

# English language policy in Algeria: Perspectives of university teachers and students

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the implications of the current foreign language policy in Algeria by holding evidence from the Algerian government practices and the Algerians' beliefs and views. The study also responds to the call of Maraf and Osam (2022a) to study neoliberalism as a possible outcome of the English wave in Algeria and considers further implications of linguistic imperialism as an additional outcome. To do so, the study follows a concurrent mixed methods research design that relies on the contribution of 200 Algerian university students who participated in a questionnaire (amongst 20 who participated in semi-structured interviews) who are affiliated with sixty-four Algerian universities, and 20 university teachers through semi-structured interviews. The study concludes that English is a tool leading to neoliberalism in Algeria and that English poses a threat of unnoticed linguistic imperialism that is already visible in the practices of certain youth groups. These conclusions are a roadmap for future problems similar to shadow education and language shift.

**Keywords:** Neoliberalism, linguistic imperialism, Algeria, foreign language policy, English as a medium of instruction (EMI).

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## INTRODUCTION

Language policy in Algeria was for long an exclusive enterprise undertaken by the Algerian government. However, it recently became an area of shared practice between the government and the public because of the harmonious views of the English language between the two. This new perspective of language policy in Algeria is a result of dimensional socio-political realities that were expressed through the Hirak protests<sup>1</sup> in Algeria (Maraf and Osam, 2022a) and the actual practices of the English language for different communicative functions (Belmihoub, 2018; Maraf and Osam, 2022a). Despite that the Hirak protests occurred only in 2019 and the underlying political decisions towards the English language are still in progress for application, the Algerian society opted for

more autonomous decisions (i.e., decisions of the use of English in different domains to cope with the speed of development in the world) and did not wait for overt political decisions to develop the use of English in different areas. A number of studies expected that there would be a wave of English in Algeria and many other countries (Spolsky, 2005) and that there is a current seismic wave of English in Algeria that is expected to develop into a tidal wave of English (Maraf and Osam, 2022a). Such waves of English are currently distinctly visible in the overt policies of the Algerian government and the socio-linguistic practices of the Algerian society. Nowadays, the visibility of the policies and practices makes us question the future of English in Algeria and its outcomes on the Algerian society and economy. Being mainly a socialist economy and system, Algeria has a 49.7 economic freedom score which makes it the 13th country in an order of 14 North African and Middle Eastern countries (Heritage.org, n.d.).

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<sup>1</sup> The Hirak also known as the Smile Revolution which is a socio-political reaction to the previous political regime and the poor living standards in the country.

The freedom of economy reports propelled Algeria to continuously make efforts to 'liberalize' its system, according to New York Times reports (Gupte, 1982). The Algerian efforts of liberalism did not only involve the economic system but also the linguistic choice to cope with the goal of liberalism. An example of these efforts is the deliberate explanation of the government for its choice to develop English in the Algerian educational setting as the language of business and world scientific publications (Maraf and Osam, 2022a). This awareness, despite its late existence, represents a shared view with the public towards the English language that was for long perceived as beneficial only by the Algerian public. Therefore, the present study responds to the call of Maraf and Osam (2022a) to study neoliberalism as a possible outcome of the English wave in Algeria. To do so, the study focuses on the government's and public beliefs and practices representing neoliberalism and leading the country into a form of linguistic imperialism. The study takes into evidence the existence of a newly formed youth group (i.e., commonly known as 'the deep'<sup>2</sup> that already 'shifted' to the use of English (as the only medium of communication) in different social life situations and the decisions of the government to use English as the medium of instruction in the next academic year 2023-2024 (Elwassat, 2020). Taking into consideration these factors led us to hypothesize the following:

H<sub>1</sub>: English is viewed as a means of neoliberalism

H<sub>2</sub>: The overt beliefs of neoliberalism are leading to a new form of linguistic imperialism.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of the current paper addresses two areas of relevance to the scope of the study: neoliberalism and linguistic imperialism. The present study acknowledges that the Algerian government along with the Algerian public view English from a pragmatic perspective (the language of business, economy, and educational benefit) as discussed in many studies (e.g. Belmihoub, 2015; Maraf and Osam, 2022b); however, there are no studies, to the best knowledge of the researcher, that address the areas of English neoliberalism and possible imperialism in Algeria. Therefore, the present study focuses on this gap in the literature to shed light on the implications of the presence of English in Algeria.

### Liberalism or neoliberalism

Liberalism is a political ideology that emerged as a dominant theory at the start of the third millennium. The

ideology is based on four basic elements according to Gary: "individualism, egalitarianism, universalism, and meliorism" (Chau, 2009, p.2). The elements of the political ideology, of liberalism, involve a moral philosophy that encourages individualism to adopt more liberty and individualism. Both the political and moral ideologies of liberalism found their way to the language of individuals as they did in many other social domains. Rotunda (1986) explains that liberalism changed language symbolism and created more inclusive connotations to words like secretary and nurse that symbolized only 'girls' and later became words that represent both men and women. Despite that liberalism promoted ideologies of freedom and liberty in different domains, the world had more thirst for universalism and freedom that needed to be fulfilled by an evolved ideology of liberalism, which is commonly known as neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism is an ideology that was established amid an aversion towards the norms of social planning and the redistributive 'governmental' economic policies (Adino and Nebere, 2016; Ceallaigh, 2019). The ideology of neoliberalism was embraced by the Western world economies. At the same time, it is seen as a threat to African economies which struggle with insufficiency of economic goods due to the regulations followed by the governments in regulating economies (Simutanyi, 2006).

