



The Perceptions Of Human And Social Sciences Students' Towards Implementing English As A Medium Of Instruction In Algeria: The Case Of Third-Year License Students At Aflou University Center

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Email: b.hamidi@cu-aflou.edu.dz Received : 12/09/2023 ; Accepted : 01/02/2024 ; Published : 11/02/2024

Abstract

The present study is an attempt to shed light on the current situation of the English language in the Algerian human and social sciences faculties and institutions. The rising number of students who are aware of the important status of the English language in the human sciences field point out their urgent need to shift towards the use of the English language as a medium of instruction . Accordingly, within the remit of this study a quantitative research method is used to collect and analyze the required data. Thus, a questionnaire is administered to sixty third-year license students at the department of human sciences at Aflou University Center. The findings obtained indicate that there is an agreement toward the shift to use English as a medium of instruction. In addition, the data gathered revealed the non-existence of real ESP courses for human sciences students in their field of study, it is of great importance to suggest some efficient measures and practices be implemented to ESP and EMI instruction in the Algerian human sciences faculties.

Key words: English language, Human Sciences Students, English for Specific Purposes, English as a Medium of Instruction, Teaching/Learning Process.

1. Introduction

As the English language has asserted its dominance over the world in the recent decades by becoming the most widely used language of communication in academic settings, many universities, especially in countries where English is taught as a foreign language, have adopted English for Specific Purposes, hands for ESP, as an independent academic discipline to meet specific learners' needs. Such an increased interest in teaching ESP can be markedly reflected in the concern of teachers, researchers and program designers in developing courses to simplify the task of teaching and learning. Most universities have included ESP programs as part of their syllabuses because they recognize the importance of assisting non-native speakers of English. ESP courses are introduced in Algerian universities to meet learners' needs of the English language in both academic and future occupational purposes to meet the 21-st century labor market demands.

Social sciences students have begun to be aware of the great importance of the English language because they have to get access to some original resources in their field of study,

which are mostly written in English in addition to the emphasis of the labor market managers on the level of the workers in the English language. The current research aims to seek the attitudes of social sciences students' toward the implementation of the English language as a medium of instruction through raising the following research questions.

- What are the student's perspectives toward using English as a medium of instruction in the faculty of social and human sciences?
- To what extent is the use of the English language useful for students of social sciences in Aflou University Center?

2. Review of Related Literature

Language of instruction is the language used in the teaching and learning process. According to Simanu-Klutz (1999), the language of instruction is the language of the classroom. This indicates that the language used to teach different academic disciplines in the classroom. Haryanto (2012) sheds light on the migration from non-English to English teaching, as a medium of instruction (EMI) has become a global phenomenon in the educational systems. As a result, this makes the English language taking such an important position in many educational systems around the world. Dearden (2014, p.1) defines EMI as "The use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English". It means learners and teachers whose mother tongue is not English use English language in an academic setting.

Many worldwide countries have failed to continue EMI education due to a lack of educational infrastructure, English proficiency, appropriate teacher education programs, and in-service professional development (Tylor, 2010). This means that even the higher status of the English language in the different countries where it is considered as a second language, but the educational structure of these countries and the teachers' competencies in the English language affect very widely the use of English language as medium of instruction. Tasçi, Ç. (2017).

Good communication skills have been fundamental to the successful practice and advancement of social and human sciences field, but this importance has not often received the respect it deserves with regard to the use of non-native languages. A study conducted by Bayes (2018) in which he describes problems and provide solutions for students concerning the English language also revealed the urgent necessity of using English as a medium of instruction.

3. Research Methodology

There is no perfectly agreed scheme for classifying methods in the field of educational research. However, the nature of the problem, the type of the needed data, the objective of the research work, and the populations are factors that impose the appropriate method (Turney and Robb, 1971).The descriptive approach would certainly fit the purpose of the current research because the objective is to know and describe the social and human sciences students' attitude toward the use of English language as a medium of instruction. With regard to the data collection methods, a questionnaire for students in the department of social and

human sciences is used to collect the appropriate data with reference to the use of the English language as a medium of instruction in their field of specialism in Aflou university center.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. The analysis of the questionnaire

The questionnaire seeks to investigate learners’ perceptions towards the implementation of the English language as a medium of instruction and to seek students’ attitudes towards ESP courses. Sixty randomly chosen students were requested to answer this questionnaire. They were informed about the significance of their participation in the current study as data providers, to reach the objective of current research. The questionnaire’ items are derived from different topics debated in the theoretical part of the study. It is a combination of sequenced close- ended and multiple choices where the participants are asked to tick the appropriate box or boxes if needed, and an open-ended questions where they are given the chance to provide their own answers. The number of the questionnaire copies was reduced to fifty because of some constraints.

