badis Primary School, Si Ammar Primary School, Zmeit Ibrahim Primary School.
09	Cherif Bouchoucha Primary School, Mohamed El Aid Al Khalifa Primary School, Hakmi Ali Primary School, Mouloud Feraoun Primary School, Malek Bennabi Primary School, Chenawi Mohamed Primary School, Mohamed Essadik Ben Yahia Primary School, Oum Greine – Ben Zaid Abdelkader Primary School, Hassiba Ben Bouali Primary School, Saadi Laarej Primary School, Ghasmi Abdelkader Primary School, Mohamed El Akhdar Essaihi Primary School, Abbas Taher Primary School.
10	Messaybeh Mohamed Primary School, Charaf Belkacem Primary School, Khayali Ahmed Primary School, Merzouki El Wekkal Primary School, Maliki Taher Primary School, Touir Aboudi Primary School, Derraji Moubarak Primary School, Cheghal Naimi Primary School, Yousfi Amer Primary School, Attia Guider Primary School, Merzouki Abdelkader Primary School, Hemka Abdelkader Primary School, Mohamed Boudiaf Primary School, Gaddouri Abdelkader Primary School, Terbi Ahmed Primary School, Jabri Belabbas Primary School, Abdelhafidh Zakhrouf Primary School, Agag Abdelrazak Primary School, Rachdi Mohieddine Primary School,

	Kaaib Mohamed Primary School, Bouthlaja Djadid Primary School, Cheriki Abdelkader Primary School, El Bachir El Ibrahimi Primary School.
11	Othmani Larbi Primary School, Mansouri Bachir Primary School, Kirdi Issa Primary School, Cheibani Omar Primary School, Bouazza Khathir Primary School, Abdelkader Hadidi Primary School, Attia Toumi Primary School, Alili Belkacem Primary School, Bourahla Taher Primary School, Mohamed Salmi Primary School, Ziani Abdelkader Primary School, Saidani Abdelkader Primary School, Saidani Eddine Primary School.
Total	**60**

This table presents the educational institutions targeted by the study, which are distributed across (04) administrative districts. These districts represent the organizational structure governing the study environment. The teachers working in the schools listed in the above table were targeted, noting that the number of teachers varies from one school to another depending on each school's needs and according to several employment patterns (working in a single school, working in a main school and another to complete the teaching load, or working in a school jointly with another teacher). See Table No. 02.

Table No. 02: Distribution of the Study Sample According to Professional Experience

| Professional Experience	Percentage (%)
3 years	24%
2 years	44%
1 year	32%
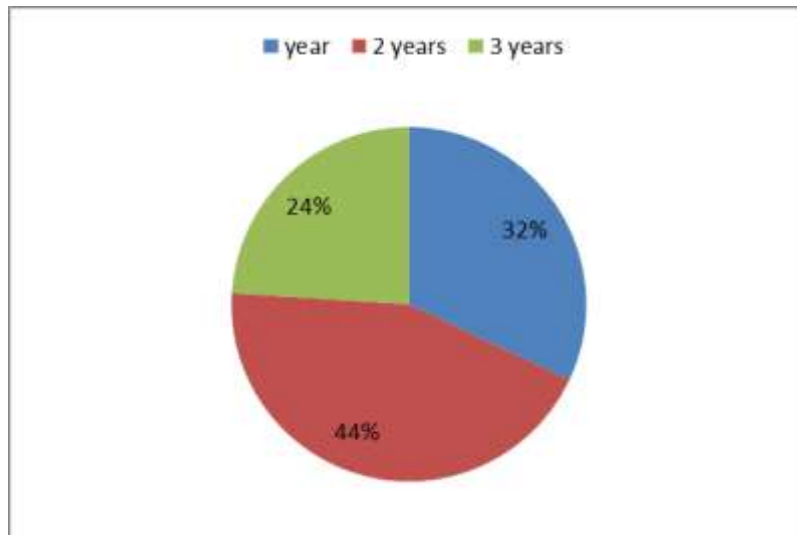
Figure No. 01: Distribution of the Sample According to Professional Experience

It is evident from Table No. 02 that professional experience ranges between one and three years. The percentage of teachers with one year of professional experience reached 32%, those with two years of professional experience reached 44%, and those with three years of professional experience accounted for 24%.