Neoliberalism usually serves as an ideology presented through covert language policies (Piller and Cho, 2013). However, in Algeria, the ideology was expressed through overt language policies advocating for the use of English as a medium of instruction by introducing a program of teaching English to university teachers through an online platform (Journal el Bilad, 2023), for teaching English in primary schools starting from the third year of primary education instead of the first year of middle school (Elbilad.net, 2022), for strengthening its presence in the linguistic landscape (Maraf and Osam, 2022b), and for replacing French by English on the newest Algerian monetary banknotes (Pierre, 2022).

Sekhar Rao (2017) states "English is the ideal and preferred language in the business community" (p. 1). However, Algeria has been negligent of the role English plays in doing business. Belmihoub (2015) explains that English can bring economic peace to Algeria since it can be used as a means for attracting international investors to the country. Recently after the 2019 revolution, however, the government acknowledged the role of the English language by adopting a different political speech by its ministers who addressed the public in English and encouraged the media and businesses to do business in English (Maraf and Osam, 2022a). Similar to the government's standpoint, Algerians consider English as the entity that allows them to have more career opportunities and more income. To illustrate, Belmihoub (2018), by referring to Euromonitor reports, states that: "English users of large companies with such professions as secretary, manager, and director tend to earn more than

<sup>2</sup> A youth group that shares the same clothing style, the same interests in English music, and the same language of communication

non-English users for the same job” (p. 212).

### Linguistic imperialism

Linguistic imperialism reflects how and why “certain languages dominate internationally” (Phillipson, 2013, p. 1). In other words, some languages travel from their local borders to dominate in other contexts for reasons of colonialism and globalization. An ideal example of linguistic imperialism can be found in the African continent where English is used as a medium of instruction in preschools and primary schools (Özad et al., 2021). Consequently, This use of English as the medium of instruction in African schools caused numerous drawbacks such as the high numbers of ‘dropouts and class repeaters’ (Wolf, 2018). English language imperialism in the South and East African contexts is ‘structural’ in its essence since it is dominant in areas of “culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military ” (Phillipson, 2013, p.1). Unlike the other parts of Africa, the North African context, specifically Algeria, appears to have a subtractive form of imperialism. Subtractive imperialism involves developing proficiency in the language of imperialism through education at the expense of other languages (Phillipson, 2013).

Recently after the Smile Revolution (a public movement against the previous Algerian regime expressed through

public protests and resulted in multiple reforms aiming at developing the presence of English in Algerian schools and universities, see more in Maraf and Osam (2022a), Algeria recognized the importance of English language as a lingua franca and decided to promote the English language in the country through short-term, mid-term and long-term decisions that aim to enhance the presence of English in Algerian schools and universities (Elwassat, 2020; Maraf and Osam, 2022a). According to the Ministry of Higher Education in Algeria, the current interest in English is mainly due to four reasons: 1) English is the world’s lingua franca; 2) English represents 95% of world scientific publications; 3) English is used in 80% of social media content; and it is the business language in the world (Maraf and Osam, 2022a). The Ministry’s reasons appear to be rational and logical at this stage, but they represent what Cooke (1988) describes as a ‘trojan horse’. The latter is referred to describe the way English is embraced in a context due to its international value, then causes concerns of dominating the existing languages and cultures in that context. One of the implications of the spread of English as a lingua franca is linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999). Examples of linguistic imperialism, described as ‘linguistic imposition’, are visible in the UAE where English became the medium of instruction and therefore threatened other languages (Moore-Jones, 2015).

**Table 1.** Student participants in the survey.

	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	143	71.5
	Female	57	28.5
	Total	200	100
Age	17-20	17	8.5
	21-24	64	32
	25-27	41	20.5
	28-30	29	14.5
	31+	49	24.5
	Number of spoken languages	1	28
2		64	32
3		85	42.5
4		20	10
5 or more		3	1.5
Location	East	78	39
	West	26	13
	South	39	19.5
	North	57	28.5
Educational level	BA	81	40.5
	MA	99	49.5
	PhD	20	10

## METHODOLOGY

The current study employed a concurrent mixed-method research design. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Therefore, both closed-ended and open-ended data were collected (Creswell, 2014). This method has been selected because it “provides a stronger understanding of the problem or question than either by itself” (Creswell, 2014, p. 264). The mixed methods procedure also bridges positivism and constructivism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). It also provides descriptive (i.e., semi-structured interviews) and numeric (i.e., survey) data that aim to address the hypotheses of the study.

