RESEARCH ARTICLE   **WWW.PEGEGOG.NET**

The Philosophy of Teaching English in Algerian Schools: A Sociological Reading of Causes and Challenges

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Abstract:

The Algerian educational system has undergone several transformations since independence up to the present time. These changes were shaped by both national and global challenges. For this reason, the Algerian state has recently introduced reforms across all components of the educational system in line with the new global order and the requirements of globalization. The purpose is to build a modern educational system that improves the quality of education and increases its efficiency. It also supports the preparation of future generations, responds to social needs, and addresses emerging challenges.

One of the most important recent reforms is the introduction of English as a core subject and a second foreign language at the primary education level, starting from the 2022–2023 academic year. This step aims to diversify pupils' linguistic resources, broaden their educational and professional horizons, and enable them to integrate into the knowledge society. It also seeks to keep pace with global scientific and technological developments.

Since English has become a global language used in various scientific, technological, economic, social, and cultural fields, Algeria has recognized the need to strengthen its teaching across all educational levels. This requires the provision of appropriate material and human resources. These include qualified teachers, suitable curricula, teaching materials, pedagogical equipment, and school textbooks.

Keywords: Teaching, English language, Algerian school, causes, challenges.

Introduction

The sector of education in Algeria has experienced several changes since independence. These developments have continued up to the present day. The Algerian state has sought to respond to national and global transformations. Such changes have had direct effects on the national education

system. For this reason, the state has introduced a series of ongoing educational reforms. These reforms aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They also seek to enhance the overall performance of Algerian schools.

The reforms have included the revision of curricula, the renewal of teaching methods, and the modernization of pedagogical tools. They have also promoted the integration of technology into classroom practice. In addition, attention has been given to the training and professional preparation of teachers.

One of the most significant recent reforms is the introduction of English as a compulsory subject and as a second foreign language at the primary level, starting from the 2022–2023 academic year. English is regarded as one of the most important global languages. It holds a central position in scientific, technological, and cultural fields. For this reason, its teaching in Algerian schools at all educational stages has become a pressing necessity.

The teaching of English in Algerian schools is linked to several factors. Among the most important is the need to keep pace with globalization and international transformations, since English is widely considered the language of science and knowledge. It also supports the digital shift currently taking place in Algerian schools. Moreover, it aims to strengthen pupils' linguistic and intellectual skills. It encourages cultural openness and intercultural communication. In light of these considerations, the Algerian state has made clear efforts to promote the teaching of English. It has worked to provide the necessary material and human resources at different educational levels, particularly in primary education.

This context has led us to raise the following research questions:

- What are the reasons behind the introduction of English in Algerian schools?
- What challenges face the teaching of English in Algerian primary schools?

In response to these questions, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

- The introduction of English in Algerian schools is associated with improving pupils' linguistic competence.
- The limited time allocation and the density of the curriculum negatively affect pupils' learning of English.

The importance of this study stems from the importance of the English language itself. English is a global language with a central role in science, technology, and the economy. Teaching it at the primary level can help pupils access modern knowledge and follow scientific developments. It can also broaden their cultural horizons and strengthen their cognitive and intellectual abilities.

In order to examine the reasons for adopting English and its implications for pupils and society on the one hand,

and to explore the challenges of teaching it in Algerian schools from the perspective of English teachers on the other hand, a field study was conducted. The study aimed to collect objective data from the social context of the research problem and to answer the guiding questions. A qualitative approach was adopted. This approach allowed for the description and analysis of the data provided by the participants and for comparison between their responses.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. A total of eight (08) interviews were conducted. The questions focused on the reasons for introducing English at the primary level, its perceived implications, and the challenges faced in teaching it, according to English teachers. A purposive sample was selected from primary schools in the city of El Bordj, in the province of Mascara. The research sample included eight English teachers with different socio-professional characteristics, such as age and place of residence.

Conceptual Definitions: This study includes the following concepts

Teaching:
Teaching is defined as "a set of organized and planned procedures carried out by the teacher inside the classroom. These procedures include presenting the learning content, employing various teaching methods and strategies, using instructional aids, and organizing classroom interaction in order to produce observable and measurable learning outcomes among learners. This is achieved through improving their cognitive performance and their skills during the lesson." (Hassan Zeitoun, 2003, p. 25).

