Article

Media Literacy and English Language Teaching in Algeria: What's Missing in Higher Education?

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Abstract

This research examines the incorporation of media literacy within higher education EFL (English as a Foreign Language) programs in Algeria. Employing a mixed-methods design, data were gathered from 50 EFL instructors and 50 students at Algerian universities using structured online questionnaires. The study explores the extent to which media literacy is recognized and embedded in curricula, as well as the perceptions of its importance among teachers and students, and the obstacles to its effective integration. Results indicate that, despite widespread acknowledgment of its value, media literacy is not formally included in the curriculum. Both educators and learners cite challenges such as inadequate resources, limited training, and insufficient institutional backing. The study underscores the necessity for targeted professional

development, curriculum reform, and institutional collaboration to successfully embed media literacy in Algerian EFL education. The findings provide practical recommendations for advancing media and digital literacy across Algerian universities.

Keywords: Algerian EFL education, Barriers, Curriculum integration, Media literacy, Professional development.

Introduction:

In the 21st century, media plays a significant role in our daily lives, dominating much of our leisure time as the primary source of entertainment. The media and the messages it conveys are so pervasive that we are constantly exposed to them, even when we are not actively engaging with media. The shift from traditional media to new digital formats has had a profound impact on the lives of media consumers (Asli Sezgin, 2015). Teaching media literacy is a crucial step toward understanding media, analyzing messages, and making the young generations media literate. Teaching media literacy to children and young people has become more important than ever. Skills for media literacy can be obtained between the ages six and young adulthood. The first aim of media literacy is providing a basic understanding of media and the language of media. Media literacy is trying to make human beings aware of the importance of media in their lives and enabling them to understand and analyze media properly. A well-educated media consumer will get the bigger picture of daily problems and understand the politics underlying these problems more easily. Despite its significance, however, media literacy is often overlooked in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program, particularly within the context of Algerian higher education. Algerian EFL programs traditionally focus on linguistic proficiency, with limited attention given to the critical analysis of media texts and the development of students' ability to engage critically with the media (Fadhloune & Madoui, 2024).

The limited integration of media literacy into EFL curricula at Algerian universities has sparked concerns regarding students' ability to critically evaluate the media content they encounter in an increasingly interconnected world. Lacking these critical skills, students may be more vulnerable to biased portrayals and stereotypes, which are common in contemporary media. As Algerian students-like their peers globally-are exposed to a wide range of media sources, many of which convey ideologically charged narratives, it becomes essential to examine how higher education institutions are responding to, or neglecting, these challenges within their curricula.

This study seeks to assess the current status of media literacy within Algerian university EFL programs, focusing on the extent to which media literacy is explicitly embedded in the curriculum

and how it is valued by both teachers and students. By surveying EFL instructors and students from various Algerian universities, the research will evaluate awareness levels and identify obstacles to integrating media literacy into higher education teaching. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study utilizes an online questionnaire to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on teaching practices, curricular content, and the pedagogical difficulties faced by educators. This comprehensive strategy aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the present landscape and to offer recommendations for better incorporating media literacy into EFL education in Algeria.

2. Theoretical Background

While the exploration of media literacy in educational environments has been widely examined across numerous contexts, its integration into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction-especially within Algerian classrooms-has received comparatively little attention. Media literacy is fundamentally connected to the development of critical thinking, investigative skills, and the ability to interact with media in an engaged and discerning manner. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a summary and synthesis of the key points from the existing literature, addressing media literacy education in Algeria, its integration into the national curriculum, and its relationship to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts.