### Participants

The participants were 200 university students (affiliated to 64 universities and aged between 17 and 31+) and 20 university teachers (affiliated to 6 universities and aged between 27 and 63). 10% (N = 20) of the large population of students (N = 200) were selected to be interviewed based on convenience sampling (Creswell, 2014) since the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The interviewed students were selected based on their availability and convenience since all the survey participants share similar initial characteristics (studying in Algerian universities) and there was no need to set further criteria for selection. This sampling technique, convenience, resulted in the participation of students from the English language department (who were later discarded from the research data as they had biased opinions towards the English language and their perceptions could bias the research findings). Table 1 shows the detailed demographic data of the student participants in the survey.

The twenty interviewed students (9 females and 11 males) were aged between 20 and 40. To add breadth to the research data, students were selected from eight Algerian state universities located in the east, west, north, and south of the country to guarantee the geographical representation of Algerian students from the four poles of Algeria and ensure the generalizability of the findings. The respondents were BA, MA, and PhD students, affiliated with technical, medical, and engineering departments (Table 2). None of the students were affiliated with foreign language departments so their attitudes towards foreign languages would not bias the research findings.

**Table 2.** Student participants in the interviews.

	Gender	Age	Affiliation	Level/Department
Student 1	Female	23	Houari Boumediene University	MA/Biology
Student 2	Male	24	Yahya Fares University	MA/Electric Engineering
Student 3	Male	20	Hadj Lakhdar University	BA/Electro Mechanic Engineering
Student 4	Male	26	Yahya Fares University	MA/ Electro-Technical Engineering
Student 5	Female	23	Mohamed Khider University	BA/Civil Engineering
Student 6	Female	24	Hadj Lakhdar University	MA/Nutrition
Student 7	Male	23	Mohamed Khider University	MA/Civil Engineering
Student 8	Female	29	Hadj Lakhdar University	BA/Finance
Student 9	Male	24	Saad Dahleb University	Medical Dentistry
Student 10	Female	25	Hadj Lakhdar University	MA/Religion Studies
Student 11	Female	40	Mohamed Khider University	PhD/Business
Student 12	Female	24	Chlef University	BA/Social Sciences
Student 13	Female	29	Mohamed Khider University	Ph.D./Education
Student 14	Male	27	Oran University	Ph.D./Electronics
Student 15	Female	25	Oued University	MA/Biology
Student 16	Male	21	Hadj Lakhdar University	BA/Science & Technology
Student 17	Male	20	Hadj Lakhdar University	BA/Science & Technology
Student 18	Male	25	Hadj Lakhdar University	Medical Doctor
Student 19	Female	24	Mohamed Khider University	BA/Law
Student 20	Male	26	Houari Boumediene University	BA/Agronomy

The twenty university teachers were selected using snowball sampling (Dragan and Isaic-Maniu, 2013) since

the first participants were directly contacted by the researcher, and then they were asked to recommend other

participants that share similar characteristics (age, field of teaching in other universities, and position) since the author does not reside in Algeria and has no connections with Algerian academicians in Algeria. It is noteworthy to mention that snowball sampling is generally criticized for causing sampling bias (Parker, Scott and Geddes, 2019); however, the different viewpoints of the participants on similar topics indicate that the participants only share initial characteristics, but not opinions and perspectives on language matters.

The university teachers were selected as participants because they can address broader issues related to the English language such as language status, research and publication issues, and linguistic preferences and experiences. Table 3 demonstrates the demographic data of the interviewed teachers.

The interviews with the university students and university teachers were conducted using video-conferencing and audio call applications (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WhatsApp) due to COVID-19 restrictions between 2019 and 2021. The identities of all participants were kept anonymous and were presented in the data by student or teacher and corresponding hyphenated numbers (e.g., student-1, teacher-1).

### Validity and reliability

The present study has two hypotheses that were addressed by a set of interviews and a survey. The latter after its initial pilot study, was edited to answer the first hypothesis (H1: English is viewed as a means of neoliberalism) while the interviews explained the findings of the quantitative data to prove the first hypothesis and answer the second hypothesis (H2: The overt beliefs of neoliberalism are leading to a new form of linguistic imperialism.). The validity and reliability of the survey were checked through SPSS analysis. Internal validity was obtained by referring to the significance values that were observed through connection using 'Pearson correlation' and 'sig. 2-tailed'. By using the Pearson correlation, the researcher could assess that there is a positive correlation coefficient of 0.43 which suggests a moderate positive linear relationship. This relationship indicates the extent to which changes in one variable (e.g., Neoliberalism or language importance) are associated with changes in another (e.g., beliefs about English). Pearson correlation and sig. 2-tailed were calculated at  $r(200) = .43$ ,  $p < 0.01$  or 0.05 as Table 4 shows.

Table 4 illustrates that there are correlations between the variables (Beliefs about English (BE), Neoliberalism (language importance) (NL), Future of English in Society (FES), Future of, English as the Medium of Instruction (FEMI), English for Universities' Development (EUD)) at  $.226 < .43$  and  $.001 < 0.0$ ,  $.246 < .43$  and  $.000 < 0.01$ , and  $.273 < .43$  and  $.000 < 0.01$ ,  $.348 < .43$  and  $.000 < 0.01$ , respectively.

