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- البويرة -

Faculté des Lettres et des Langues

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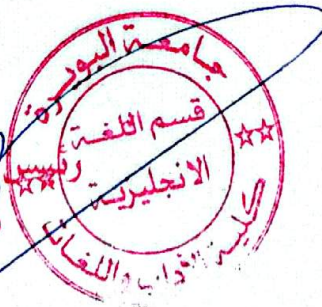
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Students' Identity: An Applied Sociocultural Investigation

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**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**University of Akli Mouhand Oulhadj, Bouira**

**Faculty of Letters and Foreign Languages**

**Department of English Language and Literature**



## **The Effect of EFL Learning on Algerian University Students' Identity: An Applied Sociocultural Investigation**

**A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Language and Literature - University of Bouira – in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of Master's Degree in Didactics and Applied Languages**

### **Candidates**

Hazem Amira

Djeddi Asma

### **Supervisor**

Djadi Sara

### **Board of Examiners**

<b>Dr. Henen Cheriet</b>	<b>MCB</b>	<b>University of Bouira</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Dr. Sara Djadi</b>	<b>MCB</b>	<b>University of Bouira</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>
<b>Mrs. Nadia Messaoudi</b>	<b>MAA</b>	<b>University of Bouira</b>	<b>Examiner</b>

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## ***Dedication***

To my beloved family, for whom I work so hard to make proud, my devoted father, my loving mother, my incredible sisters *Meriem* and *Maroua*, and my dear brother *Abdelhak*. Last but not least I want to thank me and my supportive friend *Asma*, whom I shared this wonderful journey with, for believing in ourselves and for doing all this hard work.

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To my devoted parents, *Djeddi Smail* and *Saadi Sihem*, for whom I work so hard to make proud, my incredible supervisor *Sara Djadi*, whose guidance, patience, and unwavering belief in my abilities shaped every step of this research, my best friend *Douaa*, for always being there through every challenge and celebration, and my dear friends *Djoughina*, *Rayane*, and *Malak* for their kindness and constant support. Last but not least I want to thank my partner and friend *Amira*, with whom I shared this entire wonderful journey from the very first idea to the final word.

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## Abstract

This study investigates the effect of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and identity re/construction among Algerian university students. Situated within a complex postcolonial and multilingual ecology characterized by the coexistence of Arabic, French, Berber, and English, this research addresses the gap in understanding how learners navigate tensions between global English-speaking identities and local cultural affiliations. The study examines how EFL learning influences identity re/construction, the role of classroom practices and social agents, and how students negotiate local-global tensions. A mixed-methods explanatory design was adopted, integrating questionnaire data from 112 participants, semi-structured interviews with 16 PhD students and teachers treated as lifelong learners, and critical analysis of four official university program documents. Findings reveal that students experience English learning through “additive hybridity” rather than replacement. The study identifies “asynchronous subjectivity,” whereby learners perform future professional identities in present academic contexts, and documents an “identity tax”—the continuous labour of managing competing linguistic hierarchies. Local culture operates as a strategic anchor and protective mechanism, while teachers and peers function predominantly as confidence-enhancers. It is concluded that Algerian students are not passive recipients of globalization but active, strategic agents who construct workable hybrid identities through selective adoption, cultural anchoring, and protective identity work.

**Keywords:** Algerian EFL learning, identity re/construction, additive hybridity, asynchronous subjectivity, identity tax.

## الملخص

تستقصي هذه الدراسة العلاقة بين تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وعمليات إعادة بناء الهوية لدى طلبة الجامعات الجزائريين. وانطلاقاً من بيئة معقدة تمتد جذورها إلى مرحلة ما بعد الاستعمار، وتتميز بتعايش العربية والفرنسية والأمازيغية إلى جانب الإنجليزية، تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى سد الفجوة المعرفية المتعلقة بكيفية تعامل المتعلمين مع التوترات القائمة بين الهويات العالمية الناطقة بالإنجليزية والانتماءات الثقافية المحلية. وتتناول الدراسة ثلاثة محاور رئيسية: كيف يؤثر تعلم الإنجليزية في إعادة/ بناء الهوية، وما دور ممارسات الصف الدراسي والعوامل الاجتماعية في ذلك، وكيف يساوم الطلبة على هوياتهم في خضم التوترات بين المحلي والعالمي. اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً جمع بين استبيانات من 112 مشاركاً، ومقابلات شبه منظمة مع 16 طالباً، وتحليل النقدي لاربعة وثائق رسمية للبرامج الجامعية. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يعيشون تجربة تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال ما يمكن تسميته "التهجين الإضافي" لا الاستبدال. كما كشفت الدراسة عن ظاهرة "الذات اللامتزامة" حيث يؤدي الطلبة هويات مهنية مستقبلية في سياقاتهم الأكاديمية الحالية، ووثقت ما يُعرف بـ "ضريبة الهوية" أي الجهد المستمر لإدارة التسلسلات الهرمية للغات المتنافسة. تبرز الثقافة المحلية كمرتكز استراتيجي وآلية حماية في آن واحد، في حين يؤدي الأساتذة والزملاء دوراً أساسياً في تعزيز الثقة بالنفس. تستنتج الدراسة أن الطالب الجزائري ليس متلقياً سلبياً للعولمة، بل فاعلاً استراتيجياً نشطاً يبني هويات هجينة قابلة للحياة من خلال التنبؤ الانتقائي، والارتكاز على الثقافة المحلية، وأعمال حماية الهوية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تعلم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر، بناء الهوية، التهجين الإضافي، الذات اللامتزامة، ضريبة الهوية.

### **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT** English Language Teaching

**L2** Second Language

**LMD** *Licence Master Doctorat* (Bachelor-Master-Doctorate)

**SLA** Second Language Acquisition

**ICT** Information and Communication Technology

**ZPD** Zone of Proximal Development

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# **General Introduction**

## **1 Background of The Study**

Over the last few years, the relationship between language acquisition and identity has become the focus of applied linguistics. No longer does language acquisition occur as an internalization of grammar rules and lexical structures, but it is essentially a process of self-construction through which learners bargain new subjectivities within social, cultural and symbolic orders. This re-conceptualization is particularly applicable to the postcolonial environments where the choice of language is highly ideologically loaded, and where a universal language such as English comes into contact with the past of colonialism and nation-building and globalization (Pavlenko, 2000).

Algeria is a good example of analysis of these dynamics. Its linguistic environment is due to what Mohamed Benrabah (2007) describes as “linguistic schizophrenia”: the complex palimpsest of Arabo-Islamic traditions, French colonialism, and Berber tradition, which is now shaped by the influence of English as a lingua franca. After 132 years of colonization by the French who made French the language of prestige and modernity, the post-independence Arabization policies aimed at recovering the national identity with the help of Standard Arabic. However, this policy has faced consistent problems in higher education when French continued to dominate in sciences and technology, which generates a systemic discrepancy between the cultural socialization of students and their academic needs (Maarouf and Lamouri, 2022; Saadi, 2018).

English has now arrived as a new competitor, with its neoliberal rationales that introduce it as a new “linguistic capital”— the key to survival in the global economy (Maraf, 2024). The new turn of the Algerian government to adopt English Medium Instruction (EMI) in higher education is what Abdelkrim Dekhakhena (2025) refers to as a “paradoxical path to decolonization”: in an attempt to break the hold of Francophone intellectuals, the government adopted a global language. This change in policy places highly identity pressure on students of the university, who now have to learn disciplinary material using English and establish themselves as valid subjects in the world scholarly and professional academic communities. Unlike monolingual settings, Algerian students come to English classrooms with fine-tuned mastery of multi-identity management since their entire life was negotiating the meanings of Darija (Algerian Arabic), Standard Arabic, and French, all with their own social and political values (Saadi, 2018). With the introduction of English, a fourth dimension is introduced into

their linguistic repertoire which may result in disruptive identity formations and new possibilities of self-construction.

## **2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the growing body of literature on language policy and sociolinguistic attitudes in Algeria, an essential gap still exists in understanding the influence of EFL learning on the identity of university students. Existing research has predominantly focused on macro-level policy studies, such as the history of Arabization, the continuation of French in higher education, or the recent governmental change toward EMI, without giving much attention to the micro-level phenomenology of identity change. The works of Benrabah (2007), Noureddine Saadi (2018), and Baya Maraf (2024) have shed light on the structural and ideological aspects of the Algerian linguistic landscape, but the experience of the students who have to move around this terrain has not been studied in detail.

In addition, while the international literature on language and identity has developed some theoretically strong frameworks to understand identity construction in the process of learning a second language, these frameworks have rarely been applied in the context of the postcolonial multilingual setting of Algerian higher education. The specific structure of linguistic hierarchies in Algeria, where English is introduced into a sphere that is already defined by the French-Arabic dichotomy and diglossic conflict between Standard Arabic and Darija, puts in place special conditions of identity negotiation not fully explained by the current theory.

The following study fills in these gaps by looking at the psychological, social and cultural aspects of identity change among Algerian university students involved in EFL learning. It goes beyond survey-based measures of language attitudes to explore how students tell their own stories of becoming users of the English language--how they balance their Algerian self with their English-using self, how they invest in imagined global communities and local affiliations, and how they manage the classroom as a place of both empowerment and alienation.

## **3 Research Objectives**

The present study pursues four primary objectives:

1. To examine how learning English contributes to changes in Algerian university students' cultural and personal identity. This involves investigating the mechanisms through which EFL learning reconstructs students' self-concepts, worldviews, and sense of cultural belonging.
2. To explore learners' perceptions of English as a tool of empowerment and social mobility. This objective seeks to understand how students conceptualize their "investment" in English—what

symbolic and material resources they anticipate gaining, and how this investment intersects with neoliberal ideologies of linguistic capital.

3.To identify the pedagogical and institutional factors that support or constrain identity development through EFL. This includes analysing how classroom practices, teacher attitudes, and curriculum content facilitate or impede students' identity negotiation.

4.To propose context-sensitive recommendations for language education policy and practice in Algeria. Based on empirical findings, this study aims to contribute to the development of pedagogical approaches and policy frameworks that support students' identity development while respecting Algeria's multilingual heritage.

#### **4 Research Questions**

To achieve these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- 1.How does EFL learning influence the identity re/construction of Algerian university students?
- 2.What role do classroom practices, curricula, peers, and teachers play in shaping these identity changes?
- 3.How do learners negotiate tensions between their local linguistic identities and global English-speaking identities?

#### **5 Research Hypotheses**

This study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1:** EFL learning fosters additive hybrid identities, strengthening students' sense of global belonging while preserving local linguistic and cultural affiliations.
- H2:** Classroom practices that validate students' multilingual repertoires and Algerian English varieties facilitate positive identity negotiation, while native-speaker norm enforcement generates anxiety and disengagement.
- H3:** Students navigate tensions between local and global identities through selective cultural adoption, maintaining core local values while acquiring specific communicative behaviours.

#### **6 Significance of The Study**

This study contributes significance across three dimensions:

**Academic Significance:** The research advances applied linguistics scholarship on language and identity by extending established theoretical frameworks to an under-researched postcolonial context. The proposed "Identity Navigation Framework" synthesizes psychological, sociological, and spatial dimensions of identity transformation, offering a theoretical model applicable to similar multilingual, postcolonial EFL contexts globally.

**Practical Significance:** The findings offer pedagogical recommendations for culturally responsive EFL instruction in Algeria. By identifying how classroom practices and curriculum content shape identity negotiation, the study provides actionable insights for teachers seeking to validate students' multilingual identities while developing English proficiency.

**Policy Significance:** The study provides empirical grounding for national curriculum planners. By examining how students actually experience English learning, rather than how policymakers intend it, the research offers evidence-based recommendations for implementing English education without eroding local linguistic identities.

## **7 Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses specifically on Algerian university students enrolled in EFL programs. The investigation is delimited to students at the undergraduate, Master's, and PhD levels, excluding primary and secondary education contexts.

Geographically, the study encompasses four universities representing different regions of Algeria to capture potential regional variation in linguistic attitudes and practices. However, it does not claim to represent all Algerian universities or the full diversity of the country's sociolinguistic landscape.

Methodologically, the study employs a convergent mixed-methods design combining quantitative questionnaires with qualitative interviews. While this approach enables both breadth and depth of understanding, it is subject to the limitations inherent in self-reported data and the challenges of capturing longitudinal identity processes within a bounded research timeframe.

