# EMI IN PRACTICE: CHALLENGES IN CEIL TEACHERS' TRAINING SESSIONS AT SAIDA UNIVERSITY OF ALGERIA

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### Abstract

The concept of teaching core curriculum subjects in English might be labeled differently but suggested notions cannot be used interchangeably. Such approaches can be irregularly known as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) , Content Based Teaching (CBT) or English as a Medium of Intsruction (EMI). The use of this latter is common all around the world. However, there are serious obstacles that could compromise the standard and fairness of professional development. CEIL stands for the French tag 'Centre d'Enseignement Intensif des Langues', which is a center where teachers boost their skills in English for communication and for subject teaching as well. This study critically examines the integration of EMI at a university setting emphasizing the linguistic and the pedagogical implications in language learning classes. Through mixed-methods lens, the research investigates how language proficiency impacts knowledge acquisition and affects learning retention. It is important being part of the workshops for observations, strategic note taking and cluster sampling, in addition to a questionnaire administered to participants of different profiles. According to the results, the CEIL program places a greater premium on general English competence than it focuses on particular discipline language training and basic EMI skills. The study advances best practices for instructors; it adds to debate on transforming teacher education and reviewing EMI as a tool for inclusive and efficient pedagogical change.

**Keywords:** EMI, CEIL, communication, language proficiency, pedagogy.

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## Introduction

Algeria has acknowledged the value of English as a global language. It is widely used in many fields, such as international communication, research, and education, much like many other nations do. Accordingly, there has been a notable trend toward the implementation of EMI in national higher education institutions to accomplish a number of goals that improve the quality of education. Even though EMI has evident potential advantages, there are particular difficulties in successfully implementing it in Algeria since it is a multilingual and a non-English speaking nation.

By providing learners with good English language proficiency that enables them to actively participate in international academic exchanges. Such a transition is not an easy task; it requires time and a systematic effective policy to succeed the shift from teaching in Arabic or French to the use of English in the Algerian classes. Additionally, university learners encounter difficulties in an EMI setting, especially those who have never experienced academic English before. Their understanding and involvement may be affected by such obstacles which could affect the academic achievement and the overall educational practices.

Through variant programs, the CEIL at Saida university - Dr. Moulay Taher supports EMI in a special training for university teachers. The CEIL offers training courses, professional development opportunities that empower the educators and improve their capacity to teach in an EMI environment. The training program is designed mainly to address the particular difficulties using English for communication. The overall aim of the scheduled training is guiding the teachers to better their English so that they will be able to teach in English diverse specialties and communicate in English in academic settings like seminars or even in daily conversations in need.

This study seeks to investigate the prevalent language-related difficulties encountered by both educators and students in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classes, alongside the principal challenges faced by instructors in CEIL classes of English which are directed to teachers from various faculties at Saida University. Therefore, one attempts to identify the linguistic obstacles and the pedagogical challenges that hinder teaching and learning efficacy, and to offer recommendations for enhancing English Medium Instruction practices and teacher training in higher education.

To structure the study, one set two research questions addressing the linguistic and the pedagogical dimensions to narrow the scope of research:

> ➢ What are the common language-related challenges faced by teachers and learners in EMI language learning classes?

> ➢ What are the main challenges faced by teachers in CEIL programs when implementing EMI, particularly regarding language proficiency and pedagogical skills?

In response to the above mentioned questions; we hypothesize that:

> ➢ Learners' varying levels of English proficiency create difficulties in peer interaction and collaborative learning within EMI classes.

> ➢ CEIL educators have challenges in the implementation of English Medium Instruction (EMI) largely owing to inadequate training in pedagogical practices particular to EMI.

Such inquiries highlight concerns such as teachers' inadequate English proficiency, the necessity for specialized EMI training, pedagogical modifications, and the significance of institutional support for effective EMI implementation in higher education, particularly in language learning contexts like CEIL.

**EMI Significance in Higher Education**

What is known as "English-medium instruction" (EMI) refers to any type of formal education where instructions are conducted in English. Some scholars suggest that it refers to the use of English to teach academic subjects other than English itself in settings where English is a foreign or second language. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the term "EMI" is employed in a variety of contexts. However, the actual circumstances of EMI are more complicated in terms of participants, educational level, and geographic location, reflecting the global spread of English.