The reliability of the survey was calculated using Cronbach's Alpha which in total appeared to be greater than .70 (Cronbach's Alpha  $> .70$ ) for a total of 13 items (only 5 items are presented)

### Data collection and analysis

The university students' interviews were conducted between February and June 2021 and the university teachers' interviews were conducted between July 2020 and January 2021. The students' interviews for 20 to 30 min addressed the following areas: (a) background information and (b) their views on foreign language policy in Algeria. On the other hand, the teachers' interviews lasted 30 to 40 min and dealt with similar areas as the students' interviews but included different questions.

Both interviews were conducted in English, but translation into Arabic or French was a common practice when requested by the students and teachers who had less fluency in English (the author had the questions in English translated into Arabic and French by a translation expert so when the participants do not understand the question in English, the author provides the Arabic or French version of it). The interviews were recorded and transcribed, then analyzed inductively by referring to themes that answer the research hypotheses, such as beliefs about the status of English, the importance of English, English as a medium of instruction, and the future of English.

The questionnaire survey, however, was presented in two languages (Arabic and English) to ensure the understanding of all the survey questions by the university students. The survey was piloted three months before the last version was administered to the students. The final version of the survey was divided into three sections: 1) Part I related to background information with eight questions; 2) Part II related to the presence of foreign languages in Algeria with ten questions; and 3) Part VI related to the future of English language policy in Algeria with nine questions. Since the present study is part of a larger study, only a few survey questions are presented in this research (from parts II and VI sections) since they represent the focus of the current study. The survey data was analyzed using the SPSS program (Version 27) by an expert in statistics and then interpreted by the author of the present research.

### Ethical considerations

To comply with research ethics and maintain the anonymity of students and teachers, the identity of the interviewed participants (students and teachers) was kept anonymous. The approval to conduct this study was obtained from two Algerian state universities, Mohammed Khider University in Biskra and Hadj Lakhdar in Batna.

**Table 3.** Teacher participants in the interviews.

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Department</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Spoken Languages</b>
Teacher 1	27	Female	University of Algiers 3	Media and communication	Lecturer	Arabic, French, Spanish, English, Turkish
Teacher 2	28	Male	University of Algiers 3	Political sciences	Lecturer	Arabic, French, English, Turkish
Teacher 3	30	Male	Mohamed Khider University	Civil engineering	Associate Professor/ Vice department head	Arabic, French, English.
Teacher 4	32	Male	Mohamed Khider University	Civil engineering	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, English.
Teacher 5	42	Female	Institute of Letters and Sciences	Education	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, moderate English.
Teacher 6	38	Female	Bouira University	Business	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, moderate English
Teacher 7	40	Male	University of Algiers 3	Business	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, moderate English
Teacher 8	35	Female	Boumerdes University	Business	Associate Professor	Arabic, French, English
Teacher 9	40	Female	Boumerdes University	Business	Associate Professor	Arabic, French, English
Teacher 10	38	Female	Hadj Lakhdar University	Business	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French
Teacher 11	45	Male	Bouira University	Management	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, English, Berber
Teacher 12	49	Male	Hadj Lakhdar University	French language	Assistant Professor	Arabic, French, moderate English.
Teacher 13	60	Male	Mohamed Khider University	Physics	Professor	Arabic, French, moderate English.
Teacher 14	63	Male	Mohamed Khider University	Mathematics	Associate Professor	Arabic, French.
Teacher 15	55	Female	Mohamed Khider University	Natural sciences	Professor	Arabic, French.
Teacher 16	36	Female	Hadj Lakhdar University	Mechatronic engineering	Assistant professor	Arabic, French, English.
Teacher 17	55	Male	Mohamed Khider University	English language	Lecturer	Arabic, French, English.
Teacher 18	48	Female	Hadj Lakhdar University	Law	Assistant professor	Arabic, French, moderate English
Teacher 19	65	Male	Hadj Lakhdar University	Medical studies	Assistant professor	Arabic, French.
Teacher 20	30	Female	Mohamed Khider University	Biology	Associate professor	Arabic, French.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation for validity.

Variables	BE	NL	FES	FEMI	EUD
Beliefs about English (BE)	-	.226** 0.001	.246** 0	.273** 0	.348** 0
Neoliberalism (language importance) (NL)	.226** 0.001	-	-	-	-
Future of English in Society (FES)	.246** 0	-	-	-	-
Future of English as the Medium of Instruction (FEMI)	.273** 0	-	-	-	-
English for Universities' Development (EUD)	.348** 0	-	-	-	-

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5.** Reliability of survey items.

Reliability statistics	N of Items
Cronbach's Alpha	.711
Beliefs about English (BE)	5 out of 13
Neoliberalism (language importance) (NL)	.688 < .711
Future of English in Society (FES)	.707 < .711
Future of English as the Medium of Instruction (FEMI)	.673 < .711
English for Universities' Development (EUD)	.659 < .711
	.678 < .711

However, the lockdown measures and travel restrictions from and to Algeria due to COVID-19 led the researcher to directly contact university teachers from other Algerian universities who also eventually helped the researcher to reach more students by distributing the link of the survey. All university students and teachers signed consent forms before participating in the interviews.