2.1 Media Literacy Education

Media literacy theories emphasize the importance of analyzing the messages that are conveyed through media, understanding their underlying ideologies, and recognizing the impact these messages have on individuals and society. Hobbs (2024) defines media as all the structures that communicate with audiences in today's societies, such as the press, cinema, books, radio, television, and internet. For a long time, the definition of media emphasized the printed text; however, with the discovery of cinema and later on, radio, press was considered not only as printed media but also as visual media and across time the tools of media have diversified even more. Print media, visual media, and electronic media have also been categorized under the main headings of media. Now, all media using these diverse forms are collectively called media. In this regard, media literacy education is expected to provide such knowledge: the general characteristics of media, the working principles of media, new technologies, the types of media, how to analyze the media, etc. (Asli Sezgin, 2015). The gist of these literacies is, however, providing a critical standpoint to view and comprehend how media are produced, marketed and how they reach consumers, and how they manipulate audiences. Media literacy is a formula to educate critical readers and therefore to enable individuals to respond to such needs as media commentary, understanding, media openness, and the interrogation of the underlying motives of media producers (National Association for Media

Literacy Education, 2023; Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021). Media literacy is the new trend in education developed mainly by the tongue/language experts. Media literacy is a critical evaluation education about visual media and an educational activity practicing the criticism, and media literacy can be defined as the criticisms cultured to cooperate with criteria, lead to questions about media-image-watching conditions, and assess responsible judgments against them.

Today, media literacy education has moved beyond reading newspapers and critical analysis of political platforms; it has gone into the curriculum of schools and universities as a cross-disciplinary field that educates people on how to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication. This definition is more liberal since it encompasses media beyond text and promotes inquisitiveness about the media we consume and create (National Association for Media Literacy Education, 2023).

Media literacy education aims not only to empower people to consume the media critically; it also aspires to make people capable of producing media. This media education can take place formally in any pedagogical environment. This suggests that media literacy education can take place in the context of both foreign language and media studies. However, some do not recognize the shaping influence of media on how people learn languages and deem that it is inappropriate to teach a foreign language through media or to take up media issues in a foreign language class. The wisdom of integrating media literacy education into English language teaching is to better prepare and empower students in developing the competencies which will enable them to exercise their critical citizenship and become effective participants in a democratic public sphere (Dominguez, 2019).

2.2 Digital Literacy

Digital literacy, which is often referred to as media literacy, is fundamentally a measure of an individual's ability and willingness to actively access, comprehend, and create a wide array of information across numerous formats by utilizing various technologies. In many contexts, the terms media literacy and digital literacy are frequently used interchangeably without distinction (Wuyckens & Landry, 2022). However, an ongoing debate exists among experts who argue that digital literacy is a more precise concept. This is because digital literacy encompasses other closely related terms, including, but not limited to, computer literacy, internet literacy, and web literacy, along with the broader category of media literacy (Tinmaz, Fanea-Ivanovici, & Baber, 2023). Media literacy, in a more comprehensive sense, refers to the ability to engage in critical thinking-empowering individuals to analyze, evaluate, and interpret the diverse array of media messages

they encounter. It also encompasses the capacity to thoughtfully create content and articulate informed opinions based on one's understanding of different media forms.

While recognizing that definitions of these terms may vary, this paper adopts the view that media literacy is a fundamental element within the broader scope of digital literacy. This connection highlights the importance of equipping individuals with the skills necessary to effectively navigate the complexities of the digital environment

2.3 Historical Development of English Language Education in Algeria

The trajectory of English in Algeria's education system is rooted in colonial history, sociopolitical shifts, and evolving policy frameworks. Under French colonial rule (1830-1962), French dominated administrative and educational spheres, relegating Arabic to marginal status in formal institutions (Haddam & Bouabdallah, 2022; Belmihoub, 2017). English remained virtually absent from curricula during this period, with limited instruction in a few secondary schools. Post-independence (1962), Arabization initiatives prioritized Arabic in education and governance, though French retained prominence in technical domains.

By the late 20th century, globalizing forces and technological developments prompted Algeria to gradually integrate English into its educational strategy, aiming to enhance ties with non-Francophone nations. Despite these measures, English occupied a tertiary position behind Arabic and French, primarily catering to specialized academic and career requirements.

Substantial policy changes emerged in the 1990s when the Ministry of National Education mandated English instruction in middle and high schools, positioning it as a viable counterpart to French in science and technology education.