Table No. 03: Distribution of the Sample According to Gender

| Gender	Percentage (%)
Male	**15.4%**
Female	**84.6%**
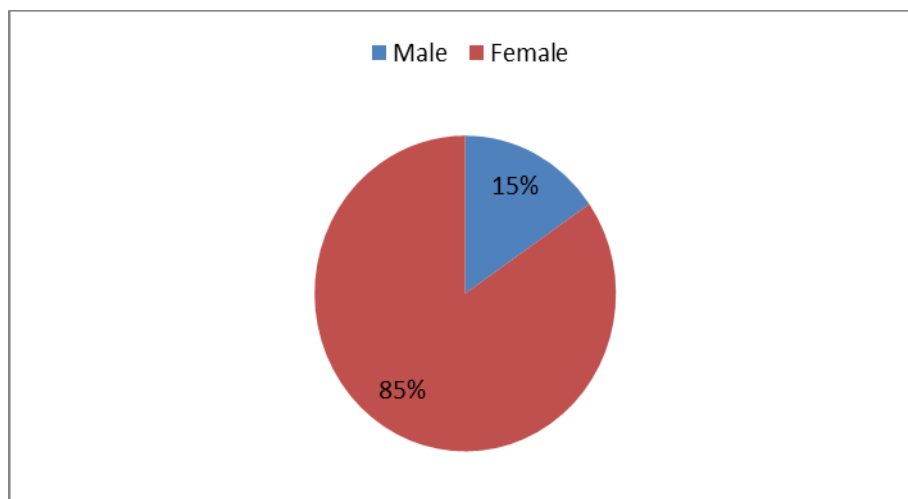
Figure No. 02: Distribution of the Sample According to Gender

It is shown in Table No. 03 that the percentage of males reached 15.4%, while the percentage of females reached 84.6%. This indicates that the proportion of females is very high compared to males.

Table No. 04: Distribution of the Sample According to the Number of Groups

| Number of Groups	Percentage (%)
02	3.8%
03	3.8%
04	3.8%
05	3.8%
06	7.7%
07	15.4%
08	11.5%
09	26.9%
10	11.5%
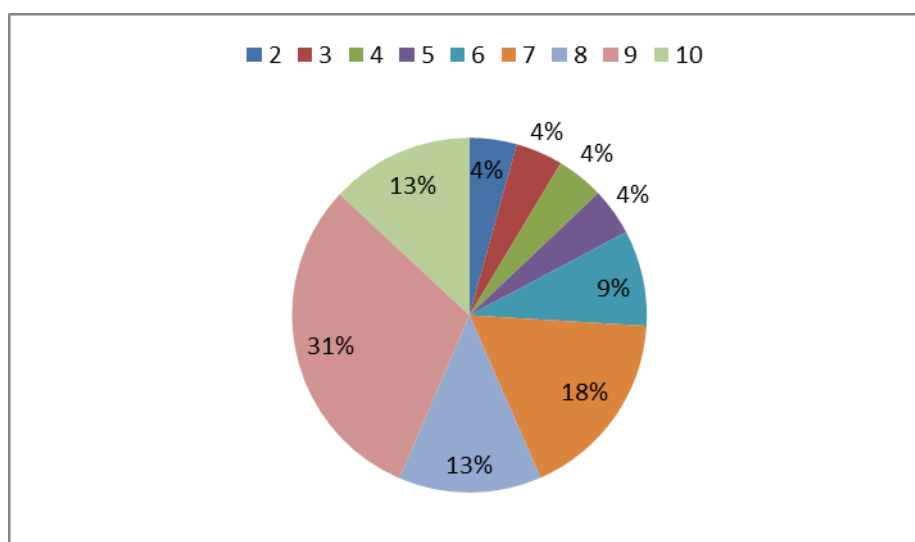
Figure No. 03: Distribution of the Sample According to the Number of Groups

Table No. 04 shows that the percentage distribution of the number of groups taught by the teachers in the study sample was as follows: two groups accounted for 3.8%, three groups 3.8%, four groups 3.8%, five groups 3.8%, six groups 7.7%, seven groups 15.4%, eight groups 11.5%, nine groups 26.9%, and ten groups 11.5%.