## **8 Theoretical Framework**

This research study integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives to examine how Algerian university students negotiate identity transformation through EFL learning. Together, these frameworks account for the psychological, sociological, and spatial dimensions of identity reconstruction in a postcolonial, multilingual context where English enters an already crowded linguistic ecology shaped by French colonial legacy, Arabization policies, and Berber linguistic revival.

### **8.1 Sociocultural Theory and Communities of Practice**

Drawing on Lev S. Vygotsky (1978), language learning is conceptualized as a socially mediated process where cognitive and identity development occur through interaction with others, cultural tools, and artifacts. Learning is never an isolated cognitive activity; it is fundamentally a social process where knowledge is constructed through dynamic engagement.

The EFL classroom functions as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998)—a shared social space where learners engage in the ongoing enterprise of becoming “English users.” Through this engagement, students co-construct not merely linguistic competence but their identities as legitimate members of an academic and potentially global community. This framework positions the classroom not merely as a site of skill transmission but as a social arena where students perform, experiment with, and refine emerging English-using selves. Peer collaboration and teacher scaffolding operate within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), enabling learners to enter new identity positions they could not achieve independently.

## **8.2 Postcolonial Perspectives on Language and Identity**

The “third space” concept offered by Homi K. Bhabha (1994) offers the analytical space to comprehend the way learners negotiate cultural in-betweenness. This interstitial, liminal zone is neither purely “here” nor “there”—it is a space of hybridity where the cultural binary of “self” and “other” destabilizes, allowing emergence of new cultural identity forms. For Algerian students, the third space is not an abstract: it appears as the everyday-life experience of translating between Darija, Standard Arabic, French, and English, which does not necessarily belong to one linguistic community but does not belong to none. Alastair Pennycook (2010) extends this analysis by framing English as a local practice that introduces new symbolic hierarchies in postcolonial contexts. His critical approach cautions that the teaching of English language may impose the norms and values of native speakers and this may lead to a sense of inferiority or what Aneta Pavlenko refers to as “language attrition.”

## **8.3 Identity Construction in EFL Contexts**

Bonny Norton’s (2013) theory of “investment” reframes learner motivation as a sociological commitment to imagined communities. Unlike “motivation”, which describes internal psychological disposition, “investment” captures the complex relationship between learners and the social world. Learners invest in languages when they anticipate expanded access to symbolic resources (friendship, social status, recognition) and material resources (higher education, employment, economic advancement). Crucially, Norton connects investment to Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of “imagined communities”—the future worlds individuals desire to inhabit. For Algerian students, this imagined community is multifaceted: the global professional sphere, the academic world of science and technology, and transnational networks offering mobility beyond local economic constraints. Aneta Pavlenko (2001) complements this by conceptualizing the “multilingual self”—a dynamic, historically situated subject who reconstructs self-concept through the affective and psychological tensions between languages.

She challenges the hegemonic construct of the “native speaker” as the *telos* of language learning, proposing instead that second language acquisition entails profound transformation of self-concept.

## **9 The Structure**

This thesis is organized into two main chapters. The General Introduction establishes the research background, problem, objectives, and theoretical framework synthesizing sociocultural theory, postcolonial perspectives, and identity construction models. Chapter One reviews literature on EFL learning and identity development, the Algerian linguistic context, and pedagogical factors, identifying a conceptual gap in understanding students’ lived experiences. Chapter Two details the explanatory mixed-methods design combining questionnaires (112 participants), interviews (16 participants), and document analysis (four programs). It additionally presents the results and findings across all three data sources, including questionnaire findings on global identity, emotional expression, cultural practices, local identity maintenance, media engagement, and pedagogical influences; interview findings on identity transformation, emotional expression, cultural negotiation, and social/academic influences; and document analysis findings on institutional representation, cultural discourses, and alignment with student experiences, concluding with integrated triangulated findings. Chapter two interprets these findings and develops three theoretical contributions: “additive hybridity”, “asynchronous subjectivity”, and “identity tax”, and summarizes key findings, confirms the hypotheses, and outlines implications for pedagogy, curriculum design, and language policy.

# **Chapter One**

## **Literature Review**

## 1.1 Introduction

In the contemporary era of globalization, the English language has evolved from a mere subject of academic study into a prerequisite for social mobility, economic participation, and transnational communication. No longer just a foreign language, English has established itself as the global lingua franca, functioning as a gatekeeper to knowledge, technology, and professional advancement. This shift has profound implications for the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), particularly regarding the relationship between language learning and the self. It is no longer sufficient to view language learners solely as processors of grammatical rules or vessels for vocabulary; rather, they must be understood as complex social beings whose identities are continuously reshaped by their engagement with a new language. Contemporary research increasingly suggests that acquiring a language is not a cognitive process occurring in a vacuum, but a deeply social and psychological undertaking where learners negotiate their sense of self in relation to the target language and its associated cultures.

For students in Algeria, this phenomenon is particularly intricate. The Algerian sociolinguistic landscape is uniquely characterized by a complex interplay of competing linguistic forces: the heritage of Arabic, the colonial legacy of French, the revival of Berber (Tamazight), and the rapidly rising influence of Global English. This multilingual environment creates a dynamic “linguistic marketplace” where language choice is often laden with political, historical, and ideological significance. The tension between the country’s Arabization policies, the enduring Francophone dominance in higher education and administration, and the emerging utility of English places university students at a critical juncture. Within this context, learning English is not simply an academic exercise; it is a process that inevitably influences how university students perceive themselves, their culture, and their place in the world. As they navigate between local traditions and global modernities, these students must construct a hybrid identity that balances national heritage with international aspirations.

This literature review aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical and contextual background for the present study, bridging the gap between global theories of language identity and the specific realities of the Algerian context. It is organized into four main sections. First, it examines the theoretical frameworks concerning identity and language learning, focusing on the poststructuralist and sociocultural perspectives that challenge traditional, fixed views of the learner. Second, it reviews the specific linguistic situation in Algeria, analysing the historical and current tensions between local languages and global English to establish the environmental backdrop of the study. Third, it explores the pedagogical factors within the university classroom

that facilitate or constrain identity development, highlighting the role of curriculum and interaction. Finally, it synthesizes these areas to identify the conceptual gaps that this study intends to address, setting the stage for an investigation into how Algerian students navigate the Identity challenges posed by EFL learning.

## **1.2 EFL Learning and Identity Development**

The relationship between language and identity has emerged as a central concern in applied linguistics over the past two decades. Historically, Second Language Acquisition (SLA) scholarship privileged cognitive perspectives that conceptualized language learning as the internalization of grammatical rules and lexical structures. However, the epistemological shift from structuralist to poststructuralist paradigms has fundamentally reconceptualised the ontology of the language learner (Pavlenko, 2001). This section critically examines the theoretical architectures underpinning the present study, specifically interrogating the dynamic constitution of identity, the sociological construct of investment, and the liminal topology of the “third space” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37) where subjectivities are reconstituted.

### **1.2.1 Identity as Dynamic and Multiple: From Essentialism to Constructivism**

To apprehend the complexities of identity within the Algerian EFL context, it is imperative to first deconstruct the epistemological foundations of identity conceptualization. Traditional, or essentialist, paradigms of culture and identity have exercised considerable influence in the social sciences. Essentialist perspectives, as exemplified by Edward O. Wilson’s (1975) sociobiological approach positing genetic predispositions for social behaviour, and Geert Hofstede’s (1980) structuralist view in *Culture’s Consequences*, conceptualize identity as a fixed, inherent attribute tethered to specific demographic groups. Within this framework, culture operates as a “closed” semiotic system, and individual behaviour is delimited and constrained by cultural membership, frequently generating reductive stereotyping. This approach presupposes that identity constitutes a static possession—something one “is” rather than something one “performs”.

Contemporary scholarship, drawing upon poststructuralist theory, contends that this conceptualization proves inadequate for comprehending the contemporary globalized condition. Luisa Conti (2024) advocates for a constructivist epistemology, positing that identity is fluid, multiple, and perpetually in process. She argues that identity functions not as a reflection of social group membership but as a “creative self-performance” constructed through dialogic interaction and communicative practice. Within this framework, individuals are not merely

cultural products; they are agent subjects who navigate multiple cultural collectivities simultaneously. This generates a dynamic feedback loop between their “lifeworld” (their phenomenological reality) and their communicative actions.

The theoretical positions advanced by Luisa Conti (2024) and Aneta Pavlenko (2001) demonstrate a shared stance: identity is not a zero-sum game. This challenges the binary assumption that adopting English means “losing” Algerian identity. Instead, the Algerian context demands what is termed “additive hybridity”<sup>1</sup>—where English does not replace but reconfigures existing identity layers. This is crucial because it shifts our research question from “Does English erode identity?” to “How does English restructure the identity architecture?”. Therefore, this fluidity proves central to the language learning process. Aneta Pavlenko (2001) challenges the hegemonic construct of the “native speaker” as the *telos* of language learning. She proposes that second language acquisition entails the reconstruction of what she designates the “multilingual self”. According to her, language learning transcends the cognitive of semiotic codes; it constitutes an affective psychological struggle for social recognition. This process involves complex negotiation between one’s historically sedimented selves<sup>2</sup>—rooted in first language and culture—and emergent possibilities afforded by the target language.

Pavlenko (2001) argues that L2 acquisition potentially precipitates profound transformation of self-concept. This process may generate significant anxiety, as learners experience sensations of displacement or fragmentation of the self. For Algerian students, this signifies that learning English does not constitute merely acquiring another communicative skill to accumulate to their existing repertoire of Arabic, French, or Berber. Rather, they are potentially reconfiguring their internal narrative. They may experience tension between the “Algerian self” (constituted by local traditions, religious values, and familial ties) and the “English-using self” (potentially associated with modernity, individualism, or Western values). The “multilingual self” thus operates as a site of contestation and creativity where learners must reconcile the “I” of historical constitution with the “I” of imagined futurity.

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<sup>1</sup> Author’s original theoretical construct, developed from Suresh Canagarajah’s (1999) work on resistance and hybridity in postcolonial language learning contexts.

<sup>2</sup> “Historically sedimented selves” refers to the layered accumulation of identity formations through one’s personal and cultural history, drawing on phenomenological theory (particularly Husserl, 1970; Ricoeur, 1992) where “sedimentation” describes how past experiences settle into habitual ways of being. In language learning contexts, this manifests as the embodied history of the first language that shapes perception, selfhood, and emotional resonance.

From the above, a theoretical tension emerges that existing literature has not resolved. Pavlenko emphasizes the psychological struggle, while Conti emphasizes social performance. In the Algerian context, these are not separate processes—they are simultaneous and mutually constitutive. The student does not first psychologically struggle then socially perform; rather, the classroom becomes the stage where psychological anxiety is enacted socially. This intersection is where the present study intervenes: examining how the EFL classroom functions as both psychological crucible and social theatre.

### **1.2.2 The Concept of “Investment” and Neoliberal Ideologies**

Building upon these psychological and social dimensions of identity, “investment” posits itself as one of the most recognizable theories which shed light on the social performance of language. While “motivation” describes a psychological disposition or interest, the construct of “investment” provides a more robust sociological framework for comprehending learner commitment (or non-commitment) to language learning. Bonny Norton (2013) argues that traditional motivation theory proves insufficient to explicate the complex relationship between language learners and the social world. She contends that learners evince complex desire and commitment to target language acquisition because they anticipate it will provide access to expanded “symbolic and material resources” (Norton, 2013, p. 6).

Norton’s (2013) theory of “investment” proves crucial because it redirects analytical focus from the learner’s internal psyche to the external social world. Symbolic resources might encompass friendship, social status, or recognition, while material resources might include higher education opportunities, employment prospects, or economic advancement. Learners invest in a language when they believe that language will generate “return on investment” in the form of these resources. Crucially, Norton (2013) connects investment to Benedict Anderson’s (1983) concept of “imagined communities”. Anderson (1983) originally theorized imagined communities as socially constructed groups—particularly nations—conceived as limited, sovereign communities to which members feel belonging despite never encountering most other members. Norton (2013) adapts this construct to language learning, arguing that learners invest in languages not merely because of immediate environmental factors, but because they aspire to membership in communities they envision for themselves. The “imagined community” represents a future world the individual desires to inhabit. For Algerian university students, this imagined community is multifaceted: it encompasses the global professional sphere where English functions as the lingua franca of business and diplomacy; the academic world of science

and technology where research dissemination occurs primarily in English; and transnational networks offering mobility beyond local economic constraints.