Item 1: The Learners’ Specialties

The figure below illustrates the answers of the respondents of the first question, which aimed to identify the respondent educational specialty to analyze the questions accordingly; there is a significant percentage of social and human sciences students with (50% and 46%) respectively in comparison with psychology students (4%).

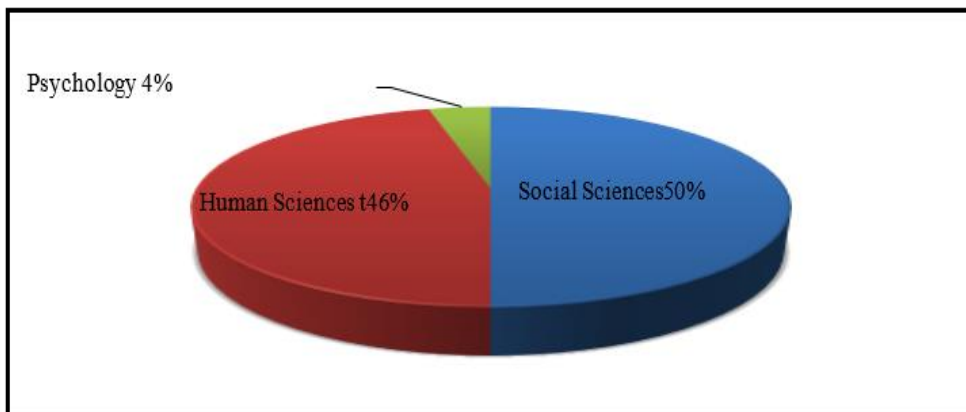


Figure 1. The Learners’ Specialties

Item2. The Language of Instruction in the Respondents’ Field of Study

The answers that are presented in the table below showed that the language of instruction in social and human sciences departments is the Arabic language. It is clear from the table that approximately all the students use the Arabic language to study their field of specialism. It is worth mentioning that no one had been taught using English as a means of instruction.

Option	Response	Percentage

	s	
a) Arabic	50	100%
b) French	00	00%
c) English	00	00%
Total	50	100%

Table1: The language of instruction in respondents' domain

Item 3. The Difficulties that Students Face when Using the Language.

60 % of our informants stated that they find difficulties when using the English language; however, 40% said that they can carry on their education using English as a medium of instruction as it is presented in the figure below

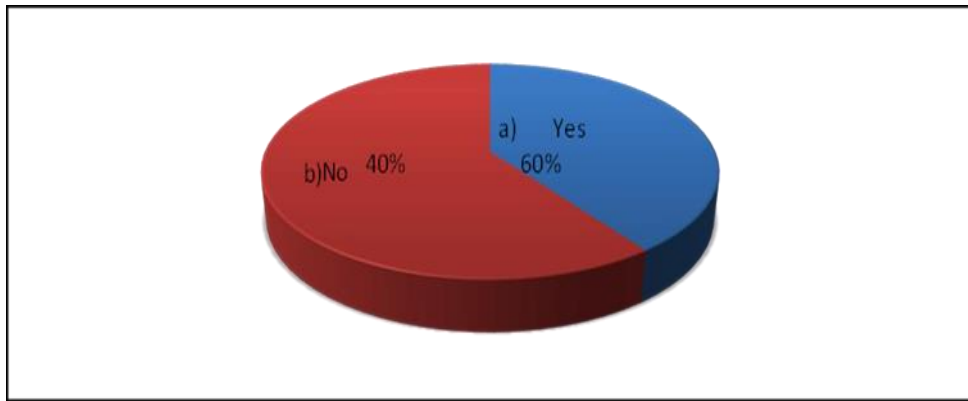


Figure 2: The learners' difficulties when using the English language used in their studies

The 40% of those respondents' who did not find difficulties when using the language justified their answers that they felt adapted with the language with time since all the surrounded environment used the language. However, others have a significant background from the previous educational levels, and a few of them justify their answer by stating that the field of social and human sciences is plenty of new terminology that should be taken whatever the language is. The table below illustrates the answers very well.

