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Fostering Students' Readiness for English-Medium Instruction (EMI) Through the Development of Listening Strategies

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Keywords

English-Medium Instruction (EMI); Academic Listening; Listening Strategy Use; Algerian Higher Education; Lecture Comprehension; EFL Learners; EMI Readiness

Abstract

Many countries have adopted English as a medium of instruction in higher education, and in 2022 the Algerian government initiated a similar policy shift. For such a policy to succeed, university students must possess adequate English proficiency. Listening is central to both language use and knowledge acquisition, since in EMI contexts learners rely on listening ability to understand disciplinary content delivered in lectures. However, many EFL students struggle to develop the level of English listening competence required to benefit fully from EMI instruction. Listening strategies may either facilitate or hinder learning in EMI courses, depending on how effectively they are deployed. Given the scarcity of research on this issue in Algeria, the present study investigates the listening strategies used by students in the English Department at Blida 2 University, Algeria. In Algerian English departments, content courses such as linguistics and civilisation are taught in English and represent 50% of BA credits and 100% of MA credits. This context therefore provides an appropriate setting for examining listening in English-medium content instruction. Strategy use was analysed in relation to participants' gender, English proficiency, and educational background. Understanding students' strategic behaviour may help make EFL listening strategy instruction in Algerian English departments more conducive to academic achievement in content courses. Data were collected through three instruments: a listening comprehension test, a listening strategy-use questionnaire, and listening course syllabi. The instruments were reviewed for content validity by an expert and designed with reference to the relevant literature. The questionnaire was completed by eighty-one (81) randomly selected students, and the data were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. As an exploratory study, the findings are not intended for broad generalisation but should be viewed as initial insights. The main findings indicate apparent similarity in strategy use across the variables examined, suggest that appropriate strategy use may matter more than frequency of use, point to limited learner engagement, and reveal insufficient training in listening strategies. Recommendations are offered to improve listening strategy instruction in Algerian English departments and to support students in developing more effective listening strategies for learning from English-medium lectures.

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الكلمات المفتاحية

التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغةً للتعليم (EMI)؛
كفاءة الاستماع الأكاديمي؛
استراتيجيات معالجة المدخلات السمعية؛
التعليم العالي في الجزائر؛
فهم الخطاب الأكاديمي الشفهي؛
متعلمو الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛
الجاهزية الأكاديمية للتدريس باللغة الإنجليزية (EMI)

الملخص

اختارت العديد من الدول اللغة الإنجليزية لغةً للتعليم العالي، وفي عام 2022 قررت الحكومة الجزائرية اعتماد هذا التوجه. ويُعد الاستماع مهارة أساسية في التعلم والتواصل، إذ يعتمد فهم المحاضرات واكتساب المعرفة إلى حد كبير على القدرة على الاستماع. وفي سياقات التدريس باللغة الإنجليزية، يستخدم المتعلمون مهارات الاستماع لفهم المحتوى الأكاديمي الشفهي، غير أن كثيراً من الطلاب قد يواجهون صعوبات في تطوير هذه المهارات بالقدر الذي يسمح لهم بالاستفادة الكاملة من المحاضرات.

يمكن أن تسهم استراتيجيات الاستماع في تعزيز التعلم أو إعاقته في المقررات التي تُدرَّس باللغة الإنجليزية. ونظراً لقلة الدراسات الجزائرية في هذا المجال، هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف استراتيجيات الاستماع المستخدمة لدى طلبة قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة البليدة 2. وتُدرَّس المقررات التخصصية في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائرية باللغة الإنجليزية، حيث تمثل 50٪ من أرصدة مرحلة الليسانس و100٪ من أرصدة مرحلة الماستر، مما يجعلها سياقاً نموذجياً للتدريس باللغة الإنجليزية.

دُرس استخدام الاستراتيجيات في ضوء متغيرات الجنس، ومستوى الكفاءة في اللغة الإنجليزية، ونوع التعليم ما قبل الجامعي. وجُمعت البيانات باستخدام اختبار لفهم الاستماع، واستبيان لاستراتيجيات الاستماع، ومناهج مقررات الفهم الشفهي، وقد خضعت جميع الأدوات للتحكيم العلمي. شارك في الدراسة 81 طالباً اختيروا عشوائياً، وحُللت البيانات نوعياً وكمياً.

أظهرت النتائج تشابهاً واضحاً في استخدام الاستراتيجيات بين مختلف الفئات، وأشارت إلى أن ملاءمة الاستراتيجية قد تكون أهم من تكرار استخدامها، كما كشفت عن محدودية مشاركة بعض الطلاب في التعلم وعدم كفاية التدريب على استراتيجيات الاستماع. وتُقدَّم توصيات لتحسين تدريس هذه الاستراتيجيات بما يدعم تعلم الطلاب من المحاضرات المقدمة باللغة الإنجليزية بفعالية أكبر.

1. Introduction

Listening in classes is the most widely used academic EFL skill in Algerian English Departments. In 2022, this importance extended to nearly all departments after the Algerian government decided to shift to EMI (English-Medium Instruction) in higher education. Indeed, EMI makes extensive demand on learners' EFL listening skills (Zhou & Heath, 2025). However, many Algerian students may struggle to acquire sufficient EFL listening ability (Missoum, 2007). EFL students' difficulties with listening comprehension are often greater in EMI classes especially due to new specialist vocabulary and a variety of teachers' accents (Zhou and Heath, 2025). Listeners employ strategies to develop their ability to comprehend oral contents. This paper reports on an investigation of listening strategies used by students of the English Department at Blida 2 University, Algeria. In

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this department, students study from 50% to 100% of the courses in English. The first research goal consists of identifying the listening strategies used by the participants and how often they use them. Then, the second objective consists of comparing strategy use along the following learner variables: gender, proficiency in English, and educational background. Research is necessary to understand EFL listening strategy use in a way that can contribute to making EFL listening instruction prepare students better for achievement in the study of content modules delivered in English. This paper consists of a theoretical context, description of the research design, key findings and implications.