Norton's framework, while powerful, contains a blind spot when applied to postcolonial contexts like Algeria. Anderson's original concept was about national belonging, but for Algerian students, the imagined community is not just horizontal (global peers) but vertical—positioning themselves against the Francophone elite that has historically dominated Algerian universities. This is not merely about joining a community; it is about displacing an existing linguistic hierarchy. It is argued that “investment” in the Algerian context carries what Bourdieu (1984) would recognize as “distinction”—it is not just about accruing capital, but about converting linguistic capital into social position within a stratified field.

In the contemporary Algerian context, this investment is deeply entangled with neoliberal ideologies and economic globalization. Baya Maraf (2024) provides a critical analysis of this phenomenon, arguing that the current ascendancy of English in Algeria is driven by shared governmental and public conviction that English constitutes the key to economic liberalization. Maraf (2024) suggests that English is increasingly conceptualized as “linguistic capital”—a commodity exchangeable on global markets. However, critics note that “investment” frameworks risk reducing language learning to purely economic calculation, potentially neglecting aesthetic, ethical, or communal motivations (Block, 2014). In the Algerian context, this raises critical questions: Does framing English as “linguistic capital” (Maraf, 2024) reproduce the very market logics that marginalize local languages and ways of knowing?

Block's (2014) critique is particularly salient here. The Algerian case exposes the limits of Norton's framework. When students describe English as the “language of money” (Maraf, 2024), they are not simply making rational economic calculations; they are articulating a form of “structures of feeling”—Raymond Williams's (1977) term for the lived experience of historical forces. The “investment” is not just in future returns but in escaping what they perceive as a stagnant present. This affective dimension—hope, anxiety, aspiration—cannot be captured by purely sociological frameworks. The present study addresses this by examining how students narrate their investment, revealing the emotional grammars underlying economic rhetoric.

Maraf (2024) further highlights that the Algerian government and public now view English through a pragmatic, neoliberal lens—as the language of business, science, and technology. Consequently, students invest in English not merely for affective attachment or communicative purposes, but for survival and thriving within competitive, globalized markets. This aligns with Norton's (2013) conceptualization of material resources while adding economic

urgency specific to Algeria's transition from socialist-influenced to liberalized economy. The student is not merely learning English; they are investing in future economic survival and social mobility.

### **1.2.3 The “Third Space” and the Multilingual Subject: Theoretical Origins and Application**

The negotiation of identity in a new language frequently occurs in theoretical space that is neither purely “here” nor purely “there”. This space is what the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha (1994) famously designated the “third space”. Bhabha (1994) describes the third space as an interstitial, in-between zone where cultural meaning and representation are negotiated. It is a space of hybridity where the cultural binary of “self” and “other” destabilizes, allowing emergence of new cultural identity forms.

While Bhabha (1994) originally theorized this space within colonial discourse analysis, Claire Kramersch (2009) adapts it to the psycholinguistic domain of language learning. She explicitly acknowledges her theoretical debt to postcolonial theory, particularly Homi Bhabha's (1994) concepts of the “third space” and cultural hybridity. Doing so, she introduced the concept of the “multilingual subject” and what she describes as the “third space”. By these two concepts, she reconceptualises language learning as a process of symbolic identity negotiation rather than the acquisition of native-like competence. The multilingual subject emerges as a historically situated, discursively constructed self whose subjectivity is shaped through the affective and symbolic tensions between languages. These constructs foreground symbolic competence, positioning multilingualism as a site of critical mediation, identity transformation, and discursive agency.

Kramersch (2009) suggests that when individuals speak a foreign language, they are not simply translating words between semiotic codes; rather, they are translating cultures and subjectivities. She argues that the third space represents a reflective zone where learners can examine their own culture through the lens of the target language. The multilingual subject occupies a unique vantage point. Because they are positioned between languages, they can perceive the limitations and assumptions of both. For example, an Algerian student speaking English might recognize that certain English concepts (such as “individualism” or “privacy”) resist translation into Arabic or Darija because they carry different cultural valences. Conversely, they might struggle to express Algerian concepts of hospitality or family honour in English. This struggle is productive. It compels the learner to reflect upon who they are.

This concept holds particular relevance for the present study. It suggests that Algerian

students do not merely adopt English-speaking identities, nor do they remain purely Algerian in self-conception. Instead, they create hybrid identities enabling navigation of both local traditions and global modernities. The “third space” allows them to be critical observers of both native and target cultures. It is a space of agency where they can claim ownership of English, using it to express their own realities rather than mimicking native speakers. In this space, the student constructs a “multilingual subject” capable of code-switching, cultural translation, and navigating complex demands of globalized world while maintaining connection to roots.

While Kramersch (2009) acknowledges the tensions of the third space, we want to push back against celebratory readings of hybridity that neglect its affective costs. Bhabha’s original formulation emphasizes that the third space is not necessarily comfortable—it is a space of disorientation and “unhomeliness”. For Algerian students, this is not abstract: it manifests as the inability to fully express themselves in any single language, the sense of never quite belonging to any community. The present study examines not just the productive possibilities of the third space, but its affective costs. What is the psychological toll of perpetual mediation between languages? How do students manage the exhaustion of constant code-switching? These questions are absent from Kramersch’s (2009) account.

What is proposed here is that these three theorists—Pavlenko, Norton, and Kramersch—form a theoretical triad that is greater than the sum of its parts. Pavlenko provides the mechanism (psychological reconstruction), Norton provides the motivation (sociological investment), and Kramersch provides the location (the third space). However, none of them adequately addresses what is designated the “temporal paradox” of language learning: the student must perform a future identity (the English-using self) in the present, while still bearing the historical weight of their past identities. This creates what is provisionally termed “asynchronous subjectivity”<sup>3</sup>—the experience of being temporally out of sync with oneself. This concept is particularly relevant for Algerian students who navigate between the local and the modernity promised by English.

### **1.3 The Algerian Linguistic Context**

To understand the specific identity challenges faced by Algerian students learning English today, one must situate their learning experiences within the country’s unique, turbulent, and deeply layered linguistic history. The Algerian sociolinguistic landscape is not a monolith; it

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<sup>3</sup> This construct builds on Bakhtin’s (1981) concept of chronotopy and extends identity theory into temporal dimensions, though the authors acknowledge this requires further theoretical development and empirical validation.

is a palimpsest of historical invasions, colonial impositions, post-independence nation-building projects, and contemporary globalization pressures. The context is defined by complex interplay of Arabic, Berber (Tamazight), French, and now English, where language choice is rarely a neutral communicative act, but is often imbued with political, social, and ideological significance.

### **1.3.1 The Legacy of Colonialism and Arabization**

The foundation of current linguistic complexity in Algeria lies in its colonial past. As extensively documented by Abdelhamid Z. Maarouf and Rabah Lamouri (2022), the country's history represents succession of linguistic contacts, from Phoenicians and Romans to Arabs and Ottomans. However, it was the 132 years of French colonization (1830–1962) that fundamentally disrupted the linguistic ecology. The French colonial administration did not merely settle in Algeria; it systematically engineered a linguistic hierarchy designed to serve the “civilizing mission”. They established French as the sole language of prestige, administration, justice, and modernity, while actively marginalizing Arabic and Berber.

Mohamed Benrabah (2007) explains that this policy was strategic: by controlling the language of education and administration, the colonizers sought to create a “French Algeria”, effectively erasing local linguistic identities to facilitate political and cultural domination. The impact of this was profound. It created a deep-seated psychological association between French language usage and social mobility, modernity, and intellectualism, which persists long after independence.

Following independence in 1962, the newly formed Algerian state faced a monumental dilemma: how to rebuild a national identity after over a century of cultural erasure? The response was the policy of “Arabization”. This was not merely an educational reform; it was a political imperative aimed at reclaiming national identity, decolonizing the mind, and re-establishing Arabic as the official and national language. The goal was to restore the language of the Quran and the heritage of the people to its rightful place in public life.

However, as Maarouf and Lamouri (2022) and Benrabah (2007) both detail, this process encountered significant, perhaps insurmountable, obstacles. While Arabization was successful in primary and secondary education, it stalled in higher education and the scientific sectors. The “Francophone elite”—the administrators, scientists, and doctors trained during the colonial era—retained their power. Furthermore, there was a severe lack of Arabic technical terminology and scientific resources. Consequently, French remained the *de facto* language of instruction in universities, particularly in medicine, engineering, and the hard sciences. This created what

Benrabah (2007) terms “linguistic schizophrenia” (p. 193)—a condition where students were educated in Arabic and immersed in Algerian Arabic (Darija) or Berber (Tamazight) at home, only to be thrust into a French-speaking environment upon entering university. This discontinuity created a pedagogical gap and a sense of alienation among students who felt unprepared for the linguistic demands of higher education.

What Benrabah calls “linguistic schizophrenia” is, it is argued, better understood as “structural bilingualism”<sup>4</sup>—not a pathology but a systematic feature of postcolonial education systems. The Algerian state created what may be understood as a “language trap”<sup>5</sup>: by promoting Arabic for national unity while French remained necessary for professional advancement, students were forced into a double bind. This historical context is crucial because it explains why English is not simply “added” to a stable bilingual system, but enters a field already characterized by inequality and anxiety. The student who turns to English is not starting from zero; they are already exhausted by the French-Arabic divide.

The complexity of this situation is further illuminated by the tension between the state’s promotion of Standard Arabic and the linguistic reality of everyday communication, where Algerian Arabic (Darija) and Berber (Tamazight) serve as the mother tongues of the majority. The result is a society characterized by diglossia and bilingualism, where language choice often carries political significance. For students, navigating this landscape presents considerable challenges; they must master Standard Arabic for official purposes, Darija for social cohesion, and frequently French for professional advancement. This complex juggling act forms the backdrop against which English is now entering the stage, adding a fourth, and potentially destabilizing, element to the mix.

The Algerian student, therefore, is obliged to pay an “identity tax”<sup>6</sup> in this complex cultural and sociolinguistic situation. Unlike students in monolingual contexts, Algerian students

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<sup>4</sup> Author’s original construct, describing the systematic institutional arrangement that mandates bilingual competence while preventing full mastery of either language, thereby perpetuating educational stratification.

<sup>5</sup> Author’s original construct, describing the double bind where students must navigate conflicting linguistic requirements for national belonging versus professional advancement.

<sup>6</sup> Author’s original construct, describing the cognitive and affective labour required to manage multiple linguistic identities in postcolonial contexts, drawing on Norton’s (2013) concept of investment but extending it to account for pre-existing multilingual fatigue.

must constantly perform identity work through language choice. Each interaction requires calculation: Which language signals the right affiliation? Which might be misinterpreted? This cognitive load is rarely acknowledged in SLA research. When these students encounter English, they are not blank slates; they are already skilled identity managers. This has methodological implications for the present study: their relationship with English cannot be treated as primary originary; rather, examination must focus on how it interacts with their existing linguistic repertoire.

### **1.3.2 The Emergence of English: Neoliberalism, Decolonization, and Identity Shift**

It is within this already crowded and ideologically charged linguistic ecology that English has emerged as a growing force. Unlike French, which carries the heavy historical weight of colonization and the traumatic history of the War of Independence (1954-1962), English is increasingly perceived by younger generations of Algerians—and by the state—as a neutral, modern, and purely utilitarian language. It is seen as a tool free from the traumatic history and the ideological stalemate of the French-Arabic conflict.

Mohamed Benrabah (2007) observes that English is viewed pragmatically as a tool for accessing the globalized world of science, technology, and the internet. In an era where 95% of scientific publications are in English, the argument goes that continuing to rely on French is a strategic liability. This sentiment has recently culminated in a significant shift in government policy. Abdelkrim Dekhakhena (2025) describes this shift of adopting English as a medium of instruction in higher education as a “paradoxical path to decolonization” (p. 45)—using a global colonial language (English) to break from a specific colonial legacy (French).