Item 4. The Students Perceptions about the Importance of the English Language for their Field of Study

The students' answers demonstrated that English was more than important for nearly more than half (56%) of the respondents who did justify their answers as follows:

- For my personal culture.
- All the sources are in English and the newest publications publication are in English too.
- Most of the research papers and articles are written in English, so to stay updated you have to master the language.

- It is science's language, now all the articles in the net are in English and all the scientific progresses are published in English.
- Most references are in English whether it is for our thesis or research papers or in our work setting.
- It is my dream to study abroad or even work there due to the current circumstances that doctors face every day while being in an ignorant society so I find it rather important to take care of my English and to develop it every day.

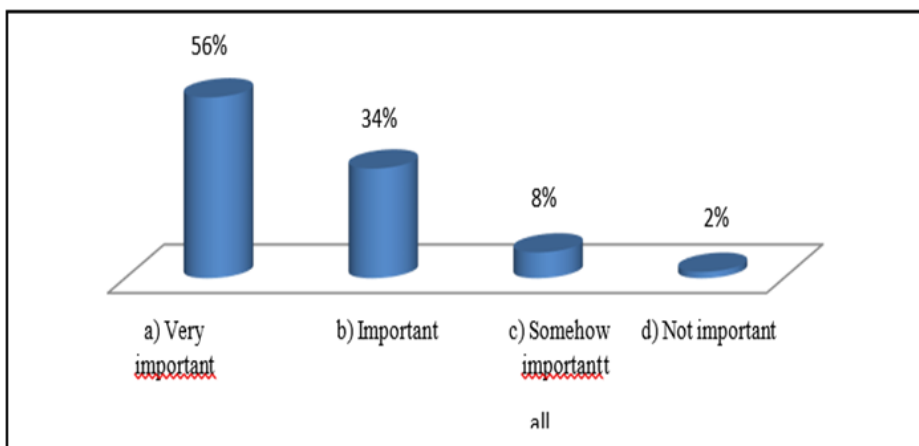


Figure 3. The Students Perceptions about the importance of the English Language

For those who answered that English language somehow important (8 %), they justified their answers as follows: “we don't have to use this language unless we are working in multinational companies and when it comes to clients, we actually often need to explain things in Arabic unless they are foreigners. Maybe we would need it to share research papers but we are not there yet I guess.”. Therefore, they consider that English language is somehow important since they rarely use it in daily life and they only use the Arabic language.

Item 5. The Respondents' Evaluation of their Level in the English Language

Through this question, the researcher aims to explore the level of human and social sciences students in English i.e., how do they evaluate their current overall level of English? To reply, students had to cross one of the four suggested possibilities or more. The table below summarizes the respondents' answers vis-à-vis their proficiency in English.

Option	Response	Percentage
a) Poor - I definitely need some help	18	36%
b) OK - but I know I could improve	22	44%
c) Good - I could improve with some advanced tips	3	6%

d) Excellent - I do not think I could improve much	7	14%
Total	50	100%

Table 2. Respondents’ evaluation of their level in English language

Although the results in the table above demonstrate that our informants level is not that advanced (3% only chose good level as an option), but most of them expressed their willingness to work harder to improve their skills in the English language.

Item 6. Social and human students’ Needs for Using the English Language

This question is very interesting in our study since it helped us a lot in determining whether they have been in a situation where they need to use English language. 76 % from the students’ responses describe the different situations in using the English language as follows:

- Joining online education courses, webinars and reading scientific papers.
- Looking for videos to understand lessons, most of them are in English.
- Reading some research papers written in English.
- Using English in a web search gets you a larger amount of information, better quality and quantity than the other languages.