*"For EMI courses, the delivery of content, whole-class interaction, the learning materials, and the demonstration and assessment of learning outcomes (such as oral presentation, assignments or tests) should be in English. Other languages may be used in a principled and limited way in specific circumstances, for example, Student-to-student and teacher-to-*

*student interaction during pair work and group work may sometimes take place in languages other than English to aid mutual comprehension and idea generation. However, students should be asked to present their discussion outcomes in English and lecturers should ensure that at least 70% of class communication takes place in English". (Dearden , 2021)*

Prior research has focused on students' and instructors' views of English Medium Instruction (EMI), as well as the correlation between their English competence and success in topic learning and teaching. The global spread of EMI is likely assigned to important factors, educational considerations, and strategic goals. (Yu et al, 2016).

Students in EMI programs often face challenges with academic English variations in addition to general communication challenges, which can affect the ability to learn in-depth and pick up new knowledge.

One of the primary concerns in EMI settings is the linguistic proficiency of both teachers and students. Studies consistently demonstrate that a student's level of English language proficiency has a major impact on the comprehension of the course material, participation in class discussions, and eventual academic success. Understanding complex discipline concepts and effectively communicating ideas in an academic setting require academic English skills, which go beyond Standard English proficiency.

The Algerian ministry of higher education is planning to integrate English in universities .Yet, EMI teachers ought to support the notion that English is the language of education and should only be used as a teaching tool.

**Challenges of Implementing EMI in CEIL Classes for Teacher Training.**

English Medium Instruction (EMI) has become a prominent pedagogical approach around the world, intending to enhance English proficiency while sharing subject-specific knowledge. This objective poses a difficult set of pedagogical and linguistic challenges for educators as well as learners. EMI presents significant challenges for a successful training of educators. Language proficiency gaps, inadequate pedagogical setup, anxiety, and a lack of institutional assistance are the main obstacles to be faced.

EMI has pros and cons. Since the majority of CEIL participants are instructors and researchers in distinctive fields like engineering, business, economics, mathematics, information technology,…etc,  and the sciences

are ,mainly, conducted either in French or Arabic; these subjects are initially taught in that language except for some teachers who are attempting to switch into English without any special training . Then, EMI spread to a wide range of other academic fields, including the social sciences and humanities.

Although the quantity and variety of EMI courses offered by universities vary, EMI is always growing. Indeed, the way that English is used varies based on the type of program.



**Figure 1. Key Challenges in EMI for Teacher Training**

Many educators have reported that it challenging to adopt the English language proficiency for effective communication and instruction in the classroom (Freeman, 2017). Researchers like Yu et al (2016) and Yuan (2021) claimed that emotional complexity, anxiety, and decreased self-efficacy can all come from EMI teaching. This latter also hypothesized that teachers frequently lack EMI-specific training and feel unprepared to integrate language and content. It is added that EMI teachers frequently lack rewards, continuous training, and clear regulations. In addition to that, anxiety among participants stems from the use of English as the only medium of communication restricting the use of L1 in CEIL classes in which the educators must have additional opportunities for reflective thinking, feedback, and collaboration.

It is expected that in CEIL classes all instruction are conducted in English and that is the full EMI context. The learning objectives in CEIL classes make it a special setting for using EMI effectively. Despite their differences,

prior research has demonstrated that EMI teachers faced comparable challenges when implementing the EMI technique. Actual sufficiency in educational abilities and English proficiency are the two other main categories into which pedagogical challenges are divided.

## Methodology

The research is designed by integrating the mixed method of research to develop a comprehensive understanding of the complex issue which gathered a group of 25 participants from different profiles. They are all teachers at Saida university of Algeria including teachers of Science and Technology, Mathematics, Agronomy, Biology, Computering and Economics. It is worthy to mention that the number of the sampling may not seem enough but this is the whole group subscribed for the program. Indeed, these teachers are graded as B1 students of English. The majority of them are passive multilinguals. Most of them master Arabic, French but they just understand English without reading, speaking or writing in English.