The Algerian government’s recent decrees mandating English instruction in primary schools and its gradual replacement of French in higher education constitute a form of linguistic resistance against “Francophonie impériale” (Dekhakhena, 2025, p. 45). Unlike Arabization, which sought to reclaim indigenous identity, the turn to English represents a strategic reorientation toward global capitalism while maintaining symbolic distance from the former colonizer. It is an attempt to “delink” from the specific hegemony of the former colonizer, even if it means engaging with the hegemony of global capitalism.

Dekhakhena’s (2025) formulation is persuasive but, it is argued, overly optimistic. The notion that English offers “decolonization” risks what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) would call “epistemic violence”—the erasure of local ways of knowing under the guise of liberation. The Algerian state is not escaping coloniality but repositioning within it. English is not neutral; it carries the epistemological assumptions of Anglophone academia. When Algerian students learn

science in English, they are not just learning content; they are learning to think like Anglophone scientists. This is not necessarily liberation—it is what may be understood as “recolonization through globalization”. The present study examines how students navigate this tension: do they experience English as freedom from French, or as new form of constraint?

However, the adoption of English is not without its own set of identity implications and risks. Baya Maraf (2024) provides a critical analysis of this shift, arguing that the overt embrace of English is deeply entangled with neoliberal ideologies. Maraf suggests that both the Algerian government and the public now view English through a pragmatic, market-driven lens. It is seen as “linguistic capital”—a commodity that is essential for survival in a liberalized economy. She warns that this neoliberal drive towards English may lead to a new form of “linguistic imperialism”, replacing the dominance of French with the dominance of English without necessarily empowering local languages.

Maraf (2024) points to tangible evidence of this cultural shift in Algerian society. She discusses the emergence of a new youth subgroup, colloquially known as “the deep”, who exclusively use English in their daily interactions, listen to English music, and adopt Westernized lifestyles. Maraf suggests that this group views English not just as a school subject, but as a symbol of modernity, intelligence, and social status. For them, English represents a break from the “backwardness” often associated with the local linguistic struggles. This signals a subtle but significant shift in cultural identity among the youth, where the “local” is being subordinated to the “global” in the pursuit of social capital.

The impact of this shift on the identity of university students is further illuminated by the empirical findings of Abdelkader Khaldoun (2021). In a study conducted at Chadli Bendjedid University, Khaldoun surveyed Master’s students to gauge the effects of English on their cultural identity. His results reveal a high level of student awareness regarding this identity transformation. A significant majority of respondents (90%) acknowledged that learning English had changed their identity. Khaldoun (2021) found that students reported distinct changes in their lifestyles and value systems. Specifically, students noted the adoption of Western festivals such as Valentine’s Day and Christmas, changes in their ways of thinking regarding individualism, and a shift in their behavioural patterns. The study highlighted a paradoxical sentiment among the students: while they recognized the instrumental importance of English for their future careers and global participation, they also expressed a sense of regret or unease regarding the gradual diminishing of traditional Algerian cultural practices. This highlights the core tension of the present study: the negotiation between the economic and professional benefits

of English (the “investment”) and the cultural costs of globalization (the potential erosion of the “native self”).

Khaldoun’s (2021) finding of “regret or unease” is symptomatic of what Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) terms “identity lag”—the phenomenon where behavioural changes outpace narrative integration. Students are adopting Western practices before they have developed a coherent story about what these practices mean for their identity. This creates a “narrative gap” that the present study aims to fill. The research will examine the stories students tell to reconcile their actions with their sense of self, including how they explain celebrations like Valentine’s Day that may induce feelings of guilt, experiencing a form of “divided consciousness” that requires narrative repair. As students invest in English language learning, they are consciously or unconsciously positioning themselves in relation to the Francophone elite, the traditional Arabo-Islamic identity, and the global Anglophone world. They are in the process of constructing what might be termed a new identity—that of the “Global Algerian”. This identity remains rooted in local culture but is rapidly developing the capability to operate effectively in international spheres. However, as Maraf (2024) and Khaldoun (2021) suggest, this construction is not without friction. It involves navigating the risk of cultural alienation, the pressure of neoliberal expectations, and the challenge of defining what it means to be Algerian in a world where the primary language of opportunity is not Arabic, French, or Berber, but English. This study seeks to explore precisely how this identity shift is experienced, negotiated, and managed by university students in Algeria.

#### **1.4 Pedagogical Factors Affecting Identity in EFL Classrooms**

The university classroom serves as the primary, tangible site where the theoretical and sociolinguistic tensions discussed previously play out in real-time. It is not merely a space for the transmission of knowledge; it is a social arena where identities are constructed, contested, and reconstructed. To understand the pedagogical factors affecting identity, we must look beyond cognitive acquisition models and view the classroom as a socially mediated environment. Drawing upon Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), we understand that learning is never an isolated cognitive activity. Rather, it is fundamentally a social process where knowledge is constructed through interaction with others, artifacts, and cultural tools. The classroom, therefore, functions as what Etienne Wenger (1998) describes as a “Community of Practice”. In this community, learners do not just study English; they engage in a shared enterprise of becoming “English users”. Through this ongoing engagement with peers and teachers, students co-construct not only linguistic competence but also their identities as legitimate members of the

academic community. This section will examine how the curriculum—specifically the shift to English Medium Instruction (EMI)—and classroom interactions shape these identity processes.

#### **1.4.1 Teaching and Peer Interaction: Dynamics of The Classroom Community**

While the curriculum provides the script, the teacher and peers provide the performance. The power dynamics and social interactions within the classroom are crucial in shaping learner identities. Teachers function as “gatekeepers” of language and legitimacy (Norton & Toohey, 2001). As Brian Morgan (2004) argues, teacher identity is itself a pedagogical tool that validates certain student identities while marginalizing others. If a teacher constantly corrects a student’s accent to approximate “native” norms, they implicitly devalue the student’s Algerian identity, reproducing what Suresh Canagarajah (1999) identifies as linguistic imperialism in the classroom. This can reduce the student’s investment in the language (Norton, 2013). Conversely, if a teacher validates the students’ Algerian English—treating it as a legitimate variety in the process of becoming—they foster a sense of security and belonging. Hamane (2023) supports this, noting that 91.8% of teachers believe in implementing feedback systems. Supportive, constructive feedback allows students to experiment with their new identity without the fear of ridicule, facilitating the struggle for recognition that Pavlenko (2001) describes.

The perspectives of Norton, Morgan, and Canagarajah demonstrate that the classroom is a “micro-political” space where global power relations are enacted locally. In the Algerian EFL classroom, these dynamics are intensified by the presence of three linguistic hierarchies: the global (English), the colonial (French), and the national (Arabic). The teacher who corrects pronunciation is not just teaching; they are adjudicating between these hierarchies. This creates what emerges as “triangulated anxiety”<sup>7</sup>—the student is not just worried about their English, but about what their English says about their relationship to French (the colonial past) and Arabic (the national present). The present study examines how teachers navigate these triangulations and how students experience them.

Peer interaction provides the second critical pillar of identity construction. The classroom is often the only space where students can practice the “performance” of their new identity. In the relative safety of the peer group, an Algerian student might adopt a more assertive, confident, or even Westernized persona when speaking English. They might use English to discuss topics they would not discuss in Arabic or French, effectively creating a “third space” with their

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<sup>7</sup> Author’s original construct, describing the unique anxiety produced by navigating three competing linguistic hierarchies in the postcolonial Algerian context.

classmates. However, peer dynamics can also be a source of anxiety. Hamane (2023) found that 72.4% of teachers believe language proficiency challenges impact student confidence and participation. In an EFL setting, a student who fears making mistakes in front of peers may withdraw, choosing silence over the risk of damaging their social standing. This withdrawal is a defence mechanism for the “self”, but it halts the identity development process.

To mitigate this, Hamane (2023) highlights the importance of peer support networks, with 88.1% of teachers endorsing this strategy. When students collaborate, they co-construct knowledge and identity together. They negotiate meaning, share the burden of linguistic incomprehension, and validate each other’s attempts at speaking. This collaborative learning aligns with Lev S. Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development, where a more capable peer (or the teacher) scaffolds the learner’s entry into the new community.

In conclusion, the pedagogical environment of the Algerian university is a crucible for identity formation. The shift to English-medium instruction, driven by neoliberal goals, offers the promise of a global identity but carries the risk of academic alienation. The success of this transition depends on the teacher’s ability to act not just as an instructor of content, but as a cultural mediator who validates the student’s hybrid identity. It relies on a curriculum that balances global access with local relevance, and a classroom culture that encourages experimentation and support rather than judgment.

### **1.5 Synthesis and Conceptual Gap**

In summary, the existing literature establishes a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the interplay between language learning and identity construction, while simultaneously painting a vivid picture of the unique and evolving sociolinguistic landscape of Algeria. Theoretical frameworks have moved beyond essentialist views of identity. Drawing on Luisa Conti (2024) and Aneta Pavlenko (2001), we understand that the language learner constitutes not a fixed identity but what Pavlenko (2001) terms a “multilingual subject”—an individual engaged in ongoing negotiation for social recognition. Bonny Norton’s (2013) concept of “investment”, contextualized by Baya Maraf’s (2024) analysis of neoliberalism, explains that Algerian students are not merely motivated by grades but are investing in their future economic and social survival. They are aspiring to belong to “imagined communities” of global professionals. Furthermore, Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concept of the “third space”, applied to linguistics by Claire Kramsch (2009), provides the theoretical mechanism for this change, suggesting that students are constructing hybrid identities that navigate the space between local traditions and global modernities.

What is argued here is that these theoretical frameworks, while powerful individually, are

insufficient for understanding the Algerian context without synthesis. The “Identity Navigation Framework”<sup>8</sup> is proposed—a framework that integrates Pavlenko’s psychological reconstruction, Norton’s sociological investment, and Kramersch’s spatial hybridity into a dynamic process. In this model, identity transformation is not a destination (hybridity) but a continuous negotiation across three dimensions: the psychological (self-concept), the social (community membership), and the spatial (third space navigation). The Algerian student moves through these dimensions not linearly but recursively, constantly revisiting and revising their position.

These theoretical frameworks converge on a central premise: language learning constitutes identity reconstruction rather than skill acquisition. Pavlenko’s (2001) “multilingual self” provides the psychological mechanism; Norton’s (2013) “investment” explains the sociological motivation; and Kramersch’s (2009) “third space” offers the liminal location where this transformation occurs. Together, they suggest that Algerian students occupy a triple positionality: negotiating between colonial (French), national (Arabic), and global (English) linguistic markets.

In terms of context, the literature highlights that Algeria is a nation defined by linguistic conflict and transition. Historical analyses by Mohamed Benrabah (2007) and Maarouf and Lamouri (2022) delineate the enduring legacy of French colonialism and the complex, often fraught, policy of Arabization. Into this complex mix, English has emerged as a potent new force. Abdelkrim Dekhakhena (2025) frames the shift to English as a paradoxical move toward decolonization—a strategic attempt to break free from Francophone intellectual hegemony by embracing the global lingua franca. However, this shift has cultural costs; Abdelkader Khaldoun (2021) demonstrates that students are acutely aware of how English is altering their lifestyles and cultural values, while Maraf (2024) warns of the risks of a new linguistic imperialism and the emergence of youth subcultures that may marginalize local languages.

On the pedagogical front, the classroom is identified as the critical site where these macro-level forces intersect with micro-level experience. While English learning offers access to global resources and careers, it poses significant threats to student comprehension and confidence, potentially excluding those without sufficient linguistic capital.

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<sup>8</sup> Previously termed “Identity Trajectory Model”; renamed to avoid confusion with McAlpine and Amundsen’s (2016) existing framework.

### 1.5.1 The Conceptual Gap

Despite this growing body of literature, a critical lacuna remains when we specifically examine the subjective, lived experience of the Algerian university student in this current moment of transition. While there is substantial research on macro-level language policy in Algeria (Benrabah, 2007) and rich theoretical work on identity in ESL contexts—particularly among immigrants in English-speaking countries (Norton, 2013; Pavlenko, 2001)—there is a paucity of empirical research that bridges these two domains within the specific context of the Algerian university.

Specifically, three critical gaps persist: (1) existing studies rely predominantly on quantitative surveys rather than narrative inquiry into subjective experience; (2) no study has applied Norton’s (2013) concept of “investment” specifically to the Algerian postcolonial context to examine how students negotiate between Francophone educational traditions and Anglophone globalization; and (3) the phenomenology of identity shift—how students actually experience the transition between their “Algerian self” and “English-using self”—remains empirically unexamined.