2. Literature Review

Students in Algerian English departments as well as in other departments where English is used as a medium of instruction use listening extensively as they listen to their teachers and classmates, which calls for strong EFL listening skills. Learners need to use efficient strategies to overcome difficulties in developing and using EFL listening ability (Huang & Wang, 2026). The present review of the literature provides a brief account of the adoption of EMI in Algeria, challenges facing its implementation, the importance of listening for EMI, definitions and role of learning strategies in language learning, and EFL students' listening skills and strategy use.

2.1 Adoption of EMI in Algeria

EMI has been expanding in many countries in the world (China (Meiyan and Lihua, 2024; Zhou and Thompson, 2023), Saudi Arabia (Zumor and Qasem, 2019), Lebanon (Abouzeid et al., 2025), etc.). This expansion has been translated into substantial research interest in the topic. For instance, Karabay and Durrani found up to 1522 publications on EMI in the Scopus database only (2024). EMI research showed continued growth, especially in Asia and Europe; while it has been limited in Africa (Heath et al., 2026). In Algeria, the Ministry of Higher Education issued on September 28th, 2022 a ministerial order to Algerian universities to promote English. On October 27th, 2022, universities were ordered to train their lecturers to start teaching in English in the 2023/2024 academic year. This quick shift understandably led to reasonable worries about a possible abrupt shift to EMI. Such a shift may not have taken sufficient time to assess of the readiness of teachers and students to engage in EMI successfully.

2.2 Challenges Facing EMI Implementation

Challenges can face the implementation of the policy of English as a medium of instruction. For EMI in EFL contexts to succeed, both students and teachers must be sufficiently proficient in English. Otherwise, the quality of teaching and learning can be affected leading to low academic achievement. Research has identified the issue of inadequate teachers' English language skills (Tsou & Kao, 2017). The EMI challenge most relevant to this study is inadequate learners' English skills. Indeed, Heath et al., concluded their systematic review of the literature in these terms: "Research on the

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transition to EMI has shown that EMI students with no prior experience learning through English tend to experience greater language challenges than students coming from EMI secondary schools (2026). Several studies documented these challenges. For instance, Zumor and Qasem investigated 264 Saudi computer science engineering and medicine students. The majority of them experienced difficulties comprehending content delivered in English causing poor achievement (2019). In China, Meiyan and Lihua's study of 361 EFL learners concluded that many of them struggled to understand the subject matter due to English-related challenges (2024). Using a longitudinal mixed-methods design, Zhou and Heath collected data from 412 Chinese EMI students. The study found that students may face challenges when listening to academic lectures (2025, see also Zhou and Thompson, 2023). In addition, a study that explored 500 students and 100 teachers' perceptions about EMI in the United Arab Emirates found that students struggled to learn the subject matter due to their low-proficiency in English (Belhiah and Elhami, 2014, p. 3). Similarly, in Vietnam, Vu and Burns (2014) investigated an EMI program. They found that lecturers were challenged by their own and the students' English competence (2014). In conclusion, many empirical studies conducted in different EFL contexts indicate that one of the main challenges to EMI is teachers and students' inadequate English proficiency.

2.3 Importance of Listening for English-Medium Instruction

Proficiency in English is a key factor contributing to the success or failure of the implementation of EMI. Listening in particular plays a major role as the language skill most frequently used by learners in class. According to Zhou and Rose, listening to academic content in EMI (...) can prove very challenging for students transitioning from education in L1 to EMI higher education (2021). Thus, listening ability of students stands out as in an important pre-requisite for successful EMI. In Marcjanik's terms, "the level of linguistic skills, with a particular focus on listening abilities in English must be adequate so that content comprehension is not hampered" (2023). Students with limited listening skills will probably fail to comprehend the contents delivered by their teachers. Research in Algeria also found that listening is a key concern in learning content delivered in English (Missoum, 2007). Therefore, the success of the implementation of EMI depends on developing sufficient EFL learners' listening skills.

2.4 Learning Strategies: Definitional Aspects

Learning a foreign language can be a very demanding task especially if it combines with a requirement to learn content knowledge like sciences, sociology, and literature as it is the case for students in Algerian universities with the implementation of EMI. Learner strategies can assist students in this dual task. Research (e.g. Oxford, 1990) suggests that effective learners utilise techniques to enhance their learning and use of a language other than their mother tongue. A number of definitions for the term 'language learning strategy' are suggested in the literature (See for instance Pawlak, 2021 & Thomas et al., 2021). In this study, the term 'learner strategy' refers to, using Chamot's words, "procedures that

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facilitate a learning task" (2005, p. 112). Learner strategies refer to more or less conscious actions undertaken by learners in the process of learning and / or using a language to carry out a given task and enhance the level of performance.