In simple words, one can say that the mixed-methods approach is used, consisting of classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, systematic note-taking, and document analysis. The findings are more reliable because to this triangulated methodology offers a comprehensive viewpoint on educational and linguistic barriers.

The course teaching materials and related documents are digital. The training emphasizes the study of reading, writing, speaking and listening with a ready-made syllabus away from ESP. The classes are well equipped so that each learner has a computer with headsets, in addition to a data show and a magic board. Moreover, the lessons were shared.

Diverse research instruments are used for data collection; mainly:

❖ Observation of CEIL participants to identify interactional and instructional challenges.

❖ The trainee teachers participated in semi-structured interviews to discuss the difficulties they face and coping mechanisms they employ when using EMI.

❖ As being part of the team, document Analysis was essential to combine data, examine the training materials, syllabi, institutional documents, and language guidelines.

As it is known, structured **observation** employs a coding method for data collection that is well defined and procedural, with no direct involvement with the participants. Hence, coding is the application of some specified precise behaviours or acts that qualify as indications of interest such as peer discussion, or even helping one another in an academic setting especially when working on improving the oral skill.

Initially there were to be four observation sessions, each three hours in length. The sessions were planned for teaching English emphasizing the four skills. However, as the observations proceeded we varied the design of the methodology to structure **note-taking** technique, subjects are established; interview responses are recorded and arranged. This approach makes it easier to comprehend the primary difficulties that students encounter, the perceived teaching skills of educators, and language proficiency problems, which eventually results in a more perceptive study. The non-linear notes start from the main idea to the detailed information using mind maps, pattern notes and concept maps showing ideas branching down from a central idea explaining the connection between the varies details. Yet, observation and note-taking together provide an effective set of tools to cope with the complex nature of EMI in CEIL classrooms, through which we can observe teaching strategies and conduct deeper examinations of the data.

A broader comprehension of EMI context is made possible by the combination of both tools. Moreover, finding, classifying, and evaluating themes that come up from interviews require taking notes effectively. Therefore, having the potential to create deep, rich data, one has used an interview as a tool of data collection seeking to uncover the students' understandings about a particular topic. Then, the semi-structured interview is the best option asking broadly similar questions but the participants are free within the interview protocol to explore some of the answers given gaining more depth of the issue from the process.
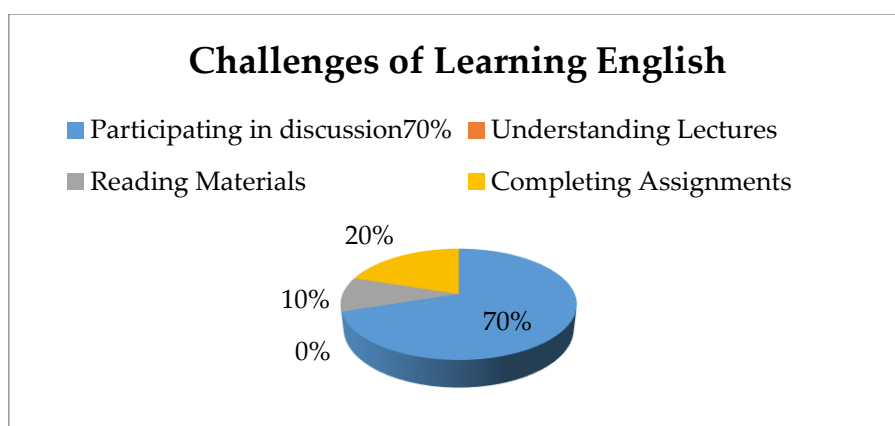
**The Interview Description**

As mentioned earlier, the varied sampling has different educational background. 60% of the participants are females and 40% are males aged between 29 – 62 years old.