These gaps are not merely empirical; they are epistemological. The dominance of quantitative methods in Algerian language policy research reflects what may be understood as “macro-bias”—the assumption that large-scale patterns tell us everything we need to know. But identity is not a variable; it is a story. The present study addresses this by employing narrative inquiry, which treats students not as data points, but as narrators of their own becoming. This method is particularly suited to capturing what may be understood as “identity trouble”—the moments when students’ stories about themselves no longer cohere, requiring narrative repair.

Existing studies have focused heavily on teacher perceptions regarding the shift to EMI (Hamane, 2023) or the general sociolinguistic attitudes of the population (Maraf, 2024). However, there is a lack of mixed-methods studies that investigate the internal, psychological world of the students themselves. Specifically, we do not yet fully understand how Algerian students feel about the tension between their deeply rooted local identities (shaped by Darija, Arabic, and French) and the emerging global identity offered by English. How do they negotiate the space between the Francophone intellectual tradition that dominates their universities and the Anglophone globalized future they aspire to join? How do they reconcile the “Algerian self” with the “English-using self” in their daily academic interactions? Do they view English as a tool of empowerment, as suggested by Dekhakhena (2025), or as a threat to their cultural heritage, as feared by Khaldoun (2021)?

Therefore, the significance of this study resides in the fact that it aims at filling the previously mentioned gaps. By applying the concepts of investment and imagined communities to the lived experiences of Algerian university students, this research will provide a nuanced understanding of how EFL learning functions as a mechanism for identity transformation in a postcolonial, multilingual society. The study employs narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to capture these subjective experiences. By collecting students' language learning histories through semi-structured interviews, this research moves beyond survey data to examine the phenomenology of identity shift—how students actually experience the transition between their “Algerian self” and “English-using self”.

Ultimately, this study makes three contributions. Theoretically, it develops the “Identity Navigation Framework” that synthesizes existing frameworks for postcolonial contexts. Methodologically, it demonstrates the value of narrative inquiry for language identity research in the Global South. Empirically, it provides the first systematic examination of how Algerian students narrate their own identity transformation. By doing so, it shifts the focus from what English does to students, to what students do with English—and in doing so, reclaims agency for the learners themselves.

# **Chapter Two:**

## **Field Work**

## **2.1 Methodology**

### **2.1 .1 Introduction and Scope**

This chapter presents the methodological framework of the research that explores the impact of EFL learning on the identity formation of Algerian university students. The study adopts a mixed-methods explanatory design that integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to capture not only the measurable aspects of identity shift but also the learners' individual narrative dimensions. The chapter provides a comprehensive explanation of the research design, sampling strategy, participant selection criteria, instruments, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

### **2.1.2 The Research Design**

This research study examines the EFL learning effect on Algerian university students' identity as a dynamic, socially constructed, and context-dependent phenomenon. Identity is conceptualized not as a fixed attribute but as an ongoing process of negotiation between the self and the social world (Pavlenko, 2001; Norton, 2013). For this reason, a single methodological approach is inadequate to capture the complex and multi-dimensional nature of identity and a mixed-methods explanatory design is adopted. The adopted research design combines quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to examine different dimensions of identity shift.

#### **2.1.2.1 An Explanatory Study**

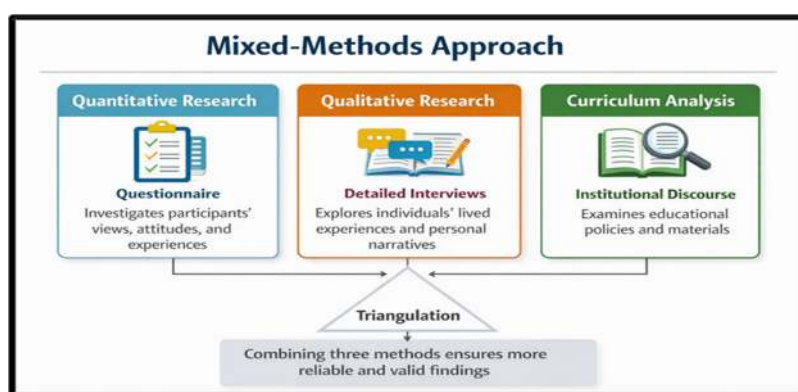
The study is explanatory in nature with the aim of exploring and understanding how EFL learning influences identity construction in the Algerian context, a research area that has not been systematically examined in previous research. Rather than testing predetermined hypotheses, the study seeks to identify patterns, phenomena, and meanings emerging from learners' experiences. It also examines how they orient their identities towards EFL communities at both the local and global-speaking communities.

#### **2.1.2.2 Mixed-Methods Approach**

The study follows a mixed-methods approach that enables investigating identity from multiple perspectives. For the quantitative data, a questionnaire was administered to investigate participants' views, attitudes and experiences and to identify themes at both micro and macro levels. Meanwhile, detailed interviews, which provide a rich account of individuals' lived experiences and personal narratives, were conducted to collect qualitative data. Document analysis, on the other hand, examines institutional discourse, revealing how educational policies and materials shape and reflect expectations regarding learners' identity. Through triangulation

of these three methods of data collection, the study ensures that findings are not based on a single method and therefore increases the reliability and validity of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The study explicitly operationalizes its theoretical framework across methodological strands. Norton’s (2013) concept of investment is operationalized through Likert-scale items measuring symbolic and material resource access, alongside identity strengthening and challenge indicators. Pavlenko’s (2001) multilingual self is operationalized through emotional valence items and analysis of identity trouble moments. Kramsch’s (2009) third space is captured through lexical erosion markers and spatial-temporal analysis of boundary-crossing experiences. This operationalization addresses the study’s central temporal paradox—the experience of performing a future identity in the present while bearing the historical weight of past identities.



**Figure 1.** *Mixed-Methods Research Design and Triangulation Framework*

## 2.1.3 Population and Sampling

### 2.1.3.1 The Target Population

The target population is composed of Algerian EFL university students, as well as EFL teachers who are considered lifelong learners. The inclusion of both students and teachers demonstrate that identity negotiation applies to all individuals who take part in the language learning and teaching process. Participants’ inclusion criteria were: (1) enrolment in a public university in Algeria; (2) being an undergraduate or graduate EFL learner; (3) aged 18 years and above to give informed consent and (4) voluntary participation. For teacher participants, they must meet the following criteria: (1) being PhD learners or being employed either permanently or currently as an EFL teacher at an Algerian university; and (2) voluntarily agree to participate. These attributes ensured that all the participants had considerable experience with EFL learning within Algerian higher education

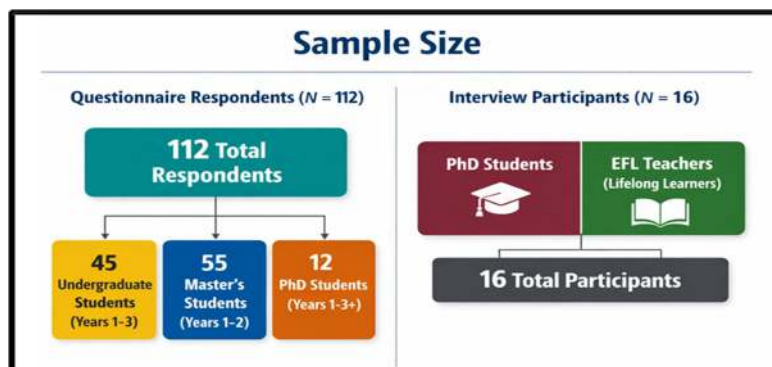
### **2.1.3.2 The Sampling Strategy**

Participants were recruited through online distribution via university communities, specifically through social media platforms by posting invitations in university-related Facebook groups. This procedure is classified as convenience sampling with voluntary participation (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Snowball sampling was also employed, as initial participants were asked to share the invitation with peers who might be interested in participating (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Although these procedures are subject to certain limitations, including sampling bias, self-selection bias, and limited statistical generalizability, their use in this study is justified by several practical and methodological considerations.

First, social media platforms allow access to geographically dispersed participants across multiple Algerian wilayas, increasing the diversity of institutional representation. Given the resource constraints of conducting in-person recruitment across a large and geographically diverse country, online distribution provides the most feasible means of reaching participants from different regions, including both coastal and interior universities. Second, voluntary participation ensures that respondents are self-selected based on their interest in and reflection upon the topic of language and identity, which is crucial for obtaining rich and thoughtful responses. Finally, the online format allows participants to answer the questionnaire or engage in interviews at their convenience, reducing social desirability bias that might occur in face-to-face settings where participants feel pressured to provide socially acceptable responses.

### **2.1.3.3 The Sample Size**

The final sample consisted of 112 respondents to the questionnaire and 16 interview participants. Among the 112 questionnaire respondents, there were 45 undergraduate students (Licence, years 1-3), 55 Master's level students (years 1-2), and 12 PhD students (years 1-3+). Such distribution across different academic levels enabled the investigation of the effect of identity negotiation depending on the level of exposure to EFL. Whereas, the interview sample included 16 participants including both PhD students and EFL teachers considered lifelong students.



**Figure 2.** *Distribution of Study Participants Across Data Collection Methods and Academic Levels.*

## 2.1.4 The Research Instruments

### 2.1.4.1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to explore participants' identity perceptions, language investment, and feelings of belonging in relation to EFL learning. It allowed the collection of standardized data from a relatively large sample, facilitating the identification of patterns and correlations that might not be visible in small-scale qualitative research. The questionnaire comprised four sections with a total of 14 questions. Section One collected demographic and linguistic background information, including age, gender, wilaya of origin, academic level, languages spoken at home, and self-reported English proficiency level.

Section Two contained eight Likert-scale items measuring identity-related attitudes and experiences, using a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. These items explored four thematic dimensions: global connection and professional opportunities; emotional expression and linguistic displacement; cultural practices and identity change; and local identity maintenance.

Section Three contained four open-ended questions designed to elicit narrative responses that complement the Likert-scale data. These questions asked participants to describe how learning English changed their self-perception, the role of local culture in their identity negotiation, specific local expressions they had abandoned, and cultural practices they had questioned or defended due to English influence. Section Four examined classroom experiences, including teacher and peer influence and the role of curriculum content in shaping identity.

#### 2.1.4.1.1 The Questionnaire Development and Revision

The development of the questionnaire followed a sequential process involving pilot testing and revision. The initial questionnaire was designed based on existing literature on

language and identity, particularly drawing on Norton's (2013) concept of investment, Pavlenko's (2001) work on the multilingual self, and Kramsch's (2009) theorization of the third space. Items were adapted from established instruments in SLA research while being modified to reflect the specific Algerian context.

The first distribution of the questionnaire functioned as a pilot phase yielding 67 responses. Analysis of these pilot data revealed limitations that necessitated revision. The pilot revealed missing dimensions in the initial instrument. Specifically, there was insufficient attention to the pedagogical context and classroom experience. Therefore, additional items were included addressing participants' experiences inside EFL classrooms, such as their teachers or peer influence on their learning and the role of the curriculum in shaping their identity. Following these revisions, the questionnaire was redistributed. The revised instrument was administered to a final sample of 112 participants and generated more balanced response distributions and improved construct validity.

#### **2.1.4.2 The Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both students (PhD level) and teachers, who were treated as lifelong learners. The interviews allowed access to participants' narratives, identity positioning, and meaning-making processes in ways that standardized questionnaires cannot capture. While questionnaires reveal what participants think, interviews illuminate how they think about it; the interpretive frameworks, emotional resonances, and narrative strategies through which they make sense of their language learning experiences. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in following up on unexpected themes or particularly rich responses, while ensuring that all key topics were addressed with each participant. This format is particularly appropriate for identity research, as it respects participants' agency in constructing their own narratives while providing enough structure to enable cross-case comparison.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted online given the geographical dispersion of participants, and were organized into five thematic sections corresponding to the research questions and theoretical framework. Part One explored personal language learning histories and motivations, asking participants what initially motivated them to learn English and how they positioned English in relation to French and Arabic in their lives. Part Two examined self-perception and identity, including questions about whether participants felt like different people when using English and how they navigated emotional expression

across languages. Part Three investigated social dynamics and negotiation, exploring how English proficiency had changed participants' social interactions and how friends and family had reacted to perceived changes in their identity. Part Four focused on the pedagogical context, examining how teachers, peers, and curriculum content had influenced participants' sense of self and professional identity. Part Five concluded with future outlook, asking participants how they imagined English would influence their future personal and professional trajectories.