By the 2000s, universities expanded their offerings to include English as a specialization, and English courses were integrated into other fields such as business, engineering, and media studies with the concept of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI). The 2020 Vision, announced in 2019, outlined plans to replace French with English as the primary language of instruction in scientific disciplines, reflecting Algeria's commitment to aligning with global academic and professional standards (Maraf, 2024).

2.4 Media Literacy Studies in Algeria

According to Fadhloune and Madoui (2024), research on media education in Algeria is relatively scarce and limited in scope compared to the broader international literature on media literacy. Existing Algerian studies can be grouped into four main areas:

Media Education in School Curricula

Studies in this category highlight the absence of media education as a distinct subject and the insufficient media-related content in civic education, which leads to confusion and implementation challenges due to a lack of curriculum content and specialized staff (Sabti & Fellak, *2017*).

Media Education at the University Level

At the university level, research often focuses on the negative aspects of internet use and the need for effective media education to ensure safe digital practices. Studies also examine how children's use of technology affects their identity, values, and well-being, calling for greater media literacy efforts targeting children, parents, and educators. Experts advocate for including media analysis in curricula, considering the broader social, political, and economic contexts in which media messages are produced (Chouaf & Dife, 2020).

Influence of New Media on Children

Several studies investigate the impact of new media on children, including issues such as bullying, gaming addiction, and cybercrime. These challenges are seen as threats to social stability and highlight the difficulty of regulating virtual platforms, prompting calls for targeted policies and training to mitigate risks (Mansour, 2018).

Theoretical Frameworks and Broader Challenges

Some research addresses the theoretical aspects of media education-its definitions, emergence, and evolution-but often lacks field studies or practical applications relevant to Algeria. Other studies review international media education experiences and propose models for Algerian development, focusing on skill-building for media content engagement (Koujil & Sidehoum, 2020).

Common Themes Across Studies

• There is a consensus on the necessity of integrating media education into Algerian educational institutions, with many studies pointing out the lack of appropriate content and qualified staff.

• Media education is inadequately represented in current curricula and educational materials, leading to confusion and implementation challenges.

• Enhancing media education requires cooperation between universities, media organizations, and other stakeholders.

• There is a shared call to embed media education concepts and practices into academic programs to foster critical thinking among students and educators.

Differences Among Studies

• The research covers a wide range of topics, including institutional media education, media literacy, internet safety, children's use of technology, information literacy, and strategies to combat cybercrime.

• Various methods are employed, such as field studies, surveys, theoretical analyses, and exploratory research.

• Each study identifies unique obstacles, such as confusion between media and civic education, lack of practical implementation, and challenges posed by modern media environments.

• Some studies suggest adopting media literacy models based on international experiences, while others emphasize integrating media education into schools or enhancing information literacy at universities.

In summary, Algerian research on media education consistently underscores the urgent need for better integration, specialized staff, and collaborative efforts, while also reflecting a diversity of focus areas, methodologies, and proposed solutions.

2.5 Media Literacy in ELT within Algerian Higher Education

At the university level, research on media literacy education calls for more concerted efforts to integrate media literacy concepts into academic courses (Hafzi & Mizlah, 2019). Such integration is essential for developing students' critical thinking skills and bridging the gap between students' understanding and the rapid pace of technological change. These studies also emphasize the need for universities to update their curricula to meet global informational challenges and address their own shortcomings. Regarding university professors' digital information literacy, research indicates that while current levels are generally acceptable, ongoing professional development-through quality academic training, self-directed learning, and lifelong learning-remains necessary (Ben Zineb, 2022).

Many other scholarly works have focused on the theoretical aspects of media education, discussing its definitions, emergence, development, and characteristics. These studies stress the importance of aligning media education with the demands of the digital environment and digital platforms (Mansour, 2018). However, they also note persistent confusion between media literacy and educative media, and often lack empirical studies or practical implementation strategies relevant to the Algerian context (Ben Issa, 2021).

To sum up, Algeria faces significant challenges in integrating media literacy into its national curriculum, with gaps in content, teacher training, and policy support. Addressing these challenges is essential to empower the digital native generation to critically engage with media, participate in democratic society, and navigate the complexities of the modern media landscape.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design to investigate the integration of media literacy within Algerian university EFL programs. The methodology combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to address three research questions:

- To what extent is media literacy recognized and incorporated into the Algerian EFL university curriculum?

- How do EFL teachers and students perceive the role of media literacy in enhancing language learning and critical engagement with media?

- What barriers exist to integrating media literacy into existing EFL curricula?

3.1 Research Design

The study unfolded in two phases:

- *Quantitative Phase:* structured online questionnaires were administered to 50 EFL teachers and 50 EFL students across various Algerian universities. The questionnaires aimed to assess the extent of media literacy recognition and curricular integration, as well as to identify barriers to its incorporation into the curriculum. The survey included both close-ended questions (e.g., Likert-scale) and open-ended questions to capture teachers' and students' views on media literacy in EFL education.

- *Qualitative Phase:* Thematic analysis was applied to the open-ended responses from both teachers and students. This phase provided deeper insights into the perceived role of media literacy in enhancing language learning and critical engagement with media. The responses were coded, and recurring themes were identified to supplement the quantitative data collected from the survey.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The participants in this study will include 50 EFL teachers and 50 EFL students from various universities across Algeria. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select a diverse group of participants, ensuring representation from different regions, and academic levels (undergraduate and graduate). The teachers will be chosen based on their involvement in English language education, while the students will be selected from EFL programs to provide insights into both teacher perspectives and student experiences with media literacy in their language learning.

3.3 Data Collection Tools

Data collection is conducted using a meticulously designed semi-structured questionnaire, for both EFL teachers and students, including four sections:

- Section I: Recognition and Perception of Media Literacy in EFL Education

- Section II: Media Literacy Integration in Teaching and Learning
- Section III: Barriers to Media Literacy Integration
- Section IV: Future Outlook

The sections of the questionnaire are designed to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights, incorporating Likert-scale items and open-ended questions to capture nuanced perspectives. The questionnaires were administered through a Google form via email.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Quantitative:

- Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages) quantified curricular integration and awareness levels.

- Cross-tabulation compared teacher-student perceptions of barriers.

Qualitative:

- Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns.

- Codes were grouped into themes and triangulated with survey data.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents and discusses the findings from both the teachers' and students' questionnaires, exploring the integration of media literacy in Algerian EFL higher education, teachers' and students' perceptions, and the barriers to its implementation. The examination of findings is delineated four sub-headings corresponding to the sub-research questions.

4.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

4.1.1 Recognition and Perception of Media Literacy in EFL Education

Table 1. Recognition and Integration of Media Literacy in the Curriculum

Items	Mean	(%)	Likert Scale	Rank
Media literacy is recognized as important in the EFL curriculum	4.2	84%	Agree	2
Media literacy is explicitly included in the syllabus	2.5	40%	Disagree	4
Teachers integrate media literacy concepts frequently	3.1	60%	Occasionally	3
Media literacy is incorporated across all EFL	1.8	25%	Disagree	5

courses				
Media literacy is taught as a separate subject	1.2	15%	Strongly Disagree	6

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of the extent to which media literacy is recognized and integrated into the curriculum in Algerian Higher Education. While media literacy is recognized as important (84% of teachers agree), it is not explicitly integrated into the curriculum, as reflected by 40% of participants disagreeing that it's formally included. The integration of media literacy in EFL courses is limited, with only 60% of teachers integrating it occasionally.

This finding aligns with Fadhloune and Madoui (2024), who reported that while media literacy is widely acknowledged as important in Algerian education, it remains underdeveloped within the EFL curriculum. The lack of systematic integration observed in this study reflects the findings of Hafzi and Mizlah (2019), who pointed to the traditional focus on language proficiency, with limited efforts to incorporate critical thinking and media analysis into the curriculum.

4.1.2 Teachers' Perceptions of Media Literacy's Role in Language Learning and Critical Engagement with Media

Table 2. Teachers' Perceptions of Media Literacy in Language Learning

Items	Mean	(%)	Likert Scale	Rank
Media literacy improves language skills (speaking, writing, etc.)	4.5	90%	Very Important	1
Media literacy enhances critical thinking skills	4.3	85%	Very Important	2
Media literacy fosters intercultural competence	4.2	85%	Very Important	3
Teachers actively integrate media content in the classroom	3.1	60%	Occasionally	4
Media literacy is essential for digital citizenship	4.0	75%	Important	3

The teachers' responses indicate that media literacy is highly regarded for its role in improving language skills (90%) and enhancing critical thinking (85%). Teachers also strongly perceive it as important for developing intercultural competence (85%). However, active

integration in the classroom is reported to be more occasional (60%), showing that while media literacy is recognized as essential, its consistent integration is still a challenge.

These perceptions are consistent with Dominguez (2019), who emphasized the role of media literacy in developing critical citizenship and intercultural competence.

However, the sporadic inclusion of media literacy in classroom settings is consistent with the observations of Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2021), who highlighted the irregular implementation of media literacy instruction despite its recognized value. These challenges in achieving consistent integration are also emphasized by Fadhloune and Madoui (2024), who pointed out a notable absence of systematic initiatives to incorporate media literacy within EFL curricula.

4.1.3 Barriers to Integrating Media Literacy into the EFL Curriculum

Table 3. Teachers' Barriers to Integrating Media Literacy

Items	Mean	(%)	Likert Scale	Rank
Lack of resources (media tools, digital platforms)	4.4	88%	Significant Barrier	1
Insufficient training for teachers	4.1	82%	Significant Barrier	2
Lack of time in the curriculum	3.8	76%	Moderate Barrier	3
Limited student interest in media literacy	3.2	60%	Moderate Barrier	4
Institutional support is inadequate	2.5	50%	Low Barrier	5

The primary obstacles identified include a lack of resources (88%) and inadequate teacher training (82%), both of which significantly impede the incorporation of media literacy into EFL classrooms. Although time limitations and limited student engagement are also noted as barriers, these are perceived as less critical compared to the gaps in resources and teacher preparation.

These findings are in line with those of Hafzi and Mizlah (2019) who similarly pinpointed resource shortages and insufficient training as central challenges. This also corresponds to the observations of Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2021), who found that insufficient resources and teacher training are major barriers to the successful implementation of media literacy in educational contexts.

4.1.4 Future Outlook: Enhancing Media Literacy in EFL Education

Table 4. Professional Development and Support for Media Literacy Teaching

Items	Mean	(%)	Likert Scale	Rank
Workshops on media literacy and digital tools	4.5	90%	Very Important	1
Access to digital platforms and media content	4.3	85%	Important	2
Teacher training in media literacy	4.2	80%	Important	3
Peer collaboration and sharing of best practices	3.5	70%	Moderately Important	4
Access to academic resources and publications on media literacy	3.2	65%	Moderately Important	5

The findings highlight that workshops focused on media literacy (90%) and the provision of digital tools (85%) are considered crucial for improving teachers' effectiveness in delivering media literacy instruction. Teacher training is also recognized as a significant factor in addressing existing difficulties (80%). Furthermore, peer collaboration and access to academic materials are viewed as moderately important, indicating that additional initiatives to promote cooperation and resource availability would be advantageous.

These results align with international practices in media literacy education, where ongoing professional development and resource access are essential for successful implementation (Wuyckens & Landry, 2022). These findings support Hafzi and Mizlah (2019), who also called for teacher training and the provision of digital tools to enhance media literacy instruction.

4.2 Students' Questionnaire

4.2.1 Students' Perceptions of Media Literacy's Role in Language Learning

Table 5. Students' Perceptions of Media Literacy in Language Learning

Items	Mean	(%)	Likert Scale	Rank
Media literacy improves language skills (speaking, writing, etc.)	4.4	88%	Very Important	1
Media literacy enhances critical thinking skills	4.2	85%	Very Important	2

Items	Mean	Likert Scale		Rank
Media literacy fosters intercultural competence	4.0	75%	Important	3
Students actively engage with media content in English	3.2	60%	Occasionally	4
Media literacy is essential for digital citizenship	4.1	78%	Important	3

Students recognize the significant benefits of media literacy in improving their language skills (88%) and fostering critical thinking (85%). However, although students acknowledge the importance of media literacy, their active engagement with English-language media remains relatively occasional (60%), suggesting a gap in consistent media literacy engagement within their learning experience.

This aligns with Hafzi and Mizlah (2019), who emphasized the importance of media literacy in improving language skills and developing critical thinking among students. The sporadic classroom engagement observed in this study reflects the persistent gap between the recognized theoretical importance of media literacy and its actual application in practice, a phenomenon also documented in earlier research (Schreurs & Vandenbosch, 2021).

4.2.2 Barriers to Integrating Media Literacy into the EFL Curriculum

Table 6. Students' Barriers to Integrating Media Literacy

Items	Mean Response Level	Likert Scale (%)	Rank
Lack of resources (media tools, digital platforms)	4.3	86% Significant Barrier	1
Limited access to digital content and platforms	4.2	84% Significant Barrier	2
Lack of media literacy-focused courses	3.9	78% Moderate Barrier	3
Limited awareness of media literacy	3.3	66% Moderate Barrier	4
Inconsistent support from teachers	2.7	54% Low Barrier	5

For students, the primary challenges closely mirror those reported by teachers, with a lack of resources (86%) and limited access to digital content (84%) emerging as the most prominent barriers. The absence of dedicated media literacy courses is also a significant issue, indicating a need for a more systematic and consistent approach to media literacy instruction.

These obstacles are in line with the findings of Fadhloune and Madoui (2024), who emphasized the shortage of formal media literacy courses as a major challenge. The resource-related difficulties identified by students are also consistent with Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2021), who similarly noted that restricted access to media platforms is a key obstacle in media literacy education.

4.3 Open-ended Questions Analysis: Insights from Teachers and Students

In this section, the analysis of responses to open-ended questions offers contextual understanding that enriches the quantitative results obtained from the surveys. These qualitative insights help illuminate the underlying factors driving the observed trends, thereby providing a more complete picture of media literacy within EFL education in Algeria.

4.3.1 Teachers' Open-ended Responses

Theme 1: The Absence of Formal Media Literacy Modules

While quantitative findings revealed that media literacy is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum, teacher insights provided deeper context for this omission. Many educators reported that media literacy is often regarded as nonessential or incidental, typically lacking a formalized place within the curriculum. Teachers also noted that the focus tends to be on conventional language skills rather than on fostering critical engagement with media. Although teachers recognize the importance of media literacy, its absence as a formal subject suggests that curriculum and institutional priorities continue to emphasize language acquisition over the critical analysis of media-despite the growing necessity of such skills in an increasingly digital world.

This aligns with Fadhloune and Madoui (2024), who found that media literacy is underdeveloped in the Algerian EFL curriculum. While teachers acknowledge its importance, its formal inclusion in the syllabus is often neglected. The absence of a standalone media literacy course is a key issue, as also highlighted by Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2021), who pointed out that many EFL programs overlook media literacy in favor of more traditional language acquisition techniques.

Theme 2: Teacher Preparedness and Training

Teachers pointed out the lack of proper training in media literacy, which they felt hinders their ability to effectively integrate media literacy in their teaching. Many suggested that teacher training programs should include specific courses on media literacy.

This finding suppor Hafzi and Mizlah (2019), who found that teacher training is a crucial factor in the successful integration of media literacy into language education. Teachers in the study felt unprepared to incorporate media literacy, which reflects the need for professional development in the digital age. This is also corroborated by Dominguez (2019), who argued that media literacy education is essential for teachers to prepare students for the critical engagement required in today's media-driven world.

4.3.2 Students' Open-ended Responses

Theme 1: Desire for Dedicated Media Literacy Courses

Students echoed teachers' sentiments, with many expressing the need for a formal course in media literacy that would help them better understand and critically engage with the media they encounter. Students indicated that without such a course, their learning feels incomplete.

This echoes Fadhloune and Madoui's (2024) finding that there is a gap in the integration of media literacy within Algerian EFL programs. Students' responses indicate that they recognize the importance of media literacy for their language learning but lack dedicated courses to fully engage with it. This is consistent with Schreurs & Vandenbosch (2021), who suggested that without structured media literacy modules, students may not develop the skills required to critically engage with media content, which is increasingly important in global education contexts.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Media Literacy in Enhancing Language Skills

Students largely agreed that media literacy could enhance their language learning experience, especially in terms of improving their speaking and writing. They expressed that engaging with authentic media (e.g., news articles, movies, etc.) could help them understand how language is used in real-world contexts.

This aligns with the quantitative findings, where both teachers and students saw media literacy as vital for improving language skills. However, students' comments about the occasional engagement with media suggest that there is room to integrate it more consistently and effectively into the learning experience.

Dominguez (2019) highlighted that media literacy fosters not only critical thinking but also improves language skills by allowing students to analyze and produce authentic media content. The students' emphasis on real-world media aligns with Hobbs (2024), who noted that engaging with

authentic texts (such as news and movies) can facilitate language acquisition by exposing students to the language used in everyday life.

Theme 3: Barriers to Media Literacy Engagement

Students noted similar barriers as teachers regarding the lack of resources, such as digital platforms and media content. They also expressed frustration with the lack of structured media literacy lessons, which contributed to their limited engagement with media.

This underlines the importance of institutional support in providing digital resources and platforms that facilitate media literacy learning. Students appear motivated to engage with media, but they face significant constraints that limit their ability to fully benefit from such learning opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated how media literacy is understood and integrated within Algerian higher education EFL (English as a Foreign Language) programs. By analyzing questionnaire responses from both teachers and students, several key insights emerged. While both groups recognize the significance of media literacy, its formal presence in university curricula is limited. Teachers reported that media literacy is not systematically embedded in EFL courses, citing insufficient training and a lack of resources as major obstacles. Similarly, students indicated a strong interest in more structured media literacy instruction, pointing to the absence of dedicated courses as a primary challenge to engaging critically with media.

Despite these hurdles, both teachers and students acknowledged the benefits of media literacy for enhancing language proficiency, fostering critical thinking, and building intercultural understanding. The findings underscore the necessity for institutional backing, including better resources, targeted professional development, and the official integration of media literacy into EFL curricula. These needs mirror international trends, where digital literacy and critical engagement with media are increasingly vital for preparing students to navigate a complex, media-rich environment.

Drawing on the study's findings, several steps are recommended to advance the integration of media literacy in Algerian EFL higher education:

• Curriculum Development: Universities should formally embed media literacy as either a standalone subject or a cross-cutting component within EFL courses, updating syllabi to reflect the essential role of critical media engagement in the digital era.

• Teacher Preparation: Addressing the gap in teacher readiness is crucial. Teacher education programs should include media literacy training, equipping educators with the tools and strategies

needed for effective instruction in media analysis. This could involve specialized workshops, courses, and ongoing professional development in digital and media literacy.

• Resource Enhancement: The lack of digital tools and relevant media content was a notable concern. Universities are encouraged to invest in digital platforms, curated media materials, and online resources to better support both teaching and learning in media literacy.

• Student-Focused Initiatives: Given students' expressed interest, institutions should consider offering dedicated media literacy modules that encourage critical engagement with diverse media formats. This approach would help align educational offerings with student needs.

• Collaboration and Support: Stronger partnerships between universities, media organizations, and educational authorities are needed to co-develop media literacy curricula and resources. Facilitating peer collaboration among teachers can also help share effective practices and innovative teaching strategies.

In summary, embedding media literacy into the Algerian EFL curriculum is essential not just for language development, but also for cultivating critical thinking and responsible digital citizenship. Tackling the current barriers and implementing these recommendations could substantially enhance EFL education in Algeria, equipping students to participate actively and thoughtfully in a global, media-driven society.

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