2.5 Role of Strategies in Language Learning

Research has highlighted the role of academic listening in the success of university students. Therefore, students must develop good listening skills. Strategies can make learning "quicker, easier, and more effective" (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995, p. 18; Oxford, 1996; Schunk, 2012). For instance, learners who evaluate their learning and are able to assign success and failure to specific factors are better at deciding what learning strategies they need to adjust. As EMI students need to learn content while learning a foreign language (EFL), the use of efficient learning strategies to develop EFL skills, especially listening, is essential to survive in EMI contexts. In Zhou and Rose' terms, "students need to quickly develop and apply new strategies to regulate their listening to lengthy and spontaneous teacher talk in their L2" (2021).

2.6. EFL Students' Listening Skills and Strategy Use

Indeed, many Algerian students' may be facing various difficulties with EFL listening. At Blida 2 University, Algeria, Missoum assessed a civilisation lecture comprehension of 300 students. Their overall performance was low with a mean score of 31.56% (2007).

The use of efficient learning strategies could help EFL students develop good listening skills. In China, Zhou and Heath found that many students managed to overcome difficulties in learning how to listen through strategy use (2025). Chamot's findings also indicated that strategies improved students' listening comprehension. Moreover, Huang and Wang studied the impact of eighty-three (83) Chinese English learners' listening strategy use on their L2 listening comprehension. The authors found a significant positive correlation between listening strategy use and listening comprehension (2026). Several other studies have shown that strategy instruction helped less successful students improve their listening skills (see an account by Chamot, 2005, pp 117-118). Therefore, preparation of students must include training in listening strategies to enable them to benefit from EMI courses.

2.7 Listening Strategies Used by EFL Learners

To inform strategy instruction, research on language learning strategies has mainly been concerned with describing strategies that good language learners use (e.g. Griffiths, 2008; Rubin, 1975). A number of characterisations of EFL learner strategies appeared in the literature as taxonomies (e.g. Oxford, 1990). The present study does not aim at assessing and comparing the different taxonomies of learner strategies. Nonetheless, we can notice many similarities between them like the inclusion of the following strategy types: cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social. Concerning listening, the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) includes the following listening strategies: Think

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of relationships between known and new, watch TV/movies, look for similar words across languages, guess the unknown, anticipate what the speaker will say, etc. (Oxford and Burry-Stock, 1995, p. 23). Nakatani developed an oral communication strategy inventory that contains listening strategies like asking the speaker for repetition or to slow down, trying to catch the speaker's main point, anticipating what the speaker is going to say (2006, pp 13-14). Finally, a third example of taxonomies was proposed by Missoum (2007) specifically for academic listening. It includes strategies such as trying to distinguish main from secondary points, asking lecturer questions, anticipating content of lecture from title / outline / discourse markers, and guessing meaning of unknown words (2007, pp 162-163). Taxonomies proposed can be combined to get a more comprehensive characterisation of EFL listening strategies.

After running several searches, research on EFL listening strategies appeared to be scarce in Algeria. Studies are needed to fill this gap and expand our understanding of how strategies impact the development and use of EFL listening ability. The success of EMI implementation depends on developing EFL learners' listening skills.

3. Methodology - An Investigation of Listening Strategies Used by Students of the English Department at Blida 2 University

The vital importance and the difficulty of developing EFL listening ability highlights the need to investigate effective strategies to improve L2 listening (e.g. Zhang et al., 2023) especially for EMI contexts. Listening programs must be reviewed in Algerian departments of English to prepare students so as to benefit better from content courses taught in English. This study attempts to contribute to this effort by reviewing English language learning strategy use and instruction. The objective of this research is to investigate the listening strategies used by students. More specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: In the context of the English Department at Blida 2 University:

- What listening strategies are used by the students? How frequently do they use them?
- Are there differences in listening strategy use between learners at good, average and low listening proficiency levels?
- Are there differences in listening strategy use between learners of different educational background as reflected in 'literary' versus 'scientific' streams in secondary education?
- Are there differences in listening strategy use between female and male learners?

The ultimate purpose of this study is to find out ways to enhance learners' EFL listening skills through efficient strategy use, and thus promote better academic achievement in EMI courses.

3.1 Research Design

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The context of the present study is Algerian university departments of English. In these departments, students study content modules like literature, civilisation, linguistics, phonetics, communication and didactics in English. Contents modules represent fifty (50) per cent of the course credit numbers in the licence (BA Degree) and nearly a hundred (100) per cent in the MA programs. This probably makes English departments a typical EMI situation in Algeria where English language has received an unprecedented amount of attention, especially after 2019.

The Ministry of Education started teaching English at year 4 then 3 of the primary school. Another surge in interest started in 2022 as the government decided to implement EMI in higher education. Nonetheless, the development of listening skills necessary for EMI seems to suffer some neglect. For instance, training in listening can have been facing some lack of attention in Algerian departments of English (Missoum, 2007). The population targeted by this research consists of a rather homogenous group. Students who participated in this study studied English language as a second foreign language starting from grade 8 (second year in the middle school). French is considered the first foreign language and Algerian Arabic or Thamazight as a mother tongue. In addition, the participant students generally pertain to the same group age (17-22). They also share the same school background (Algerian public educational system). A random sample of eighty-one (81) students completed a listening strategy use questionnaire at the English Department of Blida 2 University. This particular department and students were selected because the researcher had access to them and their listening teacher accepted to participate in the study. A placement test was used to discriminate between high, average and low achievers in listening comprehension. Numbers of participants by the four variables studied (gender, etc.) are presented in tables below.

3.2 Research Instrument(s)

Researchers have mainly used self-report procedures to identify learners' strategies as strategies are mostly mental processes. According to Chamot, self-report studies generally use interviews, questionnaires, diaries, and think-aloud protocols (2005, p. 113). For this study, data necessary to inform the research questions were collected using three research tools: a listening test, a listening strategy use questionnaire and syllabi of listening courses. To increase the validity and reliability of these tools, the researcher designed them by using relevant literature and then had them reviewed by an expert. A brief description of each of these tools is provided below.