**Q1**. All participants affirmed an encouraging atmosphere in which the majority of interactions are teacher-centered because they are over-stressed of using English in a classroom setting though they attempt to code switch between Arabic and English outdoors .
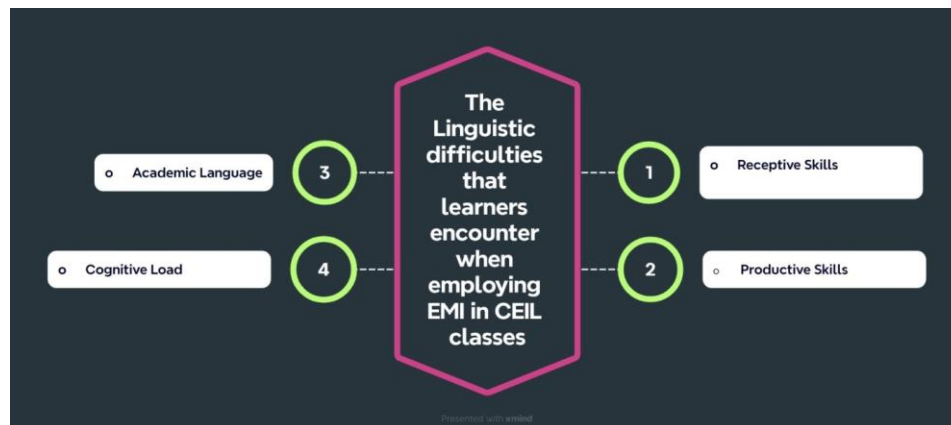
**Q2.** Checking the students' attitudes towards CEIL classes, hopefully, they had increased confidence in using English for academic purposes, access to international resources and scholarly publications along with classroom interactions . In the context of English Medium Instruction (EMI), collaborative learning is also highly valued.

**Q3.**



Comprehending lectures is frequently challenging due to rapid speech, complex vocabulary, unknown phonetic variations, and processing a lot of information at once. Most often, the students are afraid of making mistakes especially those who have a difficulty of using accurate language, so, they are not motivated to participate. For instance, to practice reading is time-consuming and difficult due to challenging factors like the timing; the unit outline which is a bit long, in addition to the focus on the other skills like writing assignments that are interested in comprehending structure, style, and referencing .However, it is challenging because accurately and fluently expressing complex ideas in writing is hard for our learners since they did not have a strong English repertoire.

**Q4**.

Students confront major language barriers in the classroom, including both receptive and productive skills, as well as the need to learn academic language regulations for a coherent and a cohesive spoken or written piece, besides, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy and pronunciation clarity which can all be obstacles they should overcome.

**Q5.** Various critical academic situations are mentioned in response to this particular question. It reveals the difficulty in expressing complex ideas, resolving academic disagreement, clarifying confusion, even expressing feelings of anxiety and poor performance.

**Q6**. Our students elicited the most valued support that includes the use of visual aids and videos, paraphrasing, simplifying the information, using technology and encouraging peer collaborative learning.

**Q7**. As teachers, we do not receive training in EMI methodology. Yet, we try to adapt materials to the contents. The timing is sufficient to achieve the goal; they have 3hours per session and that is good enough to deal with the four skills.

**Q8.** Most key pedagogical challenges for EMI teachers include comprehension and production that affect classroom interaction.

**Hypotheses Analysis**

The interplay of peer interaction and collaborative learning is profoundly influenced by the varying levels of English proficiency among students. Typically, those with higher proficiency dominate discussions and assume leadership roles in collective tasks and dialogues. On the other hand, less proficient colleagues who are less proficient tend to play passive roles or

handle non-cognitive tasks like taking notes or managing their time, which prevents them from making valuable contributions. Furthermore, this gap in participation not only limits these students' academic engagement but also slows their social integration because their fear of being judged negatively reduces their willingness to express their opinions. Because of this, even though partnerships may appear to be genuinely educational, they typically cover up members' divergent levels of comprehension. Therefore, a structural barrier to collaborative learning results from this dissimilar interaction, where participation is determined by linguistic proficiency rather than intellectual prowess.

Expanding on the second hypothesis, the findings show that many educators often faces significant challenges when implementing English Medium Instruction (EMI) because they lack sufficient preparation specific to EMI teaching methods. Despite being skilled in their fields, many of them lack the necessary materials to structure instructional language, generate assignments that take linguistic variance into account, and assess student performance in a way that separates language competency from content mastery. Without organized assistance, EMI classes frequently rely on complex environment with few visual aids or linguistic frameworks, which increases the cognitive load on EFL students. Besides, learning environments are even unstable due to unclear communication regulations, which can range from strict English-only requirements to uncontrolled code-switching. However, teachers who receive EMI-specific training exhibit improved classroom practices, including the use of explicit language objectives, the integration of a variety of resources, and the application of more beneficial review criteria. This implies that pedagogical design and language proficiency are both necessary for the successful implementation of EMI, highlighting the need for focused professional development and more transparent institutional frameworks.