Table No. 05: Distribution of the Sample According to the Work Pattern

Work Pattern	Percentage (%)
Single school	42.3%
Completing the teaching load in another school	57.7%
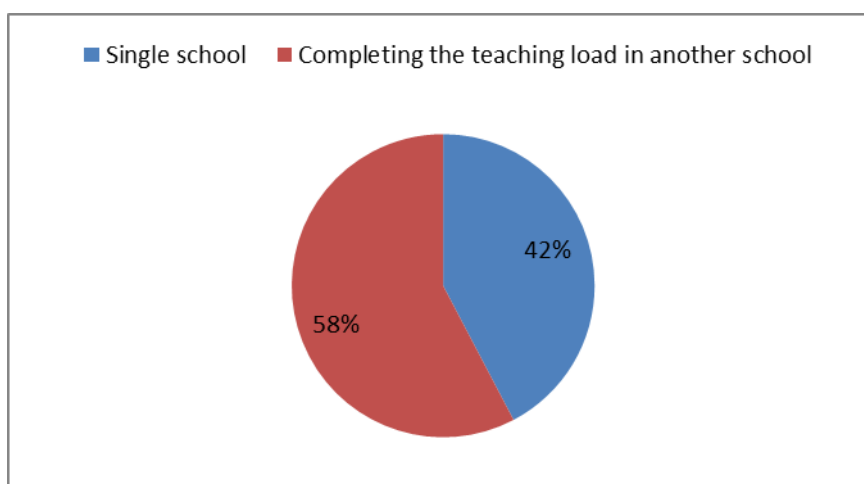
Figure No. 04: Distribution of the Sample According to Work Pattern

Table No. 05 shows that the work pattern is divided into two types with the following percentages: teachers who work in a single school accounted for 42.3%, while teachers who work in two or more schools accounted for 57.7%.

Research Instrument:

Table No. 06: Data Collection Instrument

No.	Axis	Item	Options				
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
01	Environment and Educational Conditions	A dedicated, well-equipped classroom for teaching English is available in the school.					
02		The number of pupils in the classroom allows for effective teaching.					
03		The number of weekly sessions is sufficient to achieve the educational objectives.					
04		The time allocated for each lesson is appropriate to deliver the content effectively.					
05		Pedagogical resources (books, charts, audio materials, etc.) are sufficiently available.					
06		Supporting technological tools (computer, projector, etc.) are available.					
07		I receive administrative support regarding my pedagogical needs.					
08	Curriculum and	The educational objectives of the syllabus are clear and well defined.					
09		The content of the textbook is appropriate to the pupils' level.					

#	Axis	Item					
10		There is a balance in focusing on the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing).					
11		The proposed activities contribute to developing pupils' communicative skills.					
12		The sequencing of lessons aligns with the development of learners' abilities.					
13		The content presents English culture in a simplified and appropriate manner.					
14		The textbook contains clear instructions for both the teacher and the learner.					
15	**Training and Professional Qualification**	I received sufficient initial training before starting to teach English.					
16		In-service (continuous) training is regularly available.					
17		The training courses I attended helped me improve my classroom practices.					
18		I need additional training in methods of teaching English to children.					
19		I regularly follow modern educational resources and references.					
20		I feel sufficiently qualified to teach this subject at the primary level.					
21	**Professional Challenges and Difficulties**	Pupils suffer from difficulties in pronouncing English words.					
22		I face difficulties in getting pupils to interact in English.					
23		The density of the program places pressure on me.					
24		Pupils' weak level in the Arabic language affects their learning of English.					
25		Teaching a multi-level class constitutes a major challenge.					
26		Pupils' parents do not give sufficient attention to their children's learning of English.					
27		There is insufficient cooperation among teachers to exchange experiences.					
28	**Prospects and Suggestions**	Introducing English at the primary level was a sound decision.					
29		Teaching English can be improved through the use of digital media.					
30		It is necessary to lighten the content so that it matches pupils' age.					
31		It would be preferable to prepare supplementary teacher guides containing instructional scenarios.					
32		Teaching English only from the third year of primary education is insufficient.					

The above table illustrates the items through which data were collected. It consists of thirty-two (32) items distributed across five axes, with five response options for each item.

Psychometric Properties of the Research Instrument:

To ensure the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the following procedures were applied:

• **Validity:**

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– **Content Validity:** This was achieved by presenting the instrument to a panel of experts specialized in curricula and teaching methods and educational psychology, in order to evaluate the appropriateness, clarity, and comprehensiveness of the items in covering the intended dimensions

Table No. 07: Names, Academic Ranks, and Institutions of the Experts and Specialists Who Validated the Data Collection Instrument

No.	First and Last Name	Academic Rank	Specialization	Institution
02	Ahmed Belaid	Lecturer (A)	School Guidance and Counseling	Laghouat University
03	Issa Kouasmia	Lecturer (A)	Educational Physical Activity	El Bayadh University Center
04	Badr Eddine Saghir	Lecturer (A)	Educational Psychological Counseling	Laghouat University
05	Mohamed Saidi	Lecturer (A)	School Guidance and Counseling	Médéa University
07	Ali Harrath	Lecturer (A)	Educational Psychological Counseling	Higher School for Teachers of Laghouat

• **Reliability:**

– **Cronbach's Alpha Test:** This test was used to calculate the reliability of the questionnaire and to measure the internal consistency of its items.