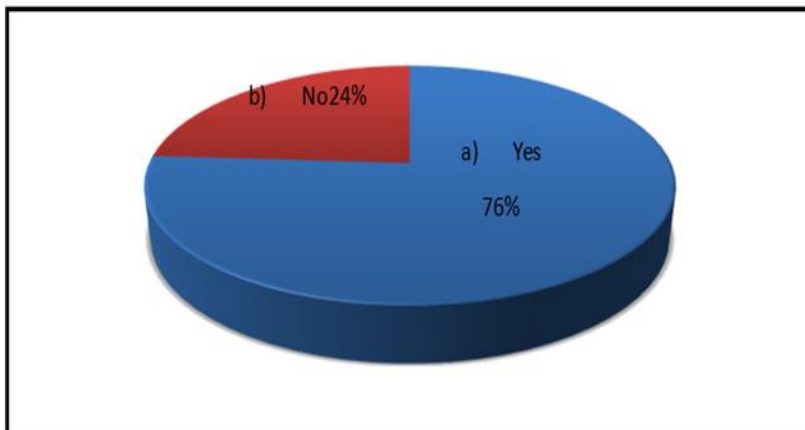


Figure 4. Students’ Needs for Using the English Language

Item 7. The students’ weaknesses in the English language

As far as this question is concerned, the students were asked to identify which of the language learning skill (s) they need to improve. The figure below indicates that the majority of the students (42%) have stated that they are weak on more than one skill. While the majority of the rest face difficulties with the productive skills (24% in speaking skill and 20% in writing skill). Thus, this clearly illustrates that students are aware of their weaknesses in the learning process and want to improve them.

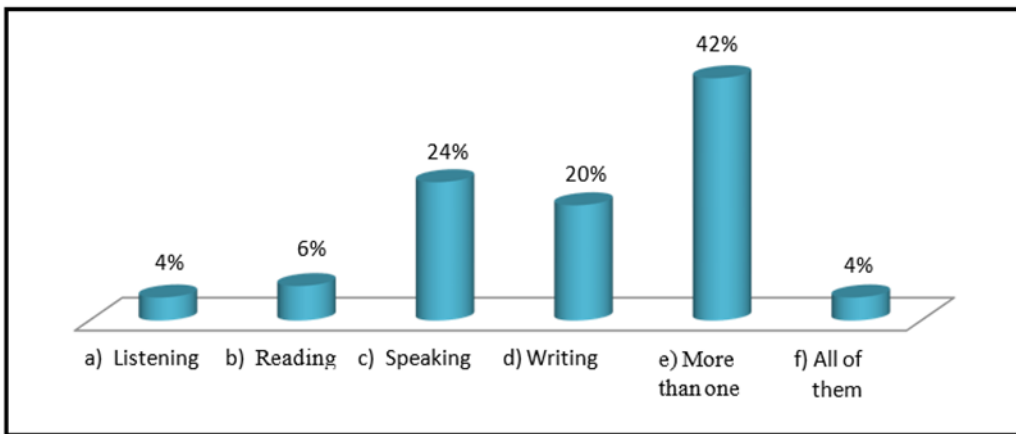


Figure 5. The students' weaknesses in the English language

Item 8. Respondents' opinions about who should be responsible for teaching English to students of social and human sciences

Generally speaking, the learners adopt a mixture of learning styles; they opted for a variety of learning strategies. So, to overcome the difficulties they face studying using the English language and to grasp the necessary knowledge or exploit the limited amount of time to fulfill their needs; social science students (88%) believe that a subject matter specialist who master the English language is better than a general English teacher as it is stated in the table below and this goes hand in hand with the instructions of the minister of higher education and scientific research for implementing the English language as a medium of instruction in Algerian universities

Option	Response	Percentage
a) A teacher of general English language	6	12%
b) A specialized teacher	44	88%
Total	50	100%

Table 3. Students attitudes towards the teacher of English

Item 9. The usefulness of the English language course for social and human sciences students.

According to the results presented in the table, 36% of the respondents have expressed a positive attitude towards the English course while 14% do not believe in the urgent need for using English as a medium of instruction in their field of specialism. Those who have expressed a positive attitude towards the usefulness of English language course might have acquired a valuable experience in their previous English learning. They may also need to learn English because of the specificity of their subject discipline. According to Kennedy and Bolitho (1984, p. 135), "A learner is bound to approach an ESP course with heightened expectations." This is not the case for the other 14% who have showed a negative attitude. It

may refer to an unsuccessful previous English learning or perhaps by the feeling that English language learning is not an absolute necessity in their surrounded environment.