3.2.1 English Listening Proficiency Test

A shorter version of the Cambridge First Certificate of English Listening Test (Evans and Milton, 2002) level B2 (upper intermediate) was used to place the participating students in three levels: high, average and low. *Cambridge English: First*, is an exam for people who need to prove they can use every day written and spoken English at an upper-intermediate level. For example, multiple choice questions include "You turn on the television and hear a man giving a lecture. The man teaches A. geography, B. tourism, or

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C. history". Prior to its administration, the test was reviewed by the researcher's PhD supervisor for content validity and clarity.

3.2.2 EFL Listening Strategy Use Questionnaire

Questionnaires are the most frequently used research tools for identifying learning strategies (Chamot, 2005). The Listening Strategy Use Questionnaire is an adapted version of Oxford (1990)'s Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). The strategies fall in two macro categories: *direct strategies*, of which memory, cognitive, compensation strategies are sub-categories and *indirect strategies* that consist of metacognitive, affective and social sub-categories. This questionnaire was used to collect data about the listening strategies the participant students reportedly use. It consists of forty (40) close-ended and two (2) open-ended items. For the close-ended items, the participants circled one of four scales representing the frequency at which they have been using each listening strategy: never, sometimes, often or always. Biographical information was collected about the respondents' age, gender, mother tongue, and secondary school major. The purpose from collecting such information is to examine possible differences in strategies used and frequency of use along those variables. Prior to its administration, the questionnaire too was reviewed by the researcher's PhD supervisor for validity and clarity. As a measure to protect the reliability of the instrument, the frequency basis for eliciting introspective data was chosen because it acknowledges the relativity of phenomena related to human beings in comparison to 'yes/no' questions. This format may actually have tempered careless responding. Measures were implemented to hopefully minimise measurement errors in using rating scales, namely, providing assistance to the participants in using the scale, limiting the number of items, and using clear response options. Minimal production by the participants was adopted, among other reasons, due to fear that efforts to verbalise by the participants could distort self-report.

3.2.3 Syllabi of Listening Courses

The syllabi of listening courses taught in the English Department at Blida 2 University were collected to analyse their contents. They should state teaching and learning goals, describe materials, as well as teaching and assessment strategies. The aim of the analysis is to examine provisions for training in listening strategies. It is also meant to cross-check self-report questionnaire data by collecting information about planned teaching practice regarding development of listening-oriented learner strategies.

3.3 Data collection and Analysis

In the present study, data collection was conducted as follows: Arrangements were made with one volunteer listening instructor in the English Department of Blida University to administer the listening placement test. First, the test was administered to three randomly selected regular groups of first-year students. They sat for the test as their second regular examination of the listening module, which presented the valuable advantage of participants working seriously to demonstrate their listening skills because

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their success in the course depended on their performance. Care was taken to ensure that the participants understood the test tasks. After the test, the listening strategy use questionnaire was handed over to the participant students. Directions about how to complete the questionnaire were given to the respondents. No issues were recorded in the data collection process.

The data collected were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. The participant students' test papers were corrected and graded by an external rater, the teacher of the course. The researcher provided the correction and correction scale. Of the eighty-one (81) student participants, 27 (33 %) scored 08/20 and lower, 30 (37 %) were placed at average proficiency (scoring 08.5 - 12/20) and 24 (30 %) scored 12.5/20 and higher. In Algerian education, these levels of achievement are usually respectively referred to by 'low', 'average' and 'high' performance or proficiency levels. The results of the test can also be described as bottom 1/3 (below 33rd percentile), middle 1/3 (between the 33rd and 66th) and top 1/3 (above the 66th percentile) of the sample.

Concerning the listening strategy questionnaire, the participant students' responses were entered in a Microsoft Excel sheet for amalgamation and analysis. For quantification, a numerical value was assigned to each response category: frequency of strategy use 'Never' was allotted a value of 0, 'sometimes': 1, 'often': 2 and 'always': 3. Such quantification is common practice in strategy use research. This operation allows calculation of the mean frequency of use for each strategy for the cohorts. It was also used to describe frequency as follows. The data set was divided into three roughly equal groups. Frequency of strategy use ranging from 0 to 0.99 is considered as 'Low'; while frequencies between 1 and 1.99 are 'Medium' and those falling between 2 and 3 are 'High'.

The primary analysis of the questionnaire data consisted of aggregating data collected from the participants. For each category of respondents along the variables examined (Gender, educational background and listening proficiency), the average frequency of use was calculated for the forty strategies and the six categories of strategies (Cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies). Standard deviation for all data sets was also calculated to measure dispersion of the data around the means. Descriptive statistics are expected to describe the distribution and range of responses for each category of respondents and enable comparison according to the variables. The results are reported in tables below.

For the analysis of the qualitative data from the two open-ended items in the questionnaire and the syllabi of the listening courses, the data were organised into coherent categories to look for patterns. The first stage of the treatment consisted of reading the students' responses to the open-ended item as well as the syllabi. The researcher noted his first impressions. Then, the second stage consisted of coding or labelling pieces of the data. The labels or codes used in this analysis relate to categories of strategies; namely, memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, etc.