Assigning students to alternating cognitive roles in collaborative activities to ensures that all students are participating intellectually rather than just linguistically.

What is noted most often in CEIL classes ,as well, is that without clear rules about language use, teachers try completely to avoid using L1; which can cause cognitive stress for the learners or allow careless code-switching, that can lead to fragmented instruction. Additionally, assessment frameworks

need to change to differentiate between content expertise and language proficiency. Rubrics for assessments should distinguish between a student's ability to articulate a concept fluently in English and their understanding of it.

In addition to subject-matter expertise, teaching EMI calls required understanding of multi-modal instruction, interactive language evaluation, and second-language acquisition. Universities ought to spend in EMI-specific training modules, create communities of practice, and offer peer observation programs to facilitate teachers' discussion of EMI concepts across disciplines.

In conclusion, the research findings highlight the necessity of pedagogical and institutional shifts. One more important finding about learner interaction is that English proficiency is a barrier to intellectual engagement and goes beyond simple language proficiency. The range of proficiency levels must therefore be purposefully taken into account when designing instructional frameworks—not by reducing the quality of the content, but by offering organized access to it. Teachers should use differentiated assignments that improve students' language and conceptual knowledge.

**Data Interpretation**

Apart from language barriers, university instructors face significant pedagogical challenges while designing, implementing, and evaluating effective learning activities for a precise category of learners . Traditional lecture-based methods are used by many university trainers, primarily those who lack formal pedagogical training. For students who prefer interactive learning experiences, a large number of lectures can result in decreased engagement and retention.

Having a varied sampling of different educational backgrounds and majors; bridging language and content can be employed to create a space for translation. An atmosphere where academics can express themselves as "bilingual beings" using their entire linguistic repertoire without adhering to the standard language, which is known as translanguaging. This is exactly, what CEIL teachers avoid in their teaching performance since they encourage a monoglossic learning space for an effective mastery of language.

Dealing with our multilingual students; the main situation where linguistic barriers occur can result a misunderstandings that decrease learning effectiveness. For example, as teachers we frequently deal with students who have trouble understanding English perfectly, which can lead to confusion due to new vocabulary, for instance, or even variations in culture. Furthermore, studies show that this can lead to academic isolation, in which students passively consume knowledge without fully understanding it which prevents them from participating. Based on several educational resources, teachers must overcome such obstacles in order to create inclusive environments. Some strategies they may employ include using tools like interpreters or simplifying language since one of the common issues include students' limited vocabulary, which impacts communication; in addition to the curriculum development that may cause other pedagogical challenges.

Therefore, both instructors and learners regularly face serious language-related challenges within higher education EMI contexts, which affects how well content is delivered and learnt. Yet, limited academic English proficiency is a common confront for learners, especially when it comes to handling particular vocabulary, comprehending lessons, and communicating complicated concepts during discussions or even assessments. Due to a lack of confidence or, sometimes, fluency, many students struggle to participate in interactive classroom activities, such as debates or group projects, and find it challenging to comprehend  or better the listening skill.  (Macaro. et al, 2018)

As a more profound outcome, the selected sampling is composed of teachers meant to perform their teaching in English at the end of the training. It is, then, one of the biggest challenges in achieving a balance between language use and content knowledge. Despite having a solid understanding of the subject, they feel constrained in their capacity to explain intricate ideas in English, particularly when improvising or whenever elaborations are required. Even, in some situations, they claimed reacting randomly to student questions which is an additional difficulty. Hence, code-switching is a tool for keeping the classroom in English and in certain international EMI contexts, the absence of a common L1 (first language) between the teacher and students can make communication even more difficult and less clear, yet, this is exactly what we are trying to overcome. Indeed, such language barriers often end up in less interaction

in the classroom, an excessive dependence on lecture-style instruction, and ultimately impede students' growth in language and critical thinking.