In the present study, teaching refers to the methods, procedures, and strategies used by the English language teacher at the primary education level to develop and enhance pupils' English language skills.

English Language:

"The English language is a Western language that originated in England. It developed through different historical stages and has become a global language used in various fields such as education, scientific research, economics, technology, and international relations." (Chafiqa Kahoul, 2012, p. 131).

In this study, it refers to the second foreign language that has recently been introduced by the Ministry of National Education as an official subject within the primary school curriculum. Pupils begin studying it from the third year of primary education, and it is taught by a specialized English language teacher.

School:

"The school is an institution established by society to meet one of its essential needs, namely the socialization of its members so that they become responsible individuals. It is also an institution for educating and teaching the young on behalf of adults who are occupied with life, in addition to

preserving and transmitting the accumulated cultural heritage." (Salah Eddine Cheroukh, 2004, p. 72).

In this study, the school refers to the first formal social institution (primary school) created by society to educate children and prepare them to assume responsibility for building, protecting, and advancing the nation. It represents society's instrument for implementing educational philosophy and instilling social values and beliefs in younger generations.

Pupil:

"A pupil is a learner enrolled in an educational institution and placed under the direct supervision of the teacher. The pupil represents the basic input that forms the main output of the entire educational system." (Ahmed Ismail, 2000, p. 29).

In this study, the term refers to any child who has reached the legal school age and enrolled in primary education in order to pursue schooling and obtain an academic certificate.

Language Level:

"It is the degree of improvement that occurs in the learner's linguistic performance over a specific period of time as a result of a particular instructional intervention. This improvement is measured by comparing the learner's results in pre-tests and post-tests and by analyzing the development of their language production." (Rushdi Tuaima, 2004, p. 28).

In this study, language level refers to the learner's degree of proficiency in using the English language correctly and effectively, whether orally or in written form.

Educational Process:

The educational process is defined as "the set of procedures and activities that take place inside the classroom. These activities aim to help learners acquire theoretical knowledge, practical skills, or positive attitudes. It is considered a cognitive system that consists of inputs, processes, and outputs. The inputs are the learners themselves. The process refers to the coordination involved in organizing information, understanding it, interpreting it, identifying relationships between ideas, and linking new knowledge to prior knowledge. The outputs are represented in the preparation of competent and educated students." (Yousef Qatami et al., 2008, p. 19).

In this study, the educational process refers to the set of activities, programs, and services provided to the pupil by the English language teacher inside the classroom. These elements aim, as a whole, to develop the learner's English-related skills, competencies, and knowledge. This development contributes to building the learner's language level and improving academic achievement.

Instructional Time Allocation (Hourly Volume):

From a sociological perspective, instructional time allocation is not

understood as a neutral distribution of time. Rather, it is an institutional mechanism that reflects the school's choices and its value and knowledge priorities. It influences the type of knowledge presented to learners, the level of attention given to a subject, and the opportunities for equal learning among pupils. (Charles Philippe, 2007, p. 63).

In this study, it refers to the official number of instructional hours determined by the Ministry of National Education for teaching and supervising the English language at the primary education level.

Curriculum:
The curriculum is defined as "a set of planned and organized educational and pedagogical experiences developed by the educational institution to guide the teaching and learning process. It includes educational objectives, knowledge content, teaching methods, learning activities, and all elements that contribute to the learner's social and cultural development within the school." (Claude Debar, 2000, p. 49).

In this study, the curriculum refers to the set of contents and learning activities related to the English language subject that are planned and implemented in the primary school. These elements aim to achieve specific and measurable learning outcomes for the pupil within a defined period of time.

The Importance and Objectives of Teaching English:

In the modern era, English has become one of the most important tools of human communication. It plays a central role in the transfer of knowledge, the promotion of cultural exchange, and the ability to keep pace with rapid scientific and technological developments. Teaching English is no longer limited to being a school subject within the curriculum. It has become a strategic means for preparing learners to integrate into the knowledge society and to engage with the wider world.