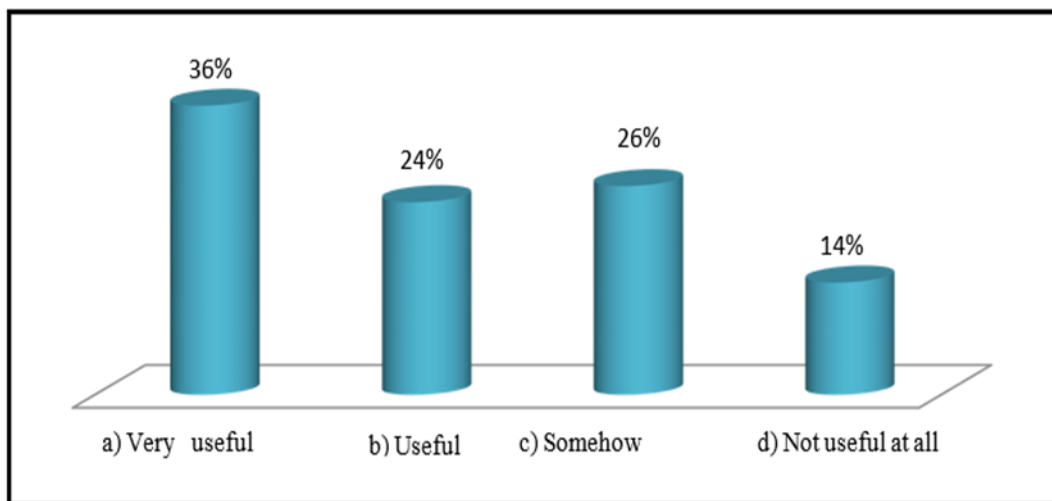


Figure 6. The degree of usefulness of the English language course for medical students

This question sought to know the students' opinion whether it is useful for them to use English as a medium of instruction. All of them justified their answers by giving a wide range of arguments. One stated that all major research and publications were in English language, the reason why learners had to be acquainted with the required skills to improve and update their knowledge with all what is new in their field. Another participant went further and said that learners had to be equipped with English language basics to be able to take part in international scientific meetings and conferences in which English has become the unique medium of interaction. In the same context, the remaining students confirmed that being able to access to a variety of working opportunities in English language has become a demand for any researcher or scientist seeking knowledge and research.

5. Discussion and Interpretation of the Results

The students' questionnaire was a research tool through which a group of fifty students from different social and human sciences branches expressed their opinions about the situation of English in the different Algerian universities. The students expressed their experience in the learning process as well as their views towards the integration of English language in the social and human sciences field of study. The results showed that there is a great acceptance of the implementation of English as a medium of instruction. Hence, the reality indicates that this integration needs very careful steps to guarantee the success of this shift toward the English language as medium of instruction.

The participants recognized the importance of English in the field of research and new discoveries. In addition, they expressed some of the difficulties that they faced in their learning process. These problems are mainly related to the four skills, for instance, making mistakes, lack of vocabulary, and the inability to produce a high level of written passages. Students' self-evaluation of their linguistic competence confirmed that they require more

training in using this language to improve their four skills. In addition, their weaknesses generally related to the productive skills (speaking and writing) where they had difficulty in writing and presenting their research papers, taking notes in conferences, and even writing reports in English. Furthermore, a big number of the respondents needed the listening skill to understand discussions on issues and comprehend spoken presentations in seminars and English conferences as much as writing papers and scientific publications. Our informants expect from their teacher of English to focus on both vocabulary and grammar with more emphasis on vocabulary through texts. Furthermore, the analysis of the questionnaire shows that the teacher wanted by human and social students should be a course designer, material provider, researcher, and subject matter specialist rather than language expert.

6. Recommendations

From the findings obtained out of this study, the following recommendations have been drawn and directed to teachers, administrators:

- The shift toward the use of the English language as medium of instruction in teaching and learning is more than a necessity.
- All the four language skills should be emphasized with more emphasis on the interactive skills.
- Collaboration between ESP teachers and subject matter specialists is recommended.
- The findings of study reveal that productive skills are more required than receptive skills. A research on the content design should mainly concentrate on English speaking and writing skills needed by social and human sciences students.
- Research on the course design and the effectiveness of EMI can be done through phases of implementation.
- A study about the design of the used material in the course of English for these students would be so useful. Research can be conducted about exploration of specialized knowledge of EMI instructors and their training materials would have much importance.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, this study is an attempt to shed light on the importance of the English language in the social and human sciences sector. For this reason, the ultimate aim of the current research is to attempt to answer the research questions and to confirm the students' attitudes towards the shift from the use of the Arabic language as a medium of instruction to the English language in teaching and learning. The findings revealed, from the very beginning, the great importance of learning English and the necessity to design effective English courses for students in the faculty of social and human sciences as well as the urgent need to provide teachers with the required training to achieve successful English teaching, the idea of implementing effective EMI courses for these students. The participants contributing to this study agreed on the absence of real courses of English and asked for teaching real effective English in the field through taking brave decisions and providing serious measures to change the situation and the prospects of English language teaching in the Algerian universities

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