CEIL programs witnessed two challenges: they have to support students' English language development while also effectively delivering subject matter. In fact, the lack of English language proficiency is a significant problem, particularly when it comes to academic discourse tasks like instructing, explaining ideas, and facilitating student interactions in English. Even highly qualified educators may have trouble with pronunciation, fluency, or the proper use of academic register, which can undermine their confidence and hinder students' understanding and that, is exactly what our sampling faced according to what they expressed via the interview.

Along with language competency, on the other hand, EMI instruction presents pedagogical challenges for many teachers including insufficient guidance regarding the use of visual aids, for example, translanguaging or even integrating language objectives into content lessons.

### Conclusion

This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of the effects of English Medium Instruction (EMI) on language learning in higher education emphasizing the linguistic and the pedagogical aspects. The developed research questions are intended to clarify the challenges faced by students and teachers, while attempting to offer predictions regarding the influence of English language competency, teacher preparation, and institutional support on the effectiveness of EMI. By carefully examining these factors, this study hopes to make a substantial contribution to improving EMI practices in the Algerian higher education, especially in the area of language learning.

EMI has the potential to worsen inequality and impede learning outcomes in the absence of focused assistance. So, to fulfill the work observational methods and systematic note-taking are essential tools for recording the details of classroom interactions, pedagogical approaches, and learner experiences when examining EMI in CEIL courses. Consequently, EMI provides access to international insights though its success depends on dropping language barriers and giving teachers the pedagogical resources required to instruct in a variety of multilingual contexts.

The Algerian public universities are featured by the use Arabic/ French in education. For EMI adoption we should care of research productivity, enhancing proficiency and encouraging innovative teaching methods. Recently, even English is extended by integrating content and language in many scientific and literary fields recognizing its instrumental value of research and even teaching despite the lack of the linguistic readiness which may lead to misunderstanding the themes as it reduces the content mastery. EMI in scientific fields, for instance, have difficulties coving the resource gaps because of the insufficient materials and training. Yet, it results pedagogical shifts either positively through limiting the use of Arabic and French or negatively by bringing to an end the use of English. Indeed, EMI offers a potential for multilingualism to enrich learning and modernize the Algerian higher education system creating a balance to empower the content using an international language.

The sampling studied affirmed that many students with little English proficiency can actually benefit within an EMI class if they demonstrate a solid self-efficacy, resulting in a stronger ability to overcome challenging learning circumstances. However, their linguistic performance for communication is not really satisfying for a particular category of audience. Indeed, they should embrace the awareness that prioritises English intelligibility above native-like skills.

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**Appendix**

 **Semi-Structured Interview  Examining EMI Concerns in CEIL Training**

The primary objective of the study is to comprehend the challenges that educators and learners face in EMI classes under CEIL programs, with an emphasis on the teachers' pedagogical skills and language proficiency.

This semi-structured interview is designed to collect opinions from the learners in order to investigate the issues related to English Medium Instruction (EMI) in CEIL training. This method ensures to cover many essential areas for data analysis.

**Target Participants:**

In a CEIL program, the teachers actively teach English for trainees who are university teachers in different subject matter (such as science, engineering, mathematics and other disciplines)

I.      **Learners' Experiences in CEIL Classes**

**Gender : Male / Female**

**Educational Background :**

**Age :**

1. How would you describe your normal class experience? ( atmosphere and interactionso)

2. What do you find most rewarding about learning English in the center?

3. What are the biggest challenges you face in learning English ?

*Understanding lectures*          *Participating in discussions*

*Reading materials*          *Completing assignments*

4. What linguistic difficulties do learners encounter when employing EMI in CEIL classes?

5. Could you describe a situation in which language barriers gravely restricted your ability to communicate in English?

6. What kind of support (from teachers, the institution, peers) do you find most helpful for overcoming language barriers in your EMI classes?

7. Does the program provide adequate resources (time, materials, training) for successful EMI implementation?

8. Beyond language, what pedagogical challenges do you face when teaching your subject through English compared to teaching in your first language?