In this context, the teaching of English holds great importance within the educational institution. It contributes to the development of linguistic and communicative competencies. It also supports the formation of a balanced learner personality and enhances future academic and professional opportunities. Accordingly, this section aims to highlight the objectives and importance of teaching English, while emphasizing its educational and social dimensions in the learner's development and in meeting the demands of contemporary life.

English holds a prominent position at the global level because of its close connection with various sciences and fields. It is the language of politics, the language used by scholars in scientific conferences, the language of trade in financial agreements and contracts, and the language of technology and information science. It is also the language of education in many institutions worldwide, as well as the main language of communication among most users of email and the

internet in general. Therefore, many fields, disciplines, and interactions rely on English, and progress or development is often linked to the degree of mastery of this language. (Boutghane Siham, 2024, p. 152).

Objectives of Teaching English at the Early Stage of Primary Education:

One of the main objectives of teaching English at the beginning of primary education is to help pupils become familiar with the language both orally and in writing. This should take place in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, free from pressure, in order to prepare them for the skills required in later stages of learning.

It also aims to emphasize that learning English is accessible and manageable. This helps to develop the child's motivation and interest in learning a new language.

The teaching of English at this level seeks to:

- broaden children's horizons so that they become more open to other cultures;
- develop positive learning habits, such as role-playing, organizational skills, and cooperative learning;
- raise the learner's awareness through experience of the differences between English and Arabic;
- enable children to communicate in a simple but effective way by developing their oral proficiency in English;

- establish solid foundations for reading and writing in English, while enabling the learner to express ideas both orally and in written form, acquire technical, scientific, and professional vocabulary, and develop skills of analysis and synthesis during communication;
- help the child understand the surrounding social and cultural environment more easily;
- facilitate communication between countries in different fields, since learning foreign languages has become a requirement of modern life, especially languages that carry a rich cultural and civilizational heritage, as learning them represents openness to the wider world;
- equip the learner with oral and written expression skills and enrich language competence at all levels alongside the first language.

The English Language and Its Role in Developing the Linguistic Level of the Algerian Pupil:

Algeria today seeks renewal, development, and reform in the field of education. This effort has continued from independence until the present time. The aim is to achieve effectiveness, improve quality, and respond to major educational challenges through new visions and strategies. This process is not merely a natural progression. It is a social necessity shaped by national and global transformations. One of the most significant reforms is the introduction of

English at the primary level, starting from the third year of primary school, according to Circular No. 1513 dated 19 September 2023, beginning with the 2022–2023 academic year. This decision reflects both the importance of the English language and the importance of the primary stage itself. At this level, the pupil has a strong capacity for acquisition. Therefore, "English is considered essential at the primary stage because it helps activate and develop the learner's ability to acquire and master it. It represents a valuable asset for any pupil who seeks future success in the modern world." (Tarhioua, 2021, p. 174). Previously, it had been taught only from the middle school stage.

Teaching and learning English have become an important necessity because it is a global language used in many fields. It is the language of science, technological development, communication, and interaction between societies. As a distinct language, it has established its presence on the international stage and across the world.

At the beginning of the implementation of English as a new language alongside Arabic and French, the process was somewhat challenging. Most participants confirmed this point. They stated that the introduction of English in primary education was an appropriate decision. However, some difficulties appeared at first, especially confusion between French and English among learners. With time, and through the use of appropriate teaching and learning skills, these difficulties were gradually overcome. At this stage, learners possess both readiness and prior knowledge that allow them to accept new learning. This helps them interact and integrate more easily.

The use of modern methods, tools, and techniques enables the pupil to develop linguistic knowledge. This is particularly important because primary school pupils respond strongly to symbols, signals, and colors. Most participants indicated that they rely on active learning strategies. These include sound, images, movement, gestures, colors, and videos. Such strategies help pupils focus and engage positively. As a result, they acquire knowledge that enriches their linguistic repertoire. This supports communication with others and helps them respond successfully in examinations.