The survey, on the other hand, was posted on Google Forms on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The students on their behalf signed a digital consent form and approved the participation and publication of the data they provided.

## RESULTS

The results of the study are divided into two main headings: 1) Status and Importance of the English Language; and 2) English in Algeria as a Road of Neoliberalism and Linguistic Imperialism to answer the hypotheses of the study.

### Status and importance of English language

As reported in a study by Maraf and Osam (2022a), Algerian students demonstrated satisfaction with the

government decisions related to improving the presence of the English language in Algeria, we decided to query the students' stand towards the desired status of the English language in Algeria. Table 6 shows that a total of 88% (24% agree and 64% strongly agree) of the students believe that English should be the first foreign language in Algeria.

Despite the students' beliefs about the English language status, they reported uncertainty due to the difficulty of erasing the colonial history of Algeria and the reigning francophone culture as explained by the students in excerpt 1 and excerpt 2.

#### Excerpt 1

I think it is normal to use a second foreign language because we are a past French colony, but when it comes to logic it is not normal. But in Algeria, numbers don't matter... first or second... because if they care about the labels, there would be protests from French bodies in Algeria like some teachers and students like the case with the Berber language whose representatives always protesting, so Algeria avoids numbers to silent the international interference while it develops English in schools and universities and we

don't forget that the new generations are really good in English since their childhood because of kids' TV channels such as national kids and Toyor Aljanna where they teach English, no one is teaching them French at that age. It's a matter of time and wisdom that English would take its rightful position. (Student 10, age: 25)

Excerpt 2

It is a whole process. The culture of people should

change from francophone to Anglophone. There should be developmental programs at all educational levels. It won't be easy for a university teacher who studied all his life in French to switch to English. It needs at least 10 years. (Student 9, age: 24)

In accordance with the Algerian government's view of the importance of English in education and in doing business, the university students shared the same view with the government as highlighted in Table 7.

**Table 6.** Desired status of English language.

English should be the first foreign language in Algeria		Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation		
	4.48	.826		
Options	Detailed statistics			
	Frequency	Male	Female	Percent%
I strongly disagree	1	1	0	0.5
I disagree	7	4	3	3.5
Undecided	16	12	4	8
I agree	48	35	13	24
I strongly agree	128	91	37	64
Total	200	143	57	100.00%

**Table 7.** Domains of the importance of the English language.

Where do you want to have more presence of the English language in Algeria?		
Domains	Frequency	Percentage
Education	87	43.50
Oil industry and business	7	3.50
National press, television, and radio	5	2.50
Official national work entrance exams	2	1
Social media	2	1.00
Policy	1	0.50
All the above	88	44
None of the above	4	2
Other	4	2
Total	200	100

Table 7 reveals that 43.5% of university students believe that the English language should be present in the education domain as it should be in all the other domains. The 2% of students who chose 'other' reported that English should be used in other domains such as hiring contests, medical domains, and 'everything else'. One of the students who selected 'other' stated: "I tend to use Arabic in general life domains" which demonstrates an

attachment to the 'Arab' identity and shows apprehension from the linguistic imperialism that could be caused by the English language over the native language of the country.

The teachers' views of the desired status of the English language are not dissimilar from the ones of the students. In this regard, the university teachers responded to the interview question 'How would you describe the status of English as a second foreign language in Algeria?' as



follows:

#### Excerpt 3

It's because of the historical relation and historical things all related to French country and we couldn't defend our policy for the languages I mean. So, they imposed on us to do it as the first language and English was the third. Actually, I think Algeria must increase this language firstly in the schools and secondly for the staff administrations. I think this is the way by which we can increase our English, but I think it must be restored and established inside of Algeria instead of any administration, but this depends on the political men." (Teacher 4, age: 28)

#### Excerpt 4

"Very weak, but nowadays it's getting more and more attention, not from the politics, but from the students. I will give you an example at Biskra University, nowadays the biggest department is the English department... more and more people are studying English. Previously it was French so now it's the reverse and the university had to recruit more than twenty teachers during the two last years ... so last year it was 9 positions and this year it was around 11 positions for English teachers ... this year it's more than 50 percent of the total positions opened at Biskra university were for English." (Teacher 3, age: 30)

#### Excerpt 5

"The status of English! Okay, I will be honest with you. In today's world, it should have a better position than it is now in Algeria especially since our kids are

interested more in this language, but for us as university professors, it would be very difficult to get rid of the French language. I mean I studied everything in French, I teach in French, switching to English would be very difficult, but the new generation needs it more" (Teacher 20, age: 65)