Table No. 08: Results of the Cronbach's Alpha Test According to the Axes of the Data Collection Instrument

Axis	Alpha
Environment and Educational Conditions	0.82
Curriculum and Academic Content	0.79
Training and Professional Qualification	0.85
Professional Challenges and Difficulties	0.80
Prospects and Suggestions	0.81
Overall Instrument	0.88

The overall reliability coefficient of the questionnaire reached ($\alpha = 0.88$), which is a high value indicating that the instrument has a high degree of reliability.

Statistical Analysis Methods:

- Arithmetic mean

- Standard deviation

- One-sample *t*-test

- Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to measure reliability

Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation of the Study Results:

First Hypothesis:

Table No. 09: Results of the First Hypothesis

Skill	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Difficulty
Listening	3.85	0.74	High
Speaking	4.10	0.69	High
Reading	3.42	0.81	Moderate
Writing	4.20	0.65	High

The results of the statistical analysis indicate the presence of noticeable difficulties in pupils' acquisition of speaking and writing skills, as the arithmetic means exceeded the theoretical value (3) with statistically significant differences, which leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The findings revealed clear difficulties among pupils, particularly in acquiring speaking and writing skills. This is consistent with Siham Boutghan (2024), who confirmed that teaching English at the primary education stage may face difficulties and challenges that hinder the proper implementation of this decision. This is also supported by Kamal Abdelhamid Zeitoun (2003), who emphasized the urgent need for teachers to possess the skills and competencies that facilitate the performance of their tasks, most notably the ability to express and explain clearly, listening skills, the ability to ask questions, and the ability to manage discussions with learners.

Second Hypothesis:

Table No. 10: Results of the Second Hypothesis

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Competence
Linguistic Competence	3.95	0.68	High
Pedagogical Competence	3.20	0.77	Moderate
Specialized Training	2.85	0.81	Weak
Professional Experience	2.60	0.72	Weak

The results showed that teachers possess acceptable linguistic competencies; however, pedagogical and training competencies remain below the required level, particularly with regard to teaching oral skills. This finding is consistent with the study by Motaeb Al-

Mutairi (2008), which confirmed that one of the most important obstacles hindering effective teaching of English is inadequate teacher preparation and insufficient professional development and training both before and during service.

Third Hypothesis:

Table No. 11: Results of the Third Hypothesis

Instructional Resource	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level of Competence
Textbook	4.05	0.61	Good
Audio-visual aids	2.45	0.88	Weak
Digital media	2.10	0.91	Weak
Equipment	2.02	0.95	Weak

The results revealed a clear lack of audio-visual and digital resources, which limits teaching effectiveness and negatively affects pupils' motivation. This finding is consistent with the study by Abdullah Jouza (2024), which confirmed that the supervising ministry lacks a clear strategic vision regarding the English language teaching environment and the resources and facilities it requires, particularly audio-visual and digital supports that contribute to the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational process as a whole, especially since such tools motivate and support both teachers and learners.

This is further supported by Kamal Abdelhamid (2003), who argues that what enables teachers to perform their tasks most effectively is their ability to use and control audio-visual resources in an efficient and purposeful manner.

Conclusion :

The results of the study revealed noticeable difficulties among pupils in acquiring speaking and writing skills in particular. While teachers possess acceptable linguistic competencies,

In this regard, Abdullah Jouza (2024) also emphasizes that the supervising ministry has lacked a genuine strategic vision regarding the needs of those responsible for teaching this language.

pedagogical and training competencies remain below the required level, especially with regard to teaching oral skills. There is also a clear lack of audio-visual and digital resources, which limits teaching effectiveness and negatively affects pupils' motivation.

Study Recommendations:

- Strengthening initial and in-service teacher training programs, especially in the field of teaching oral skills.
- Emphasizing the development of speaking and writing skills among primary school pupils through the adoption of varied communicative and interactive activities.
- Allocating additional practical sessions to train pupils in oral and written expression.
- Organizing specialized training courses on the use of modern methods for teaching English at the primary level.
- Ensuring the provision of modern educational equipment in primary schools, such as computers, projectors, and digital educational media.

- Adopting motivating teaching approaches based on interaction and active pupil participation.

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