Language development varies from one pupil to another. Participants confirmed that pupils' acquisition of English differs according to individual factors. Teachers also emphasized the importance of parental support in helping children learn. This support facilitates the teaching process. This view is consistent with Bernstein's linguistic theory, which states that a child's language development is largely influenced by the social environment in which the child lives. The growth of oral language plays an important role in the development of children's cognitive abilities. In addition, language development is affected by family relationships within the home environment (Ali Asaad Watafa, 2004,

p. 169). Differences in linguistic level therefore reflect differences in the environments in which pupils grow up. Families with higher cultural and economic levels often provide stronger support, which contributes to the development of the child's linguistic repertoire at school.

According to most participants, achieving effective language development requires the following conditions:

- The curriculum should be derived from the philosophy and values of society.
- Training programs for English language teachers should be intensified.
- The instructional workload of each teacher should be taken into account.
- Modern teaching resources should be provided, such as computers, printers, and audio equipment.
- Individual differences among pupils should be considered.
- Cooperation between the family and the school should be strengthened to prepare the pupil for learning English.

Instructional Time Allocation, Curriculum Density, and Their Impact on Teaching English in Algerian Schools:

The decision by the Ministry of National Education to introduce English at the primary level in Algerian schools represents a foundational step in the educational journey of the child. Primary education serves as the cornerstone for developing cognitive, social, emotional, ethical, and educational aspects of the pupil. It equips the learner with initial skills in reading, arithmetic, and writing, which form the basis for further learning. Introducing English at this stage is thus a pedagogically necessary and legitimate initiative. The primary aim is to advance the educational system, improve its conditions, and adapt it to the rapid developments and changes of the modern era. At the same time, it seeks to elevate the linguistic proficiency of the pupil.

English has become highly significant in both Western and Arab societies due to its global status and its close connection with technology across multiple fields. It is described as "the language of politics and diplomats in international forums, the language of science and scholars at academic conferences, the language of commerce and traders in business transactions and financial contracts, the language of technology and information professionals, the language of knowledge and educators in most educational institutions worldwide, and the language of communication among most users of email and the internet." (Halima, 2014, 2015, p. 204).

Teaching English in Algerian schools constitutes a major asset for the national educational system and, in particular, for Algerian pupils. Most participants in the study emphasized that learning English enables pupils to think critically, fosters creativity, encourages flexibility in problem-solving, and

enhances self-confidence. In addition, proficiency in English facilitates access to information and knowledge across various fields. Today, all disciplines, sectors, and interactions rely on English, and progress or development is closely linked to the use and mastery of this language.

Siham Boutghan (2024, p. 154) also confirms that "English facilitates access to scientific and technical knowledge sources available in that language, particularly information related to information technology. It allows pupils to engage with global scientific platforms that rely heavily on English and helps them use computer software and modern technological applications effectively."

Challenges in Teaching English in Algerian Primary Schools:

Given that English has become the language of the modern era and established its presence across global levels and fields, the Algerian government decided to introduce it in schools, particularly at the primary level, beginning with the 2022–2023 academic year. This decision reflects the significant impact English can have on the future of students and the development of society.

Despite its importance, this initiative faces multiple and varied challenges affecting pedagogical practice, organizational structure, and material and human resources. These challenges directly influence the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process and

the achievement of the goals set by introducing English in Algerian schools.

Most participants in the study identified several factors affecting English teaching. These include the cultural and social environment of the pupil, such as interference between French, English, and Arabic, and the weak language level of parents. Challenges also arise from the Algerian educational system itself, including overcrowded classrooms, dense curricula, and limited instructional time for English. Additionally, challenges relate to teaching staff, such as shortages in numbers and training, as well as weak teaching strategies and methods.

Among the most significant challenges reported by primary school teachers is the limited instructional time allocated for English, combined with the dense curriculum. This limits opportunities for teaching, learning, and practical application, thereby affecting the achievement of educational objectives. Teachers reported that the time allotted for English lessons is insufficient, especially for pupils learning multiple languages. The restricted time often prevents teachers from experimenting with and implementing modern teaching methods and strategies.

Some participants stated: "The limited instructional time for English does not provide pupils with sufficient opportunity to acquire the language. Time is a fundamental factor in developing linguistic skills, and this challenge becomes more pronounced given the dense curriculum. As a result,

teachers are required to cover a large amount of content in a short period, which reduces opportunities for individual assessment and follow-up." This situation negatively impacts the quality of teaching and learning, highlighting the need to reconsider the distribution of instructional time to achieve desired outcomes.