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4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Results

Before discussing the results and key findings of this study, it is useful to acknowledge a few limitations. A key limitation is related to the possible challenges posed by self-report data. Despite the practicality of questionnaires, the accuracy of the respondents' data should not be taken for granted. Nonetheless, "it is still the only way available to us to develop some understanding of learners' mental processing" (Chamot, 2005, 115). In addition, the strategy use questionnaire was not tested for internal consistency. Nonetheless, it was adapted from the widely used SILL questionnaire and reviewed by an expert researcher. Besides, the researcher does not claim to control other factors that can impact strategy use like learner motivation and social background. Finally, the scope of the present study is limited to the EMI context of the English Department at the Blida 2 University, Algeria. This exploratory study makes no claims of generalisability. With these limitations in mind, we move to present the results below. Discussion of these results follows in section 4.1.2.

4.1.1 *Research Question 1: What listening strategies are reportedly used by the students? How frequently do they use them?*

Table 1 below presents the aggregated questionnaire data for the whole sample of the participant students in this research (N=81). Concerning the six categories of strategies (Cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies), the students seem to use more frequently cognitive strategies (M=1.84/3, SD=0.26) then memory strategies (M=1.79/3, SD=0.36). Social strategies are the least frequently used (M=1.27, SD=0.39). Besides, only ten strategies out of forty were reported used at frequency 2 (=often) or higher. The two strategies with the highest frequencies are 'Try to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context' (M=2.42/3) and 'Ask myself whether I have understood the speaker or not' (M=2.35/3). The most rarely used strategies are: 'Read about the topic of the lesson before coming to the classroom' (M=0.90/3), 'Ask questions to lecturer if no one else does.' (M=0.99/3) and 'I review my lecture notes' (M=1.01). For the total cohort, the frequency of use of the six categories of strategies is only medium (1.73/3); in other words, no category of strategies is used at high frequency (≤ 2/3). It is noteworthy that the participants did not add any listening strategy that was not in the questionnaire in response to the open-ended items.

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Table 1.

EFL Listening Strategies Used by the Participants (N=81)

Strategies	Number of Strategies in the Questionnaire	Mean frequency of strategy use / 3	Standard Deviation
Direct Strategies	27	1.81	0.31
Cognitive Strategies	18	1.84	0.26
Compensation Strategies	5	1.72	0.50
Memory Strategies	4	1.79	0.36
Indirect Strategies	13	1.55	0.47
Affective Strategies	4	1.42	0.27
Metacognitive Strategies	7	1.71	0.57
Social Strategies	2	1.27	0.39
Total	40	1.73	0.39

4.1.2 Research Question 2: Are there differences in EFL listening strategy use between students at good, average and low listening proficiency levels?

The questionnaire responses were averaged for the three cohorts: learners at low, average and high proficiency for each of the six categories (Cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, etc.). With slight differences between them, the three levels of proficiency reported using direct strategies more than indirect ones. Low and average proficiency respondents said they used cognitive strategies at exactly the same mean frequency (M=1.83/3) (See Table 2 below). The high ability group reported using memory strategies the most (M=1.81/3). Social and affective strategies appeared to be the least used irrespective of proficiency level (M=1.39/3, 1.13 and 1.31).

The three strategies with the highest frequency of use are: 'Trying to guess meaning of unknown words from the context' by average proficiency respondents (M=2.53/3), 'Thinking about what the content of lecture will be from the title and introduction.' (M=2.50/3) by high proficiency respondents, and 'Trying to find out how to be a better listener' (M=2.44/3) by the low ability cohort. However, the strategies used the least are: 'Reviewing one's notes' (M=0.79), by the high ability cohort and 'Asking questions to lecturer if no one else does.' by the average and low proficiency respondents (M=0.83/3 and 0.93 respectively). For the three cohorts, frequency of use of the six categories of strategies is similarly medium (1.70, 1.73, and 1.71/3).

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Table 2.

EFL Listening Strategy Use across Listening Proficiency Levels (N=81)

Strategy Categories	Number of strategies	Mean / 3			Standard Deviation		
		Low N=27	Average N=30	High N=24	Low N=27	Average N=30	High N=24
Direct Strategies	27	1.77	1.80	1.78	0.30	0.32	0.39
Cognitive Strategies	18	1.83	1.83	1.77	0.26	0.24	0.41
Compensation Strategies	5	1.62	1.70	1.78	0.42	0.59	0.40
Memory Strategies	4	1.67	1.82	1.81	0.32	0.26	0.38
Indirect Strategies	13	1.56	1.58	1.58	0.54	0.46	0.49
Affective Strategies	4	1.30	1.49	1.55	0.21	0.30	0.33
Metacognitive Strategies	7	1.75	1.76	1.67	0.62	0.48	0.62
Social Strategies	2	1.39	1.13	1.31	0.65	0.42	0.03
Total	40	1.70	1.73	1.71	0.40	0.38	0.43

4.1.3 Research Question 3: Are there differences in EFL listening strategy use between students of different educational backgrounds?

The questionnaire responses were also amalgamated to allow a comparison of EFL listening strategy use between two cohorts: 1- students who had a literary major in secondary education and those who had a scientific major. 'Literary' educational background includes classes of students who had foreign languages, human sciences or philosophy as majors in secondary schools; whereas 'scientific' streams include students whose major was maths, natural sciences or accountancy. Regardless of educational background ('scientific' or 'literary'), the respondents said they use cognitive strategies the most (M=1.80/3 and 1.82 respectively) (see below Table 3). Both cohorts also reported using social strategies the least frequently (M=1.39/3 and 1.19 respectively). For all six categories of strategies, the data show very close frequencies of use. Concerning individual strategies, the three strategies with the highest frequencies of use are: 'Trying to guess the meaning of unknown words from the context' (M=2.44/3) by 'literary' respondents and 'Trying to understand every word the speaker says' used by 'scientific' participants (M=2.44/3). Both cohorts reported low frequencies use for 'reviewing lecture notes' (M=1.04/3 and 0.98). The 'scientific' respondents admitted they also rarely use 'Reading about the topic of the lesson before coming to the classroom.' (M=0.93/3). While according to their 'literary' counterparts, the least used strategy is 'Asking questions to lecturer if no one else does' (M=0.98/9).