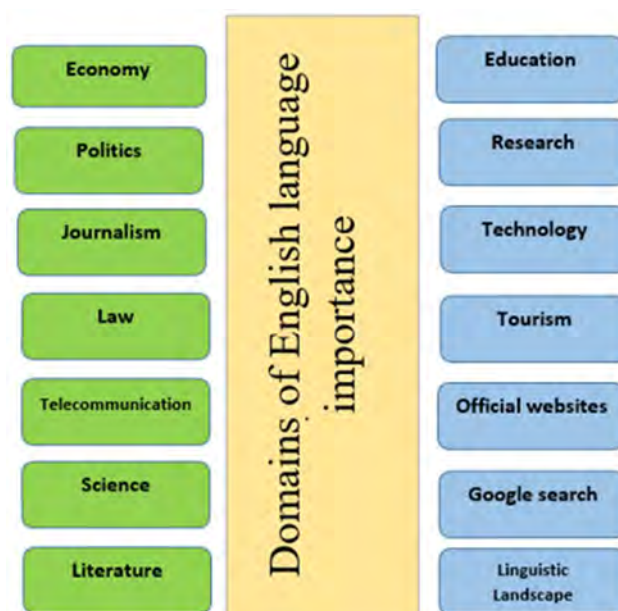
The university teachers acknowledged that English has more value than any other foreign language. However, similar to the university students believed that there are challenges of the colonial history and the educational history of many senior teachers. Also, none of the teachers reported English as a threat to other languages which shows unawareness of the shadows of linguistic imperialism.

University teachers demonstrated a pragmatic view toward the English language as appears in Excerpt 6.

#### Excerpt 6

Yes, it is very important, especially for a professor's career... let's say researcher career... because English is the language of science or research papers' projects that are published in English so it is important to understand and to write expressively. (Teacher 3, age: 30)

Furthermore, when the teachers were asked about the other domains where the English language is important, the summary of their responses showed that they believe English is important in fourteen domains: economy, politics, journalism, law, telecommunication, science, literature, education, research, technology, tourism, official websites, google search, and linguistic landscape as appears in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Further domains of the importance of English language.

Both students and teachers believe that the English language should have a better status in Algeria despite the colonial challenge it faces. Also, both categories believe that the English language is important in different domains of life. This importance shows a pragmatic view toward the language founded upon a reciprocal benefit which can result in aspects of neoliberalism and a form of linguistic imperialism in the future.

### **English in Algeria (a road to neoliberalism and linguistic imperialism?)**

The future of English in Algeria is determined by the practices that are currently in action by the government and are in accordance with the beliefs of Algerians as presented in this section. The future of English in schools, universities, and society draws the roadmap of

neoliberalism attempts that are leading to linguistic imperialism.

### **English in schools**

University students are the ones who have the ability to reflect on their previous experiences and to choose from which year they prefer to have English studied at primary schools. Table 8 shows the survey findings related to students' preferences.

Table 8 demonstrates that the majority of participants (43%) wanted the English language to be taught starting from the third year of primary school, instead of middle school as it was practiced for decades in Algeria. The findings show that the students agree with the government's decision to teach English in the third year of primary education.

**Table 8.** English in schools.

<b>From which year do you think pupils should start learning English?</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1st year of primary school	28	14.0
2nd year of primary school	30	15.0
3rd year of primary school	86	43.0
4th year of primary school	32	16.0
5th year of primary school	10	5.0
Middle school	11	5.5
Other	3	1.5
Total	200	100.0

### **English in Algerian universities**

The future of English in universities is addressed through the use of English as a medium of instruction and through the view of the role of English in improving the academic development of Algerian academic institutions.

#### **1) English as a medium of instruction (EMI): The views of students and teachers**

Nowadays in the year 2023, Arabic and French languages are the medium of instruction in Algerian universities. The former is used in human and social sciences departments (except for English and French language departments) while the latter is used in technical, engineering, and medical departments. The only exception is Boumerdes University (also known as M'Hamed Bougara University) in the petroleum engineering department. Despite that the use of English as a medium of instruction poses a threat to other local and foreign languages, both Algerian university students and teachers believe that English should be used as a medium of instruction. Table 9

demonstrates the view of Algerian students toward the use of EMI.

Table 9 shows great proximity among the students who agree, disagree, or are undecided. The agreeing students (37 agree and 33 strongly agree) constitute one-third of the general population of 200 university students with a total of 70 students. Similarly, the disagreeing students constitute the second third of the population with a total of 68 participants (7 strongly disagree and 61 disagree). Closely, similar numbers were found for the undecided students who constitute the last third of the population with 62 students, who were uncertain if they want English as the medium of instruction. The proximity in number is due to two factors: 1) The level of proficiency of university professors; and 2) The students' proficiency level in English.

Similar to the students who agree that English should be the medium of instruction, university teachers emphasized the condition of providing training to teachers before proceeding in using EMI.

Excerpt 1

I am not against it, but again I put emphasis on the

fact that the professors who will give the course... they need to be formed [trained] and learn English. You can't give something if you don't have it in the beginning. This is my how-to say ... inquiry if we are

going toward the English courses in the university, we must first think about the people who will teach it. Are they able to teach in English, or not? This is the main question.

**Table 9.** English as the medium of instruction.

<b>All courses should be taught in the English language at the university (as a medium of instruction)</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I strongly disagree	7	3.5
I disagree	61	30.5
Undecided	62	31.0
I agree	37	18.5
I strongly agree	33	16.5
Total	200	100.0

Other teachers reflected on their own experiences and highlighted the benefits of having EMI.

#### Excerpt 2

It would be great if we studied everything in English. Do you know why... because the English we studied was related to general rules like grammar, sentence structure, and so on, but if we studied the English of specialty, it would be more academic, so we could write articles, and participate in conferences. It could be much more important, but if you teach me grammar rules, I don't see ... (paraphrases) I know it's important, but you can self-train easily on these, but if it was the means of instruction, it could be more academic.

#### Excerpt 3

I already had English-medium education, so we were allowed to develop a very good education in English, which is crystal clear for all the students who studied in that school and the courses were taught in English such as European institutions, west and Southern case [course name at international relations department] and many other courses.

### **2) English as a means for universities' academic development: The view of students and teachers**

In addition to the expressed need for EMI, Algerian students believe that English can academically develop the overall level of Algerian universities. Table 10 demonstrates the views of the students towards the importance of English to Algerian universities.

**Table 10.** The role of English in developing Algerian universities.

<b>Improving English language presence can academically develop Algerian universities</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I strongly disagree	1	0.5
I disagree	4	2.0
Undecided	14	7.0
I agree	66	33.0
I strongly agree	115	57.5
Total	200	100.0

Table 10 shows that the majority of students (a total of 90.5% between those who agreed and those who strongly agreed) that English can develop Algerian universities while very few students (0.5% and 2% strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively) believed that improving the English language would not develop Algerian universities. Similarly, 7% were

undecided about whether or not it would develop Algerian universities.

The university teachers, on the other hand, agree that English would directly benefit them to have a better academic experience with their students and in international contexts (i.e., international conferences or exchange programs).

**Anecdote 1**

Sometimes the students I teach... especially MA students... speak English fluently and last year one of my students was a Ph.D. student... she used to prepare and present her research papers in English, and I used to envy students for that. (Teacher 7, age: 40, interviewed in Arabic).

**Anecdote 2**

In 2015 when I went to France for a conference. At the time my English was not that good, I had not started to take English courses yet, I was in the second year of my Ph.D., and at that time it was a bit complicated to speak to other researchers in English to communicate. (Teacher 3, age: 30)

**English in the Algerian society**

Language in society is addressed by the use of English in daily communicative exchanges, the use of English by social groups, and the imposition of the capital system.

**1) English as a Language of daily exchange**

It is commonly known that Algerians code-switch between two or more languages (Algerian Arabic, Berber language, and French language) in their daily communicative exchange. However, Algerians started to include English in different domains of communication; including social media, linguistic landscape, and social impact activities (Belmihoub, 2018; Maraf and Ulker, 2022a, 2022b). Therefore, Algerian students, as appears in Table 11, expect that English would be used in daily communicative exchange as in the case of French.

**Table 11.** English for daily communicative exchange.

<b>Improving the status of English in Algeria would make it used in a daily communicative exchange as is the case with French</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
I strongly disagree	1	.5
I disagree	11	5.5
Undecided	54	27.0
I agree	72	36.0
I strongly agree	62	31.0
Total	200	100.0

The findings in Table 11 show that a total of 67% (36% agree and 31% strongly agree) agree that if the government proceeds with improving the status of English in Algeria, It will eventually be used in daily communicative exchange. While the majority agreed, 27 were undecided, and a total of 6% (5.5% disagree and .5% strongly disagree) disagreed that English would have a presence in Algerians' daily communication. The reason behind this disagreement is explained in Excerpt 1 below as a language of a pragmatic nature (neoliberal perspective) which Algerians use to fulfill their needs of business and travel.

It does not have a big future in Algeria because French is in control. I feel English will be learned only when there is a need like for business or traveling. It cannot be a used as a language in Algeria or a teaching language in schools.

**2) English as a language of social groups**

Despite that the majority of Algerian students believe that English will have a presence in the daily communicative exchange of Algerians in the future, there is currently a social group of youth that is labeled as 'the deep' (also

known as 'Amikin'; Algerian dialect meaning the deep) who use English for their daily exchange.

The deep group, according to our participants are young individuals who are influenced by the Western culture, characterized by deep thinking, and always using English to communicate as expressed in the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 1**

I think the deep are people whose behavior is dangerous to the identity of the society because it [sic] worships Western culture, they think of themselves as intelligent, they usually talk to everyone in English and only listen to sad English songs.

**Excerpt 2**

They use a language that is mixed between English and Arabic. I think they use English just to show off, that's all. They always use OMG, bro, and other bad English words like what the h\* [a curse word]. (Participant-17, 23)

As Excerpt 1 shows, the participant sees this social group as a threat to the Algerian identity because of their admiration of the Western culture and the use of English.

Other participants attribute the view of a threat to the novelty and unusual nature of the group.

Excerpt 3

I think everyone thinks negatively of them because they are bullied everywhere they go and because they are a new group and unusual, they only speak to people who speak English like them or to people who dress like western people. (Participant-8, -21)

The negative view towards the youth group of the deep who is influenced by the Western culture demonstrates that the society, even unaware of the concept, is concerned with linguistic imperialism which was not imposed in the form of English per se, but traveled the borders through the culture of English speaking communities.