English curricula contain dense content that requires significant time and effort to cover effectively and to help pupils understand and assimilate it. Teachers often focus on completing the syllabus rather than on the quality of teaching. Awaryb and Abi Mouloud (2010, p. 92) note: "There is a degree of content overload in lessons, which forces the teacher to rely on lecture and explanation, often using translation from English to Arabic, to complete the program on time."

Most teachers alternate between using Arabic and colloquial language when teaching English. Some participants explained: "Due to the pressure and density of the curriculum, teachers often feel caught between the limited instructional time and completing the syllabus. They do not have enough time to monitor pupils' comprehension and assess them, especially in schools that lack adequate teaching resources to deliver English effectively."

This situation underscores the critical need to adjust instructional time allocation and provide sufficient resources to enhance both teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Overcoming Challenges in Teaching English in Algerian Schools and Conclusion:

Despite the variety and number of challenges facing the teaching of English in Algerian schools, these obstacles do not constitute an insurmountable barrier. On the contrary, they serve as a stimulus to reconsider and adjust teaching practices according to the needs of both teachers and learners. Achieving this requires the combined efforts of all educational stakeholders, both inside and outside the Algerian school system. Addressing these challenges can elevate the status of English nationally and improve pupils' linguistic and cognitive performance in the subject. In turn, this contributes to the development of the Algerian educational system, which plays a pivotal role in the advancement of Algerian society across all sectors.

Conclusion:

Teaching English in Algerian schools is no longer merely an additional pedagogical option. It has become an essential necessity due to rapid global transformations in knowledge, technology, and international communication.

The growing interest in English reflects increasing awareness of its importance as a language of science, economy, and culture. However, this trend faces several pedagogical and structural challenges that hinder the achievement of educational objectives. Among the most significant challenges are the lack of modern teaching resources,

insufficient continuous professional development for teachers, and variation in pupils' linguistic levels. Additionally, traditional curricula are often dense and fail to meet the requirements of contemporary communicative language teaching. The school environment sometimes does not provide opportunities for practicing English beyond classroom hours, limiting the chances for effective language acquisition. Social and cultural disparities among pupils further affect equitable learning opportunities, as some students benefit from family support and digital tools that facilitate language learning, while others do not.

Despite these difficulties, teaching English in Algerian schools requires comprehensive educational reforms. These reforms should focus on updating curricula, intensifying pedagogical and linguistic training for teachers, and integrating digital and technological resources into the teaching process. Teaching approaches should be interactive, emphasizing communication and practice rather than rote memorization, and schools should provide environments that encourage the use of English in real-life situations within the wider community.

The future of English language teaching in Algeria depends on the capacity of the educational system to adapt to contemporary demands while balancing the preservation of national linguistic identity with openness to global languages. The real challenge is not only to include English in curricula but also to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its teaching. This will prepare a generation capable of engaging with global transformations and contributing effectively to knowledge production.

For English to be effective both inside and outside the school, its teaching must operate within a clear pedagogical and administrative framework that considers educational, organizational, social, and cultural factors. Key recommendations include:

- Raising awareness among Algerian society, especially parents, about the importance of teaching and learning English at an early age.
- Establishing a continuous and permanent system to evaluate the effectiveness of English teaching in Algerian schools.
- Equipping schools with modern pedagogical and instructional resources necessary for learning English, such as videos, interactive images, and audio recordings.
- Reforming and updating English curricula to align with scientific and technological advancements worldwide.
- Intensifying professional development programs for specialized teachers, both before and during service.
- Adjusting the instructional time allocated for teaching and learning English.
- Implementing strategies to reduce classroom overcrowding, which hinders effective English teaching.

- Reducing curriculum density in English by designing it according to the philosophy and culture of Algerian society and at a level appropriate to the pupils' cognitive, educational, and cultural capacities as well as the support of their families. This structured approach aims to ensure that English teaching is effective, equitable, and aligned with the broader goals of national education and societal development.

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