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Table 3.

EFL Listening Strategy Use by Educational Background of Learners (N=81)

Strategy Categories	Number of strategies	Mean / 3			Standard Deviation		
		Sciences N=27	Literature N=54	Total N=81	Sciences N=27	Literature N=54	Total N=81
Direct Strategies	27	1.77	1.79	1.81	0.33	0.30	0.31
Cognitive Strategies	18	1.80	1.82	1.84	0.31	0.27	0.26
Compensation Strategies	5	1.68	1.75	1.72	0.49	0.46	0.50
Memory Strategies	4	1.70	1.74	1.79	0.27	0.27	0.36
Indirect Strategies	13	1.57	1.57	1.55	0.48	0.47	0.47
Affective Strategies	4	1.42	1.45	1.42	0.28	0.28	0.27
Metacognitive Strategies	7	1.71	1.74	1.71	0.57	0.54	0.57
Social Strategies	2	1.39	1.19	1.27	0.50	0.30	0.39
Total	40	1.70	1.72	1.73	0.39	0.37	0.39

4.1.4 Research Question 4: Are there differences in EFL listening strategy use between female and male students?

In the Department of English at Blida 2 University, the number of female students is generally three to four times higher than male students. Thus, the sample of this study (66 females and 15 males) reflects the common gender distribution. Questionnaire responses were amalgamated to compare mean frequency use of male and female participants for the six categories of strategies. The data show that both female and male cohorts use more frequently direct strategies (M=1.82/3 and 1.75, respectively) than indirect ones (M=1.57 and 1.49 respectively). For all six categories, the data seem to indicate no clear difference by gender in strategy use. Besides, for the two cohorts, no category of strategies is reportedly used at a frequency higher than 1.86/3.

Among the forty strategies, the most frequently used are: 'Trying to understand every word the speaker says' used by female and male participants at M=2.20 and 2.27 respectively. Another frequently used strategy is 'Trying to guess meaning of unknown words from the context' by both cohorts (M=2.73 and 2.35 respectively). The male respondents also reported using frequently 'Thinking about what the content of lecture or presentation will be from the title and introduction' (M=2.47); while the female participants seem to use quite often 'Asking oneself whether one has understood the speaker or not' (M=2.38). Strategies with the lowest means of use are: 'Rewriting one's notes after class to improve them' and 'Comparing and completing notes with classmates' for the male cohort (M=0.87) and 'Asking questions to lecturer if no one else does' for the female cohort (M=0.98). The female respondents admit that they also rarely use 'Reading about the topic of the lesson before coming to the classroom' (M=0.88).

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Table 4.

Listening Strategy Use by Female and Male EFL Learners (N=81)

Strategy Categories	Number of	Mean / 3			Standard Deviation		
		Female (N=66)	Male (N=15)	Total (N=81)	Female (N=66)	Male (N=15)	Total (N=81)
Direct Strategies	27	1.82	1.75	1.81	0.31	0.42	0.31
Cognitive Strategies	18	1.86	1.74	1.84	0.24	0.41	0.26
Compensation Strategies	5	1.71	1.76	1.72	0.49	0.60	0.50
Memory Strategies	4	1.79	1.80	1.79	0.38	0.32	0.36
Indirect Strategies	13	1.57	1.49	1.55	0.51	0.46	0.47
Affective Strategies	4	1.42	1.43	1.42	0.26	0.49	0.27
Metacognitive Strategies	7	1.73	1.63	1.71	0.60	0.46	0.57
Social Strategies	2	1.30	1.10	1.27	0.56	0.33	0.39
Total	40	1.74	1.67	1.73	0.40	0.45	0.39

4.1.5 Results of the Analysis of Listening Courses Syllabi

The syllabi of two listening courses (1st and 2nd year) covering four semesters did make explicit provisions for learner strategy training. They both state the development of strategies as a key course objective. However, they do not make reference to specific categories of strategies or individual listening strategies. One syllabus read, "The teacher selects a number of strategies to practice with every lesson. Each feature should be covered at least twice to work towards automaticity and fluency of strategy use." In addition, both syllabi do not refer to assessment of listening strategies.

4.2 Discussion

Based on the above results, a few findings are highlighted in the coming sections.

4.2.1 EFL Listening Strategies Used by the Students

In general, direct strategies seem to be used a little more frequently than indirect ones, irrespective of the variables investigated; i.e. proficiency level in listening, educational background, and gender. Concerning the six categories of strategies (Cognitive strategies, compensation strategies, memory strategies, affective strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies), our sample of students seems to use more frequently cognitive strategies (M=1.84/3) by all eight (08) cohorts. In addition, social strategies are reportedly the least frequently used by all the cohorts (M=1.27). These findings are different from Habók and Magyar who found that metacognitive strategies

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were the most frequently used (2018). In Turkey, EFL students were found using cognitive and affective strategies least while they used metacognitive and memory strategies the most (Solak and Cakir, 2015) similarly to learners in Saudi Arabia (Alrashidi, 2022). There seems to be some impact on reported listening strategy use from the participants and the context of the study, which could explain the different findings. For the total cohort of participants, the reported frequency of use of the six categories of strategies is only medium (1.73/3). Only ten strategies out of the forty were reported used at frequency higher than 2/3 (2=often). We could conclude that many EFL students may not be using listening strategies frequently enough, which could affect their listening ability and eventually their readiness for EMI courses.