#### **2.1.4.3 The Document Analysis**

Document analysis was employed to examine the institutional discourse that shapes and reflects expectations regarding learner identity. While questionnaires and interviews capture individual perceptions and experiences, curriculum analysis reveals the macro-level frameworks within which these experiences are situated. Educational documents such as program descriptions contribute to shaping institutional identity discourse by defining what constitutes legitimate knowledge, appropriate learner behaviour, and desirable outcomes of language learning. The analysis comprised a total of four program descriptions, selected from four Algerian universities (Representing different geographic regions: Bouira, Tlemcen, Guelma, and Béchar). The selection criteria were: (a) inclusion of English degree programs at different levels (undergraduate and graduate); (b) availability of complete documentation including program descriptions.

#### **2.1.5 Data Analysis**

##### **2.1.5.1 The Questionnaire Analysis**

Questionnaire data were analysed using a combination of descriptive statistics for closed-ended items and thematic coding for open-ended responses. For the Likert-scale items, results were analysed using descriptive statistical methods. Frequencies and percentages were calculated manually to summarize participants' responses, for each response category to identify general patterns in participants' attitudes. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to assess the central tendency and variability of responses. Correlation analyses examined relationships between demographic variables (such as proficiency level and academic year) and identity-related attitudes.

Responses to the four open-ended questions in Section Three were analysed using thematic coding. Initial codes were developed inductively from the data, then organized into themes corresponding to the theoretical frameworks. Particular attention was paid to narrative structure, positioning strategies, and affective markers. Given Algeria's complex multilingual

ecology, responses containing Arabic, Tamazight, French, or code-switched elements were preserved in their original form during analysis. This protocol recognizes that participants' language choices are themselves data, not merely vehicles for content but performances of the multilingual subject under investigation.

#### **2.1.5.2 The Interview Analysis**

Interview data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach. This method was chosen for its flexibility in identifying patterns across a relatively small dataset while remaining grounded in participants' own language and meanings. However, the analysis was explicitly informed by narrative inquiry principles, examining how participants construct coherent self-narratives across language learning experiences.

Phase One (Familiarization) involved repeated reading of transcripts to immerse the researcher in the data, with attention to temporal, social, and spatial dimensions of narrative experience. Phase Two (Initial Coding) entailed systematic coding of the entire dataset, preserving all code-switching, paralinguistic features, and emotional intensity markers. Phase Three (Theme Searching) involved collating codes into potential themes, organized according to the psychological, social, and spatial dimensions of identity transformation. Phase Four (Theme Review) examined the coherence of themes and their representation of the dataset as a whole. Phase Five (Theme Definition) produced clear definitions and names for each theme, with sub-themes identified where appropriate. Phase Six (Report Production) selected compelling extracts that demonstrated the complexity and prevalence of each theme, ensuring that analysis moved beyond description to interpretation.

#### **2.1.5.3 the Documents Analysis**

Program descriptions were analysed using a combination of critical discourse analysis and thematic content analysis. The analytical framework examined identity representation at three levels: discourse structure (how texts are organized and what is included or excluded), lexical and grammatical choices (how agency, responsibility, and identity are constructed through language), and intertextuality (how documents reference and position themselves in relation to other texts and discourses).

Additionally, the thematic content analysis followed a systematic coding procedure. First, all curriculum documents were read several times to gain familiarity with their content and structure. Then, initial codes were generated inductively from the data, focusing on both explicit

and implicit references to identity, culture, and language. These codes were later grouped into three main themes. The first theme ‘language positioning’ examines how English is presented in relation to Arabic, French, and Berber, and whether it is portrayed as replacing, complementing, or competing with local languages. The second theme ‘cultural norms and expectations’, explores whether the curriculum promotes native-speaker norms, acknowledges Algerian varieties of English, or encourages critical cultural engagement. The third theme ‘investment and returns analysis’ how the curriculum represents the benefits of learning English, including economic, social, cultural, and symbolic gains.

The fourth theme ‘student experience and professional trajectories’ examines how program descriptions structure student pathways through research training, professional preparation, and international integration, and how these institutional projections align with or diverge from students’ lived experiences. These themes were informed by key theoretical perspectives, including investment (Norton, 2013), the multilingual self (Pavlenko, 2001), and the concept of the third space (Kramsch, 2009), ensuring alignment with the study’s conceptual framework. This analysis was not merely descriptive but critical, examining how curriculum documents position learners within hierarchies of language and culture. Findings from curriculum analysis were integrated with questionnaire and interview data to show how institutional discourse intersects with individual experience.

#### **2.1.6 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles were maintained throughout the research process with particular attention to postcolonial research ethics given Algeria's colonial history and the study’s focus on identity in a context of linguistic power asymmetries.

1. Voluntary participation was ensured throughout the research. Participation was entirely voluntary, with no undue influence. The consent form explained the purpose of the research, the nature of participation, the use of data, and measures for ensuring confidentiality.
2. Strict anonymity was maintained for all data. No identifying information was collected in the questionnaire or the interview, and responses could not be traced back to individuals.
3. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, including the right to have their data removed up to the point of analysis. The procedure emphasized participants’ control over their involvement, ensuring ethical integrity in data collection and analysis.

## 2.2 Results and findings

### 2.2.1 Introduction

Chapter 03 presents the results and the key findings of this study, which investigates the relationship between English language learning and the construction of Algerian students' identity in multiple Algerian universities, in relation to the research questions: (1) how does EFL learning influence the identity re/construction of Algerian university students? (2) what role do classroom practices, peers, curricula, and teachers play in shaping these identity changes? And (3) how do learners negotiate tensions between their local linguistic identities and global English-speaking identities? Data were collected from three main sources, 112 respondents through a structured questionnaire, semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, and document analysis which included four official program descriptions.

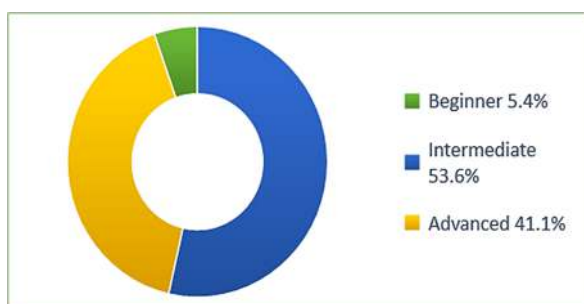
### 2.2 .2 Participants Profile

For this study, participants consisted of 112 university students enrolled in English language programs across multiple Algerian universities and the demographic Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. The sample included 73.2% females and 26.8% males and the majority (51.8%) were aged between 21-23 years old, followed by 25.9% aged 18-20 years old. Regarding the participants academic level, 40.2% were undergraduate students, while 59.8% were postgraduate students including 49.1% Master students and 10.7% PhD students.

Characteristics	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	30	26.8%
	Female	82	73.2%
Age	18-20	29	25.9%
	21-23	58	51.8%
	24-26	8	7.1%
	27+ Years	17	15.2%
Year of Study	Undergraduate years (1-3 Licence)	45	40.2%
	Master (years 1-2)	55	49.1%
	PhD (years 1-3+)	12	10.7%

**Table 1.** *Demographic Characteristics of Participants (Gender, Age, Year of Study)*

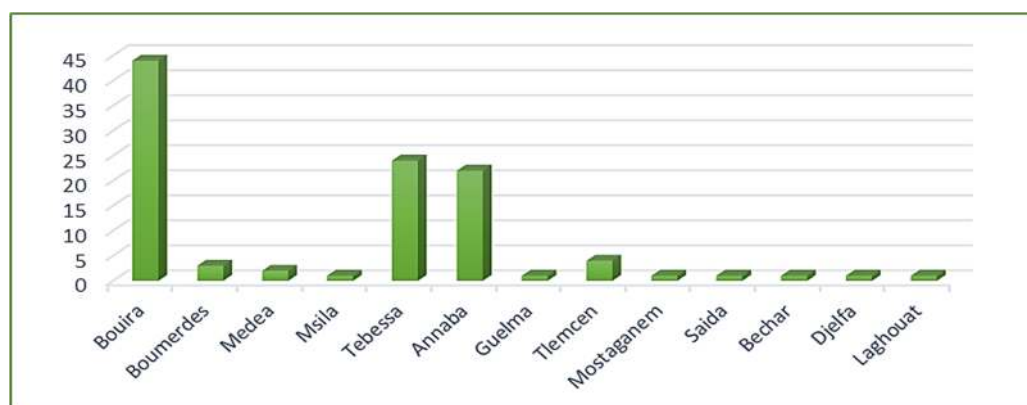
Concerning the English proficiency level of the respondents, different levels were reported, 5.4% indicating beginner level, 53.6% intermediate level, and 41.1% advanced level. As for the languages spoken at home, data shows that the participants majority speaks Arabic (85%), followed by French (26.8%), Berber (22.3%), and English (21.4%). Finally, the geographical distribution represents the participation of students from multiple Algerian wilayas, showing that most participants were from Bouira (39.29%), followed by Tebessa (21.43%) and Annaba (19.64%), while others (19.64%) were from different wilayas, Boumerdes, Tlemcen, Medea, Bechar.



**Figure 3.** *English Proficiency Level.*



**Figure 4.** *Languages Spoken at Home.*



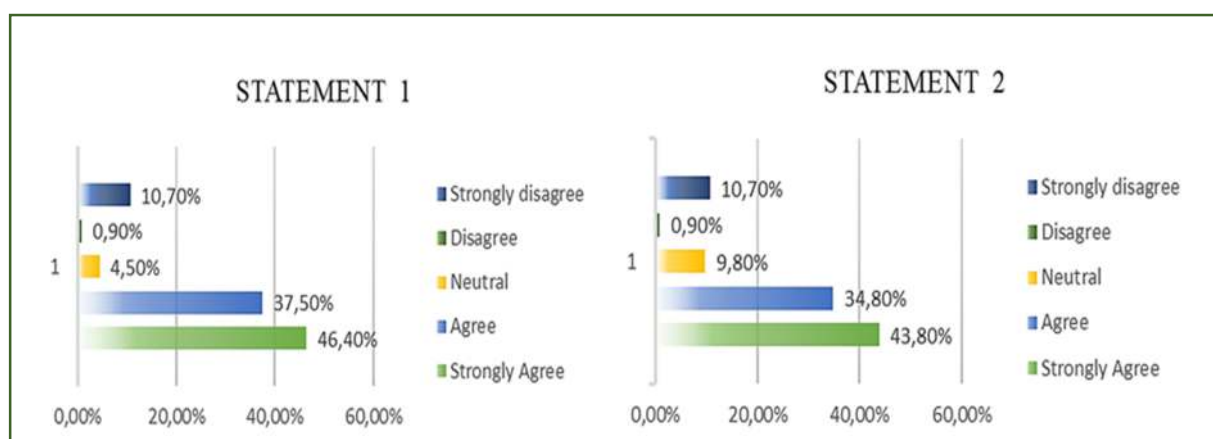
**Figure 5.** *Wilayas Distribution*

## 2.2.3 Questionnaire Findings

### 2.2.3.1 Global Identity and Opportunities

This section presents participants' perceptions of English learning regarding global connectedness and professional opportunities. The Likert-scale statements 1 (Learning English makes me feel more globally connected) and 2 (English proficiency enhances my professional 46.4% of the participants selected 'strongly agree' and 37.5% selected 'agree', yielding to a total of 83.9% participants who reported that English learning increased their sense of global belonging. On the contrary, 12 participants (10.7%) strongly disagreed, 5 (4.5%) were neutral, and only 1 (0.9%) disagreed. Regarding statement 2, the majority of the participants (78.6%)

including 49 (43.8%) who strongly agreed and 39 (34.8%) who agreed that English proficiency enhances their access to better professional opportunities. Negative responses included 12 participants (10.7%) who selected ‘strongly disagree’, 11 (9.8%) were neutral, and only 1 (0.9%) selected ‘disagree’.



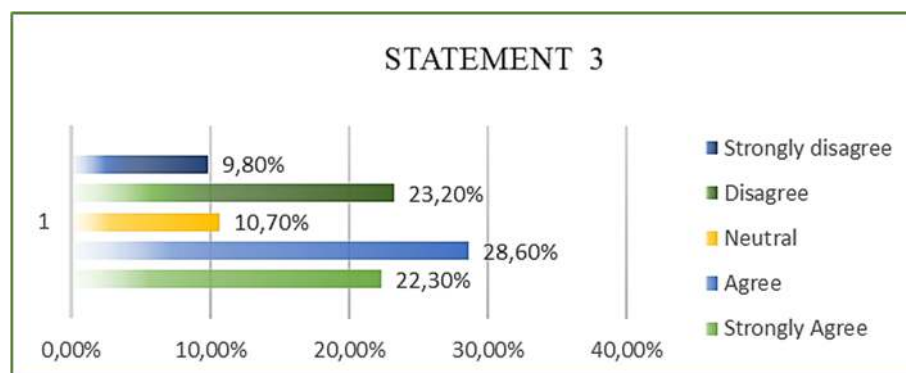
**Figure 6.** *Global Identity and Opportunities*

In addition, the open-ended question ( How has learning English influenced the way you see yourself ?) reported different responses including 57 participants (50.9%) who mentioned explicitly that English learning has increased their confidence and self-assurance such as “Learning English made me more confident in myself,” “ I feel like I can express my thoughts better and connect with people from different cultures,” “ It showed me that I am capable of learning and growing beyond my comfort zone,” and “ Learning English made me see myself as more adaptable and confident because I could express ideas in new ways.” Moreover, 34 participants (30.4%) described expanded perspectives and cultural awareness, with responses like “Learning English has made me see myself as more open-minded and connected to the world,” “I feel more cultured, especially I now know a lot about several cultures around the world” also “It opens new avenues for me.” The results indicate that the majority of participants associate English learning with enhanced global belonging and professional opportunities, while a substantial minority report increased confidence and expanded worldviews.

### **2.2 .3.2 Emotional Expression**

The data presented in this section is within the theme of the emotional dimensions of language use and the experience of empowerment and tension in English language contexts. Statement 3 (I feel less emotional intensity when I express love or anger in English than when I do in my mother tongue) has elicited different responses, 25 participants (22.3%) ‘strongly agree,’ 32 ‘agree’ (28.6%), 12 ‘neutral’ (10.7%), 26 ‘disagree’ (23.2%), and 11 ‘strongly

disagree' (9.8%). Combined positive responses were 50.9%, negative responses 33%, with 10.7% neutral.



**Figure 7.** *Emotional Expression*

Additionally, the open-ended question (How has learning English influenced the way you see yourself?) contained 23 participants (20.5%) who described emotional awareness and self-reflection through English. Some stated in their responses that English is “a detached language that will let you analyse logically your feelings,” “It made me more in tune with my emotions and mental health,” and “I can analyse myself in-depth because of the assistance of the language removing the cringe from the mother tongue.”

Another question (Describe a situation of empowerment and another of tension, discomfort or alienation when using English inside or outside the classroom) has contributed in collecting data regarding this theme. 62.5% respondents described empowerment situations including “I felt confident when I participated in class discussions and expressed my ideas successfully in English,” “When I explain an idea clearly in English and my classmates understand me, I feel proud,” and “When my family calls me to translate or explain something in English to them.” Other participants described tension and discomfort situations (37.5%) such as “When I use English in front of my friends, they make jokes or they say I am showing off which makes me feel awkward,” “I feel stressed whenever I speak English in front of people, especially when they are looking at me,” also “I felt nervous speaking English with fluent speakers online because I was worried about making mistakes.”

The collected results from the Likert-scale statement and the two questions reveal variability in emotional experiences using the English language. Approximately half of the participants view English as a language that helps them to express better their emotions and they perceive it as emotionally distancing. While minorities report both empowerment and tension when using English in different contexts.

### 2.2.3.3 Cultural Practices and Identity Change

The following section addresses data concerning the adoption of non-local cultural practices, change in linguistic behaviours and reflections on local customs. Quantitative data from statements 4, 5 and 7 demonstrate predominant resistance to cultural and linguistic abandonment. Statement 4 (Since studying English, I have started celebrating/observing cultural events that are not part of my local tradition) received 16 ‘strongly agree’ (14.3%), 21 ‘agree’ (18.8%), 22 ‘neutral’ (19.6%), 29 ‘disagree’ (25.9%), and 24 ‘strongly disagree’ (21.4%). Statement 5 (Because of learning English I now avoid using certain Algerian Arabic/Berber expressions that I used to use daily) received 15 ‘strongly agree’ (13.4%), 21 ‘agree’ (18.8%), 26 ‘neutral’ (23.2%), 31 ‘disagree’ (27.7%), and 19 ‘strongly disagree’ (17%). Statement 7 (I feel my local culture identity is challenged or changed by learning English) collected 9 ‘strongly agree’ (8%), 25 ‘agree’ (22.3%), 25 ‘neutral’ (22.3%), 29 ‘disagree’ (25.9%), and 24 ‘strongly disagree’ (21.4%). Combined negative responses exceeded positive responses for all three statements: statement 4 (47.3% negative vs. 33.1% positive), statement 5 (44.6% negative vs. 32.2% positive), and statement 7 (47.3% negative vs. 30.4% positive).

Categories	Statement 4	Statement 5	Statement 7
<b>Positive (strongly agree, agree)</b>	37 (33%)	36 (32.1%)	34 (30.4%)
<b>Neutral</b>	22 (19.6%)	26 (23.2%)	25 (22.3%)
<b>Negative (strongly disagree, disagree)</b>	53 (47.3%)	50 (44.6%)	53 (47.3%)

**Table 2.** *Cultural Practices and Identity Change*

Moreover, data within this theme was also collected through two open-ended questions. First, the question (Give one example of a local cultural practice you have questioned/defended more often because of something you read or heard in English) contained 34 specific examples of cultural practices questioned (30.4%) of total responses. 18 participants questioned gender roles and women’s rights; for instance, “traditional views about career choices and success” and “the social pressure on women,” 14 participants questioned marriage practices like arranged and early marriage, with statements as “I began questioning early arranged marriage after learning in English about the imports of women’s education and independence.” While others mentioned mental health stigma, and individual autonomy.

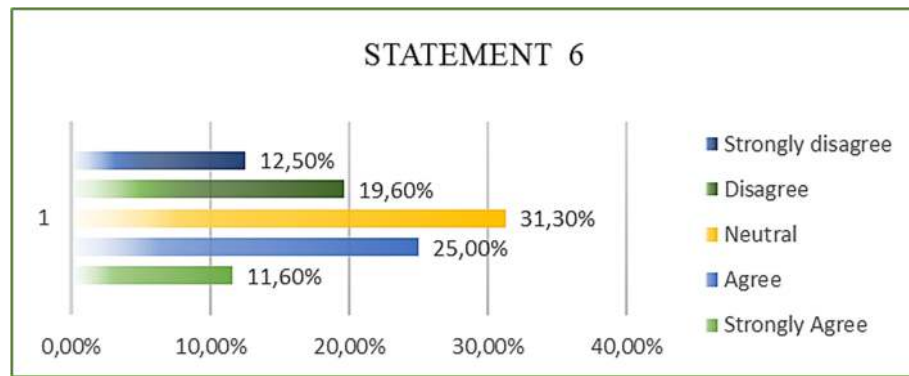
Simultaneously, 23 participants (20.5%) described defending local practices including ‘family closeness’ saying that “Appreciating familial bonds as they are not as important as in our

culture,” ‘hospitality and welcoming guests’ stating that “After learning English I realized how special our culture is in welcoming guests” and ‘sharing food with neighbours’ stating that “Learning about more individualistic cultures in English made me question why this practice, since many people elsewhere are more isolated, but it also helped me appreciate it as a way to strengthen communities and generosity.” Second, the question (List two expressions or proverbs you have stopped using since you began learning English, why?) received 47 answers (42%) identifying specific abandoned expressions. 19 respondents abandoned expressions suggesting fatalism or passivity and replacing them with English alternatives emphasizing agency such as “الصبر مفتاح الفرج patience is the key to relief, while I still value patience, I use this proverb less because English discourse frequently highlights action, initiative, and problem-solving. So now I tend to express ideas using English concepts like ‘taking action’ or ‘finding solutions’,” “اللي فات مات I use it less because English encourages talking about feelings and learning from past experiences.”

23 participants reported routine replacement of greeting and casual expressions with English equivalents for example “I use see you instead of bye-bye or من بعد,” “Instead of حسنا I use Okey and instead of شكرا I use thank you,” “Instead of Azul in Berber, I use Hi.” Other participants abandoned expressions based on their personal choice. The findings indicate that while majorities resist abandoning local cultural practices and linguistic expressions, significant minorities acknowledge cultural questioning and linguistic code-switching.

#### **2.2. 3.4 Local Identity Maintenance**

This section reports findings in relation to the role of local culture in maintaining identity when learning English. Data about this theme were collected through Statement 6 (I feel my local cultural identity is strengthened by learning English) and the open-ended question (What role does your local culture play in maintaining or changing your identity while learning English). Statement 6 generated evenly distributed responses, 13 selected ‘strongly agree’ (11.6%), 28 selected ‘agree’ (25%), 22 selected ‘disagree’ (19.6%), 14 selected ‘strongly disagree’ (12.5%), while neutral responses constituted the largest single category with 35 participants (31.3%).

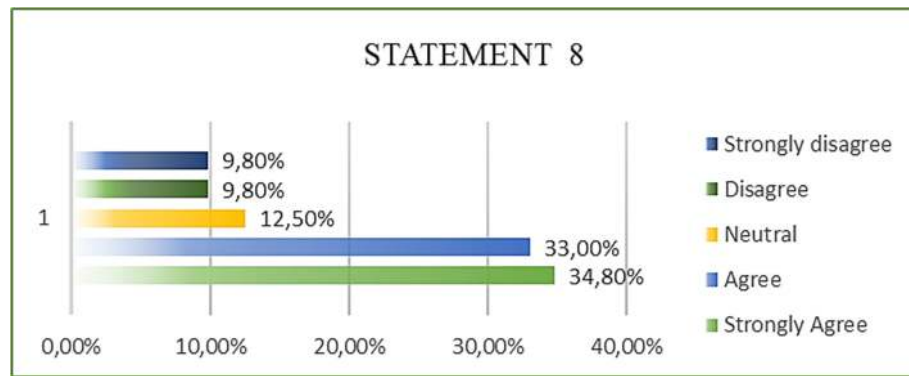


**Figure 8.** *Local Identity Maintenance.*

As for the question, fifty-five participants (49.1%) described their local culture as an anchor or foundation, using metaphors like “My local culture acts as an anchor: English expands my horizon, but my values decide the direction,” “My local culture provides core values,” and “My local culture acts like an anchor, it keeps me grounded in my roots.” Twenty-nine participants (25.9%) emphasized protective functions, stating “My local culture prevents me from becoming immersed in aspects that are contradictory with our values,” “It saves me from changing my mentality,” and “It keeps me grounded while learning English.” Eighteen participants (16.1%) articulated an additive model, describing English as “adds another part to my local culture,” and “adds to my identity rather than replacing it.” Ten participants (8.9%) indicated minimal or no role. The quantitative data reveal that neutral responses predominate regarding whether learning English strengthens local identity. While the qualitative responses demonstrate that local culture is predominantly conceptualized as an anchoring and protective force during learning English.

### 2.2 .3.5 English Media Engagement

The section provides results concerning English media consumption. Statement 8 (I consume most of my news/entertainment in English) contributed to the collection of responses for this theme. Participants demonstrated strong affirmative orientation: 39 strongly agreed (34.8%), 37 agreed (33%), 14 were neutral (12.5%), 11 disagreed (9.8%), as well as 11 strongly disagreed (9.8%). Combined positive responses reached 67.8% while negative responses accounted for 19.6%. The data indicate that approximately two-thirds of participants predominantly engage with English-language media content, suggesting substantial exposure to Anglophone cultural material outside formal educational contexts.

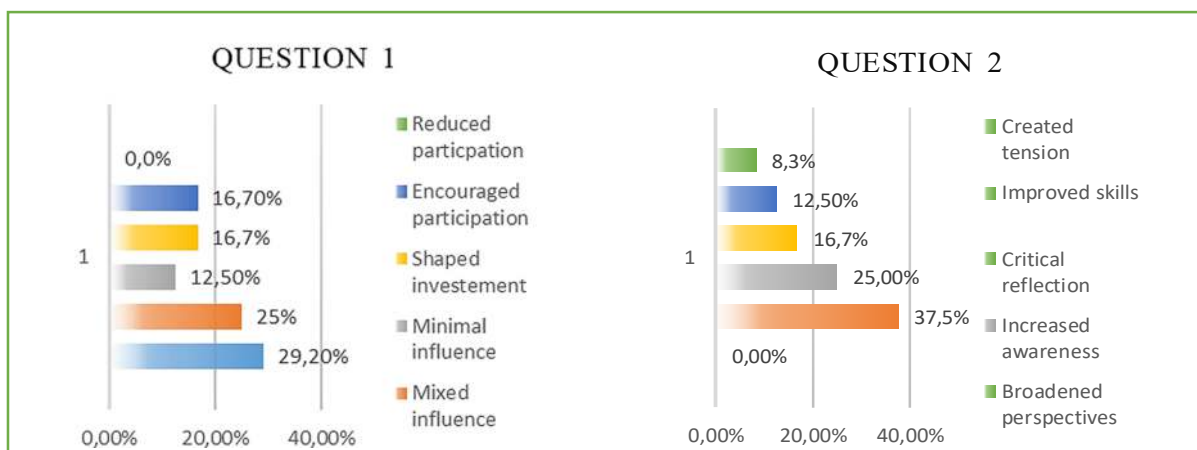


**Figure 9.** *English Media Engagement*

### 2.2 .3.6 Pedagogical and Social Influences

This section addresses findings in relation to the influence of teachers, peers, and curriculum contents on English learning and self-perception. This theme is informed by responses to the multiple-choice question 1 (How have your teachers and peers influenced your English learning and how you see yourself as a language user?), and the multiple-choice question 2 (What role did the content and the curriculum play in shaping your self-perception and sociocultural awareness?), the two questions were added to the questionnaire after revision. Question 1 has received 24 responses, 7 (29.2%) selected ‘They increased my confidence and helped me see myself as a competent English user’, 6 (25%) selected ‘Mixed influence depending on the situation (supportive at times, discouraging at others)’, 4 (16,7%) selected ‘They encouraged participation but also made me aware of my limitation’, 4 (16,7%) selected ‘Their attitudes strongly shaped how seriously I invested in learning English’, and 3 (12,5%) selected ‘ Their influence was minimal on my learning or self-perception’, while no participants has selected ‘ I often felt judged or anxious, which reduced my participation’ .

As for question 2, it has received 24 responses also, 9 (37.5%) of participants selected ‘It broadened my perspective but did not change my core identity’, 6 (25%) selected ‘It increased my awareness of global cultures and reshaped how I see myself’, 4 (16,7%) selected ‘It made me reflect more critically on both Algerian and foreign cultures’, 3 (12.5%) selected ‘It mainly improved my language skills without affecting my self-perception’, 2 (8.3%) selected ‘It created tension between my local culture and global perspectives’, and 0 participants selected ‘ It had little or no influence on my identity or sociocultural awareness’. The results demonstrate that teacher and peer influence appears predominantly confidence-enhancing though occasionally mixed, while curriculum content primarily broadens perspective without altering core identity.

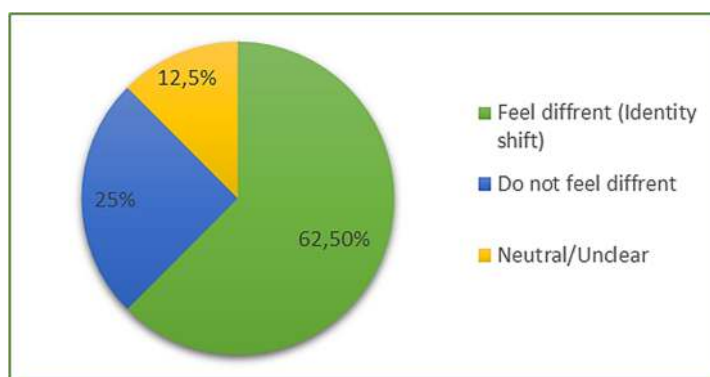


**Figure 10.** *Pedagogical and Social Influence*

## 2.2 .4 Interview Findings

### 2.2 .4.1 Identity Transformation Experiences

The section presents data regarding the participants' experiences of transforming their identity while using English and how they can feel like a different person. Responses were collected through question 4 (When you speak English, do you feel like a different person? If yes, can you describe a situation when this happened? How does it affect your emotions?). Among the 16 participants, 10 (62,5%) reported experiencing some form of identity shift when speaking English, while 4 participants (25%) explicitly denied feeling different, and 2 participants (12.5%) provided neutral or unclear responses.



**Figure 11.** *Distribution of Responses to Identify Transformation.*

Those who reported transformation, they described feeling more confident, assertive, or professional such as “When I gave presentations in English at university, I noticed that my tone and body language became more formal and confident than when I speak in Arabic or French. I felt like as though English gave me a professional identity...,” another response was: “I feel more assertive and direct when I speak English.” Some participants noted feeling more expressive or emotionally open “Sometimes it can feel like I am wearing a ‘mask’ of a more

outgoing personality,” and “During a class presentation, I spoke more confidently and clearly than I do in my native language, it made feel proud and more outgoing.” One participant emphasized determination and focus: “I feel determined and focused when using English.”

Among the participants who rejected the notion of identity transformation; they stated: “I contend that speaking any other language is itself a purely linguistic and intellectual act, it has never that nature of changing one’ own identity,” or “No, not really.” The results reveal that the majority of participants experience some degree of identity transformation when using English, ranging from increased confidence and professionalism to emotional expressiveness; however, a significant minority maintain that English functions purely as a communicative tool without altering their core identity.

## 2.2 .4.2 Language and Emotional Expression

The following section addresses the contexts in which participants feel comfortable or uncomfortable using English and how these situations affect their emotional states. For this theme results were collected from question 3 (In what contexts do you feel most comfortable using English? And in what contexts do you feel least comfortable?), question 11 (Describe a situation of empowerment and another of tension, discomfort or alienation when using English inside and/or outside the classroom?), and question 7 (Describe an experience where English proficiency made you feel empowered, this could be in work, study, or daily life).

Question 3 asked participants about their comfort levels in different contexts, 7 participants (43.8%) identified academic or professional contexts as where they feel most comfortable, 5 participants (31.3%) cited informal or casual settings, 3 participants (18.8%) mentioned teaching contexts, and 1 participant (6.3%) stated feeling comfortable in all contexts. Regarding least comfortable contexts, 6 participants (37.5%) identified formal presentations or public speaking, 4 participants (25%) mentioned specific vocabulary domains, 3 participants (18.8%) cited informal/cultural situations, 2 participants (12.5%) noted unfamiliar social settings, and 1 participant (6.3%) expressed discomfort when expressing emotions due to potential inappropriate language use.

Context Categories	Examples	%
Academic/Professional	University presentations, Classroom discussions	43.8%
Informal/Casual	Online chats, Friends, Social media	31.3%
Teaching specifically	University classrooms, Learner interaction	18.8%
All contexts	/	6.3%

**Table 3.** *Comfortable Contexts for English Use*

Contest Categories	Examples	%
Academic/Professional	Presentations and discussions, Thesis defences, Specialized vocabulary domains; Teaching	62.5%
Informal/Cultural situations	Conversations with natives, Slang, Idioms, Cultural references	18.8%
Unfamiliar social settings	Interacting in environments where English is a foreign language	12.5%
Emotional Expression	Expressing anger or frustration	6.3%

**Table 4.** *Uncomfortable Contexts for English Use.*

One participant described comfort in academic precision: “I feel most comfortable using English in academic contexts, such as reading research articles, writing essays, or giving presentations, because the language feels precise and structured in those settings.” Another participant contrasted academic comfort with daily communication challenges: “On one hand, I feel myself at ease when discussing literary, cultural and social issues, because I am well-versed in these topics.

On the other hand, I find things not smooth when dealing with the very daily topics because we do not employ English a lot in our personal communications.” Several participants noted anxiety in performance contexts: “I feel comfortable when talking to native speakers I feel like they are more tolerant and the main aim of using English is to communicate. However, I feel least comfortable when presenting or participating in classroom’s discussions, I feel overwhelmed and fearful of judgment.” For some teaching contexts provided comfort: “I feel comfortable when I am at university teaching it or with people who are willing to learn it outside the teaching context. However, I cannot use it with unfamiliar people because it is considered as a foreign not second language.” One participant expressed universal comfort: “I feel comfortable using it everywhere. I don't think I have ever felt not comfortable using the language.”

On the other hand, questions 11 and 7 provided additional insights into empowerment versus tension experiences. Majority of participants described both empowerment and tension situations. Empowerment situations included: presenting research, speaking with native speakers without hesitation, official meetings with government officials, helping tourists, and successful communication. Tension situations included: spontaneous discussions with native speakers, thesis defence stress, and fear of showing off in public. One participant described both poles: “A situation of empowerment I experienced when using English was during a group project at

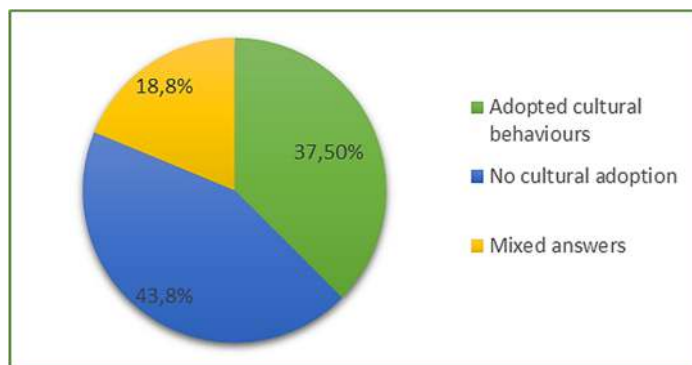
university. The team included students from different countries, and English was the only common language. I was able to explain my ideas clearly, coordinate tasks, and even help resolve misunderstandings. That moment made me feel capable and proud... On the other hand, I once felt tension and discomfort when trying to join a casual conversation with native speakers outside the classroom. They used a lot of slang and cultural references that I didn't fully understand, and I felt excluded and hesitant to speak."

Another participant noted: "Empowerment situation is when I spoke to a native speaker and did not pause nor hesitated. A tension moment is when I defended my thesis in front of the jury and I was stressed I would make mistakes." The data indicate that emotional experiences with English are highly context-dependent, with academic and teaching settings generally providing comfort while performance and informal native-speaker interactions generate more anxiety.

### **2.2 .4.3 Cultural Negotiation**

The section presents findings concerning participants' adoption of cultural attitudes from English-speaking countries and how they negotiate between global and local cultural identities, including their perception of English in relation to other languages they speak. Data were collected through the participants' responses to three questions: question 2, question 5, and question 13. Question 2 (How do you view English in relation to French and Arabic in your academic and personal life?) sought to explore participants' perception of English. Some participants described English as a complementary bridge: "I see English as a bridge language that complements both French and Arabic...together these three languages form a powerful trio." Other participants noted functional differentiation between the three languages: "It is basically my second language while my mother tongue is Arabic and French is an extra language that I speak for the sake of my environment." Some emphasized English dominance globally and others reported that it became a very important language.

On the other hand, question 5 (Have you noticed yourself adopting any cultural attitudes, habits, or behaviours from English-speaking countries? If yes, please give examples) provides deep insights and results within the theme. Of 16 participants, 7 (43.8%) explicitly denied adopting cultural attitudes from English-speaking countries, 6 (37.5%) acknowledged adopting specific behaviours or communication styles, and 3 (18.8%) gave mixed or qualified responses. The responses of the participants who acknowledged adoption mentioned politeness expressions, gestures and facial expression, sarcasm and humour, and academic writing structures.



**Figure 12.** *Cultural Adoption from English-speaking Countries*

One participant described different adaptations: “I have become more comfortable with direct communication, since English often values clarity and straightforwardness compared to the indirect style sