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# Issues of Educational Language Policy and EMI in North Africa

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## Introduction to the Language of Education in North Africa

Before reviewing the place of EMI in the northern part of Africa, it needs to be stressed that to the people of this region, from Morocco to Egypt, Arabic has historically played an incontestable role as the sole medium of learning. It has been and still is a source of pride, identity and accomplishment to the inhabitants of the five countries where the majority speak Arabic as their mother tongue. The sciences and other fields of academia and scholarship, such as human and social studies, were all conducted in Arabic. Throughout history, the scholars of this part of the world have contributed to developing knowledge and human thought via Arabic. Therefore, a review of and discussion about the role of EMI needs to consider the place and position of Arabic in the national educational systems and the corresponding sociocultural milieus. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the educational landscape in the region experienced the introduction of French and English as a direct result of the presence of the French and British colonialist powers. French and English infiltrated the sociolinguistic scene of the region, especially in the larger cities, resulting in a complex and varied mosaic of a wide range of bilingualism and multilingualism, whereby local varieties of Arabic and varieties of Amazigh, known in English as Berber, came into contact with different levels of French and English. In Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, French initially started as a foreign language in primary and secondary schools and then gradually gained a firm position as a medium of instruction, mainly for the scientific subjects, especially in higher education. It is only in the last decade or so that scholars and educationalists in these countries

have started considering and debating the potential role of English as a language of instruction in higher education. In Libya and Egypt, English is taught as a foreign language in schools and used as a medium of instruction in scientific subjects at universities. Although there are more English-speaking universities in Egypt, now and more people can speak English in the region than ever before, English still does not have the same social and media status in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco that French has.

### EMI in Tunisia: A Distant Possibility

In a British Council publication, Dearden (2015) reported the findings of a survey-based study on EMI as a global phenomenon. The study covered fifty-five countries, and the survey respondents were British Council staff residing in these countries. One of the salient features of the study is the total absence of any of the North African nations. Instead, three Arab countries were represented: Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, but no data were provided about whether EMI was allowed in any of the three educational sectors in Bahrain. Nevertheless, the generated data, primarily qualitative, point to an overall awareness in the surveyed countries of the importance of English, and EMI in particular, for economic growth and development, competition in a globalized world for knowledge and international participation through the development of students' language and communication skills. Despite the limitations of the study, which was characterized by inconclusive data and the non-participation of prominent stakeholders (e.g. teachers, students and policymakers), a clear conclusion was that EMI was increasingly on the rise and had conquered a strong position, especially in private institutions in many countries. An interesting finding was that fewer than 50 per cent of the surveyed countries had official statements and documents about EMI and its role in the area of language policy. In addition, most of the excerpts from policy statements provided in the report were general and even vague, stressing the importance of learning English at different levels but lacked a firm commitment to an EMI policy, except for Uzbekistan and Estonia. Uzbekistan supported EMI at all levels and in all institutions, whereas Estonia was for the Estonian language being the medium of instruction in all subjects at all levels. In the Arab world, the absence of clarity and official commitment at the level of official policy has also been highlighted elsewhere (Troudi, 2009; Troudi and Jendli, 2011).

Concerning the language situation in the Tunisian educational system, several scholars, such as Daoud (2001, 2002, 2007), Battenburg (1996) and Labassi (2009), have painted a complex picture characterized by a continuum of unequal coexistence and even competition between two major languages, Arabic and French, with English slowly working its way into schools and universities. Bahloul (2001), like Daoud, acknowledges the ever-growing demand for English in education and calls for a change in language policy. The phrase 'English as a medium of instruction' was not used in these early theoretical and discussion papers. Still, there was a clear recognition of the need to consider a change in language of education policy, especially in the science subjects. The ideology behind a call for English in the sciences is pragmatic, evoking discourses of economic development, modernization and global positioning. There is currently no doubt about the global force of English in education in practically all fields. Therefore, Tunisian scholars' calls for a shift in language policy are a natural and unavoidable result in the face of such a powerful phenomenon.

However, the reality on the Tunisian ground is complex and characterized by some seemingly insurmountable challenges, at least for the time being. The position of French as a language of instruction in the sciences and most academic subjects at universities is deeply rooted. A direct legacy from the French colonial period, French was politically reinforced in the last few decades after the Tunisian independence through strong ties with France and its francophone policies. A francophone Tunisian elite has also long benefited politically and socially from its French-style education and command of French. Arabic, the national and official language of the country, has a strong position in primary and most of secondary education, with scientific subjects being taught in French in the four years of the secondary stage. At the tertiary level, French rules supreme, except in the humanities, law and theological studies. English is taught as a foreign language in the intermediary and secondary stages and for academic purposes in many tertiary disciplines. English is also more notably present in the private sector – a relatively new educational phenomenon in the country. Against such unequal and powerful linguistic dualism, English is likely to struggle for some time before it can find a way into the educational system. Even if the opposing political agendas of liberalism, nationalism, conservatism and socialism are put aside, significant educational challenges for EMI in Tunisia remain at the levels of proficiency, pedagogy and teacher education. With a major economic crisis and political and social upheavals, Tunisia cannot afford to invest in EMI and prioritize it. There are many more dire priorities to tackle in all the educational

sectors before the country can address a policy shift in the medium of instruction. In addition, EMI proponents often argue for its benefits on the learners, yet there is increasing research evidence from different countries about the adverse effects of EMI on the quality of learning experience and academic achievement.

Boukadi's (2015) mixed-method study on Tunisian English teachers concludes that the country needs English to compete in the global economy. She argues that Tunisian doctors and engineers are restricted in the international job market due to a lack of English proficiency. The significance of the study lies in its investigation of language policy issues from teachers' perspectives. Their enthusiasm for English and belief in the necessity of a stronger place for it in the curriculum are not matched by supportive and clear language planning. Despite vital needs and calls for professional development in pedagogy and curriculum reforms, the situation remains dire. Discursively and theoretically, there is awareness of the increasing demand for English in academia and the sciences. Yet, at the level of language of instruction policy, the status quo reigns supreme. This post-revolution state of affairs in language policy (Boukadi and Troudi, 2017) continues to pose an intellectual challenge to educationalists and education officials alike.

Badwan's study (2019), also sponsored and published by the British Council, investigated Tunisian students, university teachers and Ministry of Education officials about their views on the country's readiness for EMI and its implementation. The majority of the questionnaire and interview respondents were in favour of EMI, but they were aware of many challenges, some of which do not seem surmountable given the dire economic conditions and political tensions in present-day Tunisia and which do not currently show any signs of improvement. On the one hand, the absence of EMI is very likely to thwart economic growth and international development. On the other hand, the country's resources are minimal and depleting. The current national priorities are economic and social as the levels of unemployment are very high. Therefore, there is no budget for introducing English as a language of instruction. Thus, despite people's political and academic readiness for EMI, Tunisia does not have the means to initiate any language changes.

At face value, the study is shrouded in neutrality vis-à-vis English and EMI. It is informed by a sociocultural conceptualization of reality that sees individuals constructing their realities in specific social contexts. However, the aims of the study, its focus and recommendations cannot hide a clear plan for preparing the ground for a gradual implementation of EMI in Tunisia. The study does acknowledge a variety of challenges, such as university teachers' inability to

teach in English, but the proposition and necessity of EMI were not questioned. It is, of course, difficult not to see EMI as a potential threat to Arabic as a language of academia when French is already marginalizing it. The spread of the English paradigm functions in an expansionist linguistic fashion with strong and established methods and strategies using triumphalist discourses. Its agents continue to present EMI as a linguistic capital serving as a condition for economic and societal development for the less-developed parts of the world. This perspective on EMI has informed some theoretical papers and empirical studies in the Arab world and North Africa. There is, of course, an opposing view of EMI warning of the unavoidable and detrimental effects of EMI policies and practices on local and national languages, learners' quality of education and social equality. This view has also informed some papers and studies, and EMI will continue to attract opposing views because of its controversial nature and mercantile and political aspects. Related to the question of EMI is the issue of academic publication for academics. While French is the *de facto* language of scholarly publication for Tunisian scholars, many are motivated to publish in English journals for more international presence and impact. Ableljaouad and Labassi (2020) investigated the challenges met by scholars whose education and academic preparation were done in French and pointed out the need for English for Research Publication Purpose to support academics in their endeavours to publish in English. Their colleagues across North Africa also experience this challenge.

With international cooperation and with institutions such as the British Council and some US educational agencies, there have been numerous teacher development projects in other North African countries such as Algeria and Morocco. In Tunisia, too, there is a steady increase of private universities and colleges with French as the medium of instruction but with relatively more hours per week dedicated to English for Academic Purposes than in public universities.

### EMI in Morocco: A Preferred Future

North African nations as developing countries and economies in transition have been urged to join the EMI trend. With such forces as globalization, neoliberalism and aggressive capitalism overpowering national economic independence and stability, these countries find it impossible to ignore discourses associating learning English with economic development and

prosperity. Thus, an indisputable argument has been woven into political, economic and educational discourses and strategies in North Africa and other world regions. This argument is based on the premise that the 'economic capital benefits' (Rassol, 2013, p. 45) of developing nations are inescapably tied up with English proficiency. A significant challenge for Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco is that their educational systems have long been entrenched with and within the French educational system, and French has been the medium of instruction. A structural move to EMI, although not in any near future, would be a massive upheaval to the educational system and students' learning experiences as well as the fundamental principle of equality of access to higher education. Moreover, EMI is likely to widen the gap between social classes and disadvantage those who cannot afford the extra expenses needed for private English tuition and additional learning materials. To benefit from EMI as a symbol of linguistic and cultural power, one needs to have access to material and monetary capital in the first place (Bourdieu, 1991).

In addition to these points, the economics of language does not address the societal, cultural and linguistic impacts of an EMI strategy or policy on the quality of peoples' lives. Additionally, the often-unquestionable premise that English is a condition for economic development has also been questioned. For example, empirical analysis by Arkand and Grin (2013) has demonstrated through econometric evidence that English proficiency is 'in no manner associated with a higher level of economic development, when the latter is measured by its common incarnation of GDP per capita' (p. 262). However, questioning the associations between EMI and economic development has not dampened EMI enthusiasts and protagonists from pushing it forward as an elixir for growth, modernization and global market competition.

Shahu (2016) places the evolution of English in Morocco in the middle of a multilingual continuum marked primarily by the strong presence of French as a symbol of colonial inheritance and Arabic as the official language of the country and a sign of its belonging to the larger Arab nation or pan Arabism. The linguistic diversity in Morocco is also described as a space of cohabitation for several competing languages with different statuses. Tamazight, the first language of a good proportion of Moroccan people, has gained the status of the second official language and is slowly working its way towards the educational system, having secured a place in a few media channels. However, this multilingualism is not seen as a sign of linguistic richness and diversity by many Moroccan intellectuals and linguists. The increasing marginalization of Arabic (due to the presence of French and now English as signs of modernity) and the lack of meaningful

language policies have resulted in 'chaotic multilingualism' (Cheddadi, 2011, pp. 56–57). Shahu argues that the linguistic situation is in crisis and that the current language policy in education has further complicated this situation. This is because decisions on the provision of languages, their status and which one would be the primary medium of instruction were based on political exigencies and ideologies instead of on prioritizing social cohesion, development needs and learners' cultural and educational characteristics. French remains powerful as the main medium of instruction for the sciences and technologies, and this is partly due to its protected status in the educational system and society at large. This privileged position is also politically maintained by the francophone elites and the country's strong economic and political ties with France. The rest of the coexisting foreign languages, such as English, Spanish and German, have not necessarily contributed to a richer multilingual scene in education. Therefore, there are calls for a clear language policy based on the country's social and economic needs to establish some sense of linguistic balance.

In addition to Shahu's work, the year 2016 saw the publication of a study by Belhiah and Abdelatif on EMI in Morocco. They focused on doctoral students of sciences and engineering and their perceptions of using English rather than French as a medium of instruction. The study is exploratory in nature using a five-item Likert scale survey with an open-ended question seeking qualitative input from 208 participants doing doctoral studies in information technology, sciences, agriculture and veterinary medicine. The authors argue that English is popular in Morocco as it is not associated with a history of colonialism as French is. People are aware of the English language's international stature as a language of sciences. As part of their theoretical justification for a study on EMI and a need for it in the Moroccan higher education system, the authors adopt Sadiqi's (1991) argument that the educational context in Morocco is ready for EMI. This is explained by pro-English educational policies, the strong position of English as a lingua franca in several domains, Moroccans' positive attitudes towards English and their motivation to learn it, and the fact that English is not linked with discourses of colonialism and territorial occupation. Economically, Morocco needs English, especially in the areas of business and tourism. Its absence in higher education is seen as the cause why Moroccan students are unable to access up-to-date scientific resources and references; thus, these students are out of step with the rest of the world and cannot compete internationally. The study revealed that the majority (75 per cent) did not have access to English classes/lessons in their colleges and that 82 per cent needed to use English in their academic research. An interesting finding is that although the majority



admit they do not master English and need assistance, 94 per cent think English should be adopted as the medium of instruction at universities and colleges. To them, English would improve the quality of scientific research and the students' educational experiences. The authors acknowledge that the measures put in place to support English in higher education have been inefficient despite the official discourse about the importance of English for the educational and economic development of the country. Another interesting finding is the shift of attitudes towards French as the medium of instruction, which 'has become a real burden on the Moroccan higher educational system' (2016, p. 221). Recommendations were for offering courses using EMI, but it is not clear whether the authors favour a complete shift to EMI. There was, however, a clear call for the elevation of the status of English in higher education based on cooperation between language planning experts, English language specialists and policymakers. Belhiah and Abdelatif's study has made a clear and significant contribution to the field of EMI in Morocco. It systematically presents the attitudes of students of sciences and technology towards the adoption of EMI in Morocco. The challenges and conditions to be addressed are a change of medium of instruction policy to take place.

A discussion of the status or future potential for EMI in Morocco cannot be fruitful without considering the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools. While some participants in Shahu's study favoured the inclusion of EMI in secondary schools as a better preparation for university subjects, Belhiah and Lamallam's study (2020) revealed that the issue of mother-language instruction in Moroccan primary schools is quite complex. Their mixed-method study showed that while students and teachers showed positive attitudes towards using the two mother languages of Amazigh and Darija, Standard Arabic is firmly seen as the major medium of instruction. Darija is the local variety or dialect of Arabic, which has recently been allowed into primary schools for pedagogical reasons. It was also met with strong resistance from those concerned about its adverse effects on Arab and Islamic identity. Teachers, in particular, were against using Darija and Amazigh in teaching materials for fear of their negative impact on learning Arabic or foreign languages, such as French and English. The authors argue that despite 'the officialization of Amazigh in 2011 and its implementation in school curricula since 2003' (p. 108), parental and teachers' attitudes towards it are still negative as they do not consider it a worthy medium of instruction. The study reports that some Amazigh parents even discourage their children from learning it at school in favour of Arabic or French, which are much more marketable and are likely to help them find jobs.

In addition, Belhiah and Lamallam bemoan the scarcity and insufficiency of financial resources put in place to protect and develop these two mother tongues in Morocco. The situation of Amazigh and Darija is made more complex by the political situation characterized by the power of nationalist ideologies calling for confirmation of Standard Arabic as the medium of instruction and a symbol of linguistic, cultural and religious identity, on the one hand, and by the strong political and historical influence of La Francophonie, on the other. This point confirms Shahu's (2016) argument about the significant role political exigencies play in shaping the language of instruction policies in Morocco.

In particular, language policy and language instruction policy are political acts even in countries where there is only one dominant mother tongue. In North Africa and the western part of North Africa, that is, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, the linguistic scene is multi-layered, complex and vibrant.

### EMI in Algeria: A Hypothetical Status

The linguistic scene in Algeria is not less complex than that of Morocco. Several Algerian scholars and linguists have been intensively debating and researching this complexity for at least twenty years. Describing it as sensitive, Milani (2000) places the discussion of the use of national and foreign languages in Algeria among the 'thorny domains' (p. 13). Algerian debates over language use and supremacy are held within a political context characterized by ideological competition between the proponents of Francophonie and the advocates of Arabic as a symbol of social, linguistic and religious identity. Milani argues that with the increasing decline of the status of French in society and education, English is seen as a solution to the educational, technological and economic problems of the country. He also laments the interference of political agendas in matters of language policy and the lack of well-thought-of and designed strategies. English was hastily introduced into the primary schools to weaken the position of French in education and sociality at large. Milani is very critical of the marginalization of language experts and pedagogues from decision-making in language policy. He argues that the Algerian language situation is made more complex by what he calls the asphyxia and ostracism of the two main languages in use: dialectical Arabic and Berber. This is very similar to the situation in Morocco as described by Belhiah and Lamallam. According to Milani, the two vernaculars are considered by politicians as of lower status and have been disparaged in favour of classical Arabic. Berber, however, has

more recently experienced more political recognition and a surge in status. With classical Arabic being the medium of instruction, Milani speaks of linguistic schizophrenia among Algerian children at school in that they have to study in a language 'with which there is no personal resonance' (p. 16).

English in Algeria has, therefore, to be considered in relation to this complex and sensitive linguistic situation of multilingualism with several languages of different social and official status competing for more influential positions in society and education in particular. Introducing English into schools is partly seen as a political attempt to sideline French and provide students with the learning and communication means to compete at a global level in the sciences and technologies. However, there were warnings that the introduction of English would exacerbate an already sensitive and fragile linguistic situation characterized by social tensions and identity crises. The main argument, similar to the case of imposing Arabic as the primary medium of instruction, is that language policy did not consider the sociocultural fabric of the Algerian society. English, however, is heralded as a neutral, not implicated with a history of colonialism in Algeria, and a popular language. Nevertheless, it is experiencing some major challenges in education, mainly due to sociocultural and pedagogical reasons. English learners in Algeria do not have the same social and contextual support they can depend on when learning French. French still exists on many levels and in many domains in Algeria, though learners' access might vary according to class and region. This is not the situation for English, which remains a foreign language. Pedagogically, English is being stripped of its cultural elements in favour of a utilitarian approach. With this lack of educational support for English and the lack of clear policy, Milani recommends going back to French as the primary foreign language and protecting Arabic and the vernacular languages.

Against this varied linguistic background in Algeria, Chemami's study investigates sixteen-year-old school pupils' daily use of languages and their attitudes towards them. Literary Arabic, Algerian Arabic, also known as Darija, Tamazight, French and English were the five choices presented to the participants in a bilingual questionnaire. The first four languages create the multilingual or plurilingual landscape of Algeria. At 68 per cent, Algerian Arabic was reported to be the most frequently used language, French being a distant second with 20 per cent. Literary Arabic, which is the standard form of Arabic used at school and official media, was equal to Tamazight in the persistent option for research instruments. English received 0 per cent as 70 per cent admitted to rarely or very rarely using English. French was a frequently used language, with 65 per cent of participants opting for it.

These are not surprising findings about the linguistic practices of young people given the linguistic history of Algeria and the language of education policies followed by the state since the country's independence in 1962. Chemami refers to the phenomenon of diglossia to explain the historical emergence and development of the Algerian Arabic or Darija, which originally branched out of an early form of Standard or Literary Arabic. With almost 80 per cent of the Algerian people using Darija as their first means of communication, most Algerians will identify with it as their mother tongue. A significant level of code switching also characterizes this form of Arabic with French, Tamazight and occasionally English. Chemami reports that French still enjoys a solid status in the educational system and society, with some recent changes in attitudes towards it. The study also shows that there is a promising future for English in schools and universities. The cooperation with the United States and Canada in teacher training, curriculum development and materials production in English language teaching (ELT) has provided some structural support for English teachers in Algerian schools. School children in Chemami's study showed readiness to learn English and made several suggestions to improve their language skills, especially in reading and writing. The author suggests that the country moves beyond a language of education policy that favours French and English as prestigious languages of sciences and technology and Arabic as a language of tradition. The call is for a plurilingual policy to usher in 'a solidarity which would have a democratic impact on the redefinition of the Algerian identity' (p. 232). However, it is not clear how this solidarity is likely to materialize and what political and educational conditions need to be put in place before a cohesive and egalitarian language policy can be created and enacted.

The most recent research study on EMI in Algeria is by Medfouni (2020). She investigated discourses and attitudes towards implementing EMI in three Algerian universities and the ways language is used in scientific courses. The main findings show a clear preference on the part of students and teachers for English as the medium of instruction. While only three institutions were involved in the study, the findings are significant and represent an increasing Algerian trend. French is no longer in favour even though it is still the official and practically the only medium of instruction for scientific disciplines. Students associate it with colonialism and the turbulent and violent history of the French invasion of their country. On the other hand, English is associated with globalization, internationalization, economic development and opportunities for the future. Above all English is not linked to colonialism and does not remind Algerians of foreign intervention in their country. These findings echo those of Shahu's study

(2016) in Morocco which shares a similar modern colonial history with Algeria. From Tunisia to Morocco, university students seem to be increasingly interested in EMI as they see it as their passage to the world of global economy, research and especially international employment opportunities. However, the studies reviewed in this chapter, including Medfouni's point out to major obstacles that need to be surmounted before EMI can gain a solid place in North African universities. The reality on the ground reflects a lack of political will to adopt EMI which is accompanied by lack of curricular, pedagogical and logistical support. The situation is also made more difficult by students' low English proficiency levels and skills and the reluctance of many university lecturers to switch to English. This is logical and understandable given that most North African university lecturers of scientific subjects have done their university and postgraduate studies in French with very little exposure to English. In fact, Medfouni talks of translanguaging in the university classes where students and teachers interacted in French and Arabic, with more French used by lecturers in some highly ranked departments such as medicine and pharmacy in central universities. In peripheral universities there was more use of Arabic by teachers and students, which is a reflection of their Arabophone background. This was also stated by an earlier study conducted by Seddiki (2015), where observed biology classes revealed a substantial use of Arabic by teachers. English was very rarely used except in occasions when students or lecturers referred to some academic references. Students used Arabic, and a strict French-only medium was not adhered to. There was also a gender difference with females preferring French to English as medium of instruction as French still enjoys a prestigious status. An important implication from Medfouni's research is that currently EMI has a hypothetical status in Algeria and students and teachers' attitudes and their preferences of English are not based on educational realities. Their positive attitudes towards English are aspirational and characterized by unrealistic expectations about the reality of implementing EMI in Algeria. Even French, long established as a *de facto* medium of instruction for the sciences, does not have exclusive use in the classroom. This raises the issue of language policy and the unavoidability of reconsidering the role of mother tongues in education.

### EMI in Libya: Preference for Arabic-English Bilingualism

The linguistic landscape in Libya and its educational system are more straightforward than its three neighbours to the West. The period of the Italian

colonization did not last as long as that of the French in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. It did not leave a similar linguistic and cultural legacy. Arabic rules supreme in Libya, especially with a national policy in education that has reflected a strong penchant for Arab nationalism for a long time and then a turn to pan-Africanism and a rejection of any form of foreign intervention in Libya, and any form of cultural imperialism. The literature search yielded very few publications on language education and EMI in Libya. In a paper about the quality of higher education in Libya and its challenges, Tamtam et al. (2010, 2011) argue that political nuances and administrative complexities have negatively affected the quality of education at universities. In addition to managerial, structural, logistical, planning, leadership and networking problems, universities have not been working for the employability of their graduates. Undergraduate and graduate programmes are not well linked to the labour market.

In a review of an official document on the objectives and structures of education in Libya, the role of Arabic is clearly emphasized. The educational system aims to maintain Arabic as a language of instruction and a symbol of religious and cultural belonging and identity. There is a mention of the importance of learning a foreign language to communicate with the outside world, but there is also a striking absence of any mention of English, whether as a foreign language or a medium of instruction at the university level.

The same authors, Tamtam et al. (2013), conducted an interesting comparative study between two science and engineering departments in Libya. One uses EMI, while the other uses Arabic as the medium of instruction. In both cases, five teachers from each university were conveniently selected and interviewed. The study's main aim was to investigate faculty members' views about the impact of EMI or Arabic as the medium of instruction (AMI) on the quality of the students' learning experiences in the sciences and engineering. They were also asked about Arabic-English bilingualism as a medium of education. The main findings show that the students in the two cases had some challenges. Those in the EMI departments like using English for reasons such as employment opportunities and global communication, despite their poor performance in English and the difficulties they experience in answering test questions. EMI did affect their overall academic performance, but they were in favour of it. Students in the AMI departments were reported to like learning through Arabic as this does not pose technical and lexical comprehension challenges to them. They did not like studying via English, but they were also aware that AMI restricted their employment opportunities and did not prepare for global communication. Both cases also showed positive attitudes towards learning via Arabic and did prefer

a policy of Arabic-English bilingualism to EMI or AMI alone. The students' English proficiency and the cultural context do not prepare them for EMI, and their academic performance at university is very likely to be negatively affected. The study participants called for the introduction of EMI at the secondary and even the primary stages of education for better preparation and transition to EMI university courses.

This study is unique in EMI literature as it offers a direct comparison between two languages of instruction policies. The data would have been more informative and significant had the authors included students from the two universities to learn directly from them about their experiences with EMI and AMI. In North Africa, comparative studies are rare and most likely not feasible because there are practically no universities that use AMI in sciences and engineering departments. Some universities use a bilingual approach in human sciences, such as in psychology, where certain subjects are taught in Arabic while others in French or English.

### EMI in Egypt: Preparing at Pre-university Stage

Placing Egypt within Kachru's (1986) outer circle, El-Fiki (2012) makes a strong connection between a need to improve proficiency in English and the country's major objectives of modernization through more vital global contribution, economic and business development, and technical and scientific research. Like in the rest of the North African nations, the premise is that English is key to a more decisive role in the international community. Her multi-method study investigated EFL and English medium subject teachers' (EMS) perceptions of a pedagogical reform introduced by the government. This is mainly characterized by the adoption of a communicative approach to teaching. A unique phenomenon in North Africa is the Egyptian experimental language schools, where the scientific subjects, natural sciences, mathematics and computer skills are taught in English with French being a foreign language. These schools are a clear sign that the country is investing in preparing a large number of Egyptian primary and secondary students for EMI at the higher education stage. The intention is to make the students' transition to EMI departments at universities smooth and free of the common language proficiency challenges met by EMI students in the Arab world. However, experimental language schools are not free of charge like the rest of the government schools where the curriculum is taught in Arabic. Parents pay what seems to be a small fee, but it is not affordable for all



Egyptian families where the standard of living is low, thus creating even more social inequalities. The main findings of El-Fiki's study are centred on the role of contextual factors in shaping the nature and process of change in teachers' practices.

The stress on English as a conduit to Egypt's economic development is discussed by McIlwraith and Fortune (2016), who states that the Ministry of Education is serious about promoting ELT in pre-university education right from the first year of the primary stage. They refer to the *Pre-university Education Reform 2014-2030* and *The National Curriculum Framework for English as a Foreign Language*, which aim to enable children to participate actively in a global society. McIlwraith and Fortune identify a long list of challenges affecting ELT in Egypt, mainly teacher education and the inequity between rural and urban areas. Children from low-income families do not have the means to compete and pay for private tuition in English, and fewer will make it to higher education. Employers complain about the low English proficiency of their Egyptian employees whose teachers were blamed for their low levels. The authors recommend that British Council English courses and supervisor training be part of the Egyptian ELT training plan.

In a literature-based study in the area of ELT, Abdel Latif (2018) provides a thorough analysis of a total of 142 published studies. The corpus of empirical research, which was primarily experimental and quantitative, revealed a focus on the mainstream areas of ELT, such as teacher education and language skills with reading. The data points to the dearth of evidence on published work on EMI. There was no mention of EMI as a separate research topic, and it is possible that any study with an EMI content was considered under the curriculum/programme evaluation category, which represented only 7 per cent of the published research studies. Abdel Latif identifies a clear methodological research gap marked by a strong dominance of the experimental and quantitative trend to research and a stark paucity of interpretive and qualitative studies. These are needed to understand teachers and learners' experiences in the various areas of ELT. In a chapter on English language policy at the pre-university stages in Egypt, Abdel Latif (2017) confirms that despite the number of reforms and changes to the ELT curricula, which were mainly at the level of official and standardized school textbooks, several areas are still in need of improvement. Public schools need to be supported with professional development for English teachers, especially in language skills, if the gap with the private sector is to be reduced. He warns that an impoverished ELT in the public sector will lead to further social inequalities and divisions. Students who can afford private education will continue to benefit from a stronger ELT and have easier access to the job market locally and internationally.



## Conclusion

Research and publications on EMI in North Africa are still in an early stage despite a steady increase of attempts to study and investigate the status and future of EMI in this region of the world. The studies and papers reviewed in this chapter represent a broad spectrum of EMI policies and practices. In Libya and especially in Egypt, EMI is more established at the tertiary level than in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, where French is the official medium of instruction. This situation is not likely to change soon despite a widespread recognition and consensus that EMI is needed if these nations are to play more substantial roles in international affairs, global economy and scientific research. Political, educational, economic and sociolinguistic considerations will keep EMI at bay for the time being. Although some tertiary institutions are showing interest in EMI (e.g. in Tunisia, there is now a state university with an EMI policy), it will be a long time before we can see a shift to an EMI policy in public education.

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