4.2.2 Apparent Similarity of Strategy Use across the Variables Examined

In the present study, overall, very few differences appeared among the different proficiency levels on all six categories of strategies. Similarly, apart from very few differences at individual strategy level, and on all six categories of strategies, very few slight differences appeared among the participants from the different listening proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and genders (female or male). Green and Oxford also discovered that most strategies did not vary significantly by level (1995). Likewise, Ehrman and Oxford also found that the gender variable did not yield a significant difference (1990). Learner variables investigated in this study did not seem to correlate with strategy use.

4.2.3 Inconclusive Results about Listening Strategy Use by Learner Variables

However, there are studies that found differences in strategy use along learner variables. For instance, Green and Oxford found higher levels of strategy use by females than by males in Puerto Rico (1995). In another study, females used memory, metacognitive and affective strategies significantly more often than males (Green and Oxford, 1995; also Alrashidi, 2022 in Saudi Arabia). As for proficiency level, Griffiths found in New Zealand that student course level had a significant relationship with strategy use (2003). Greater use of learning strategies was also found among more successful learners by Green and Oxford (1995). Similarly, with Saudi learners, Alrashidi found out that "the higher their proficiency levels, the more the students used language learning strategies." (2022). However, the present and other studies indicate that gender, educational background, and proficiency level do not seem to correlate with strategy use. A number of factors that could explain the inclusiveness of results across contexts have been suspected by researchers. For instance, educational culture could determine the strategies learners use for study. Jiang and Smith (2009, p. 297) rightly stated that "teachers or parents can be significant mediators who pass on learning strategies to the younger generation through education or child-rearing". Thus, as studies focus on a limited number of learner variables, researchers must acknowledge that other underlying variables could be at work to determine the type and frequency of strategies learners use.

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4.2.4 Appropriate Use of Strategies May Matter More for Listening Proficiency

Based on the above findings, it may be more useful for strategy research to focus on appropriate strategy use instead of variation according to learner ad context variables. According to Chamot, enhancing our understanding of language learning strategies most helpful to students seems more useful (2004). Indeed, learners can use strategies efficiently or inefficiently. The present research uncovered a few findings that could be worthy of attention. For instance, 'Trying to understand every word the speaker says' was reportedly often used by the 'scientific' participants (M=2.44/3), and both the female and male participants (M=2.20 and 2.27 respectively). Earlier in the same department, data indicated that 57.5% of the students believed it was helpful to pay attention to everything lecturers say (Missoum, 2007), which is usually a counter-productive strategy compared to selective listening strategies. Moreover, social strategies were reported as the least used by all the cohorts. This may reflect some lack of critical collaborative work. In the same context, data from different research tools indicated that many students reported not using efficient listening strategies, especially rhetorical markers (90%) and selective listening (72%) (Missoum, 2007). Indeed, research seems to suggest, the appropriateness and effectiveness of strategies used are probably more important for success than using more strategies (Graham, et al., 2008; Griffiths and Cansiz, 2015). According to Griffiths' findings, successful learners orchestrated strategies that suited their needs, goals and their situations (2015).

4.2.5 Possible Students' Limited Engagement in Learning

An important finding in this study is an underlying limited engagement in learning that could be inferred from many students' responses. It is interesting to find out that the students who need teachers' help the most seem to fail to ask them for it. Average and low proficiency respondents, females and the 'literary' participants reportedly rarely asking questions to lecturers even if no one else did. (M=0.83/3, 0.93 and 0.98 respectively). This is also true for the whole cohort (M=0.99/3). In the same department, 47.5% of the students reported that they never/rarely ask questions to lecturers (Missoum, 2007). Apparently, many students do not ask for help to understand lessons, which could be ascribed, at least partly, to limited engagement and scientific curiosity. This is supported by data from other questionnaire items. Most of the participant students do not seem to prepare for lessons and build background knowledge. The 'scientific' and female respondents, in particular, admitted that they rarely read about the topic of the lesson before coming to the classroom (M=0.93/3, 0.88 respectively). Zhou and Rose's results in China underscored the determining role of lesson preview activities in facilitating listening in EMI contexts (2021). In addition, most of the students did not seem to revise their class notes for further comprehension (M=1.01/3). Reviewing one's notes was reported the least used by five cohorts including, quite strangely, by the high ability cohort. This can be explained by over-confidence that skips revision of notes for further comprehension. Similarly, in the same department, up to 41% of the students surveyed acknowledged that they never/rarely read about the topics treated in the lecture (Missoum, 2007). Probably,

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the issue of motivation and engagement must be at the top of the agenda as it may undermine all initiatives aiming at enhancing educational outcomes.