### 3) English as a legacy of capitalism

As has been discussed by far, both Algerian teachers and students acknowledge the importance of English in different domains. In other words, there is a pragmatic view toward the entity of English as a language that serves to benefit individuals, institutions, and governments. However, this belief is hence fueled by camouflaged capitalism that would lead to linguistic imperialism. Excerpt 1 discusses the way capitalism imposed English in the world and Algeria.

Excerpt 1

As long as we are in the Capitalism reality where the stronger economy always wins, so English is the language of money and business, and even of science, of traveling. English will have its place in an incredible way in Algeria. Why do I say this! Because I have connections with people who do big businesses, they want to learn English and always looking for teachers to give them private lessons. So as long as society wants and the government is willing, its status will be much better, definitely. (student 4)

Despite that there is no colonialism history of English in Algeria, it managed to find its way to the country through the shared benefit represented by capitalism. It is also expected among participants that the benefits English entails would result in linguistic imperialism represented in the emergence of English-speaking groups (the deep) and the introduction of English as a medium of instruction in Algerian universities by the academic year 2023-2024.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study responds to the call of Maraf and Osam (2022a)

to study neoliberalism as a possible outcome of the English wave in Algeria and addresses the governments' policies which are accepted by the public (as shown in this paper) as leading to possible linguistic imperialism of overt nature. Despite that this study focused on revealing the implications of neoliberalism and linguistic imperialism as an outcome of the shared interest in English of the government and the public, the researcher did not directly address the terms during data collection because of their subtle nature that cannot be understood by the non-experts in the field. However, conclusions were drawn from the clear expressions of pragmatic interest in English and the views of the future of English by the participants and the government's efforts serving the same views of the participants. Nevertheless, future research is invited to address the topic from the perspective of experts in the field who can answer questions directly linked to the concepts of neoliberalism and linguistic imperialism.

Considering the two hypotheses of the current research, the findings revealed that the majority of participants advocate that English should be the first foreign language in Algeria despite the challenges posed by the colonial history of French. These beliefs were found to derive from the neoliberal role of the English language which was in turn believed to be important in all different areas (i.e., education, oil industry, business, national press, television, radio, official national work entrance exams, social media, science, tourism, research, technology, medical domains, policy and others). These findings show that the beliefs and views of the participants go hand in hand with the government's overt efforts (contradicting the covert nature of neoliberalism language policies as explained by Piller and Cho, 2013) to strengthen the presence of English in Algerian universities and schools (Journal el Bilad, 2023), in the linguistic landscape (Maraf and Osam, 2022b) and in monetary transactions (Pierre, 2022). The overt nature of neoliberalism through the English language in Algeria is an inevitable result of the overt demands of the Algerian public to revolutionize the Algerian economy, policy, public service, and education. The demands were later interpreted in the government's actions which addressed the public in English and encouraged the media and businesses to do business in English (Maraf and Osam, 2022a). The government measures along with the Algerian beliefs are a vivid example of the neoliberal view of English in the country. Therefore, it is noteworthy to shed light on the outcomes of neoliberalism in contexts like Algeria, especially when considering that linguistic imperialism examples still exist and preceded Algeria in embracing measures of neoliberalism.

In addition to the neoliberal view of the participants toward the English language, they also believe that English should be taught starting from the third year of primary school while there was a divergence in the opinions about the use of English as a medium of instruction. The divergence derived from the students' uncertainty about the professors' ability to use English as

a medium of instruction. There was also a reigning belief among all the participants that enhancing the presence of the English language in Algerian universities would academically develop these academic institutions. All the previous beliefs of the participants, along with the government practices in the same areas, show that the Algerian context is heading toward the initial stages of linguistic imperialism that start with the use of English as a medium of instruction (Özad et al., 2021) and possibly end by a subtractive form of linguistic imperialism that would develop the presence of English at the expense of other languages (Phillipson, 2013). The development of English at the expense of other languages goes beyond the academic context because the majority of the participants believe that English is expected to be used in daily communicative exchanges as is the case with French currently. The use of English for daily communicative exchanges is already visible among youth groups who use English as the only means of communication with each other. The emergence of these groups is viewed by university students as a threat to the Algerian identity and other local languages as is the case in the UAE as explained by Moore-Jones (2015). All in all, it is expected among our participants that English will continue to develop and strengthen its presence in Algeria as long as the capitalist system is dominating the world scene.

The beliefs of the Algerian students and teachers, along with the policies of the Algerian government that aim to enhance the presence of English in the Algerian academic and economic contexts, imply that Algeria is heading toward linguistic imperialism that developed as a result of viewing English as a means for neoliberalism. Therefore, possible outcomes of shadow education (Samuell, 2023) and language shift (Gal, 1996) are expected to emerge in Algeria leading to inequality in education opportunities and threats to other local languages. Further research is recommended to study and report on the future outcomes of enhancing the presence of English in Algeria which may lead to negative results impacting both the society and its institutions. Hypotheses that address this area may suggest that English is a threat to the Algerian society's identity and native languages.

## Disclosure statement

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