4.2.6 Possible Insufficient Training in Listening Strategies

The current listening courses make no reference to the details of training in the use of effective listening strategies. It is left to the teachers to decide how to conduct strategy training. Most often, listening courses are assigned to novice part-time teachers who could lack the training, experience and time resources to design a detailed strategy-based course. Internationally, listening was found to be neglected by teachers (Graham, 2017). Another aspect that needs attention is examination-driven courses. Research like Gao (2010, p. 72) found that "it is no surprise that examinations, or learning assessment methods, have turned out to be the most important mediating artefacts in the participants' strategy development process". Exam orientation in many educational systems may not foster efficient learner strategies that usually go untested. Finally, according to Graham, in many contexts, teaching of listening is limited to mere assessment of listening comprehension (2017) instead of training learners in listening strategies and skills.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Algeria is embracing a significant shift in higher education by opting for a quick move towards English-Medium instruction. Several challenges are facing this development including insufficient English proficiency for both teachers and students. Limited EFL listening ability can be the principle challenge for students who are expected to learn university-level scientific knowledge in a foreign language. Learning strategies could either hamper or enhance listening ability. Thus, as a measure to prepare students for success in EMI contexts, their listening strategies must be investigated to find out what strategies students are using in order to design efficient EFL strategy training. This research investigated the situation in one Algerian department of English in terms of: 1- The type and frequency of listening strategies used by students; and 2- Possible difference in listening strategy use along the following learner variables: Female / male, low / average / high listening proficiency and literary / scientific educational backgrounds. Three research tools (a test of listening comprehension, a listening strategy use questionnaire and syllabi of the listening courses) were used. A random sample of eighty-one first-year students from the English Department of Blida 2 University participated in this study. This study seems to point to a number of findings:

- As a whole, the participants reported only a medium (M=1.73/3) frequency of use of the six categories of strategies. Many students may not be using EFL listening strategies sufficiently. This calls for training in listening strategies to foster strategy use.
- Apart from very few differences at individual strategy level, and on all six categories of strategies, there is an apparent similarity of strategy use across the variables examined, which is in line with many other studies.
- Research on listening strategy use by learner variables has so far yielded

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inconclusive results. Some studies found significant differences along learner variables, which could be explained by multiple factors underlying strategy use like context and educational culture.

- Therefore, educators and researchers should probably focus on appropriate strategy use instead of variation according to learner and context variables, especially that some learners could be using counter-productive strategies or not using efficient ones like collaboration.
- There may be limited engagement in learning for some learners who rarely ask questions to lecturers, review their class notes, prepare for lessons, etc.
- There are areas where listening courses could do better in terms listening strategy instruction as suggested below.

In the light of the above findings, it could useful to consider a few suggestions to improve strategy training in order to enhance students' readiness for EMI in Algerian English departments:

- Students need to be trained in EFL listening strategies. Many studies recommended quality English education prior to EMI (Zumor and Qasem, 2019) because there is a pressing a need to develop English language proficiency (Litovchenko and Shmeleva, 2020). Many researchers recommended explicit listening strategy instruction (Coskun, 2010; Vandergrift, 2004). Nunan's experimental study indicated that language-learning strategies can be taught (1997). Besides, experimental studies conducted in several different contexts confirmed that strategy instruction improved listening performance of EFL students (Bozorgian and Pillay, 2013; Cross, 2009; Coskun, 2010; Nunan, 1997).
- Identifying current strategies must precede strategy instruction to inform it. Teachers can help learners identify the listening strategies they are using. Learners may not always be aware of the learning strategies they are using. Strategy assessment has been encouraged by researchers (Graham, et al., 2008; Oxford, 1996). This can be done via classroom observation and / or questionnaires.
- Better listening strategy instruction calls for awareness, practice, feedback and assessment. Instruction should be explicit where strategies and their rationales are discussed (Chamot, 2004). Explicit instruction involves developing students' awareness of strategies, teachers modelling strategies, strategy practice and self-evaluation (Chamot, 2005). Learners need to be assisted to develop metacognitive awareness of their strategies by using diaries and retrospective group discussions about academic tasks. Then, instructors should develop learners' knowledge about strategies. This should include rationale for strategy use, description and modelling of the most useful ones. The next stage consists of opportunities to practise strategies through completing tasks. Learners should be encouraged to assess their strategy use by monitoring their effect on task performance. In addition, they need to be guided to discover unknown strategies and experiment with them, and select

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those that work for them (Graham, et al., 2008; Green and Oxford. 1995). Strategy training must lead to integration of strategies to complete authentic listening tasks. Thus, content-based strategy instruction can be a better preparation for EMI when it integrates academic content from modules students need to study. Moreover, assessment of listening skills should test strategies not comprehension only. Finally, listening courses should encourage autonomous learning to compensate for limited class time.

- EFL teachers need to be adequately trained to provide students with adequate training in listening strategies. Chamot insisted that "expertise in teaching language learning strategies must be integrated into pre- and in-service preparation" (2005, p. 123)
- Finally, research must be conducted in other Algerian departments of English. More research is also needed to provide a better understanding of EFL students' listening strategies in other types of university departments. In addition, in terms of research methodology, Graham, et al. rightly remarked that research must investigate the manner in which strategies are used, rather than which ones and how many or often (2008). Moreover, there is a need to contextualise research tools via a qualitative phase before the quantitative one. Open-ended tools could allow culture-specific strategies to emerge. Indeed, using strategy use questionnaires based on research done in specific contexts may not capture the context-specific strategies. Finally, as self-report tools are subject to limitations, triangulation, though time and effort consuming, holds better promises for greater reliability and validity (Chamot, 2004; Oxford, 1996).

In conclusion, the implementation of English-Medium Instruction represents a major development in higher education in Algeria. It involves large investments of financial, time and human resources. Besides, its implications on the outcomes of education are expected to be considerable. Therefore, all necessary measures must be taken to prepare teachers and students to succeed in this process and hence achieve the expected progress in the economy, society and the security and prosperity of the Nation.

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Informed Consent was not formally obtained in the present study as the informants participated voluntarily and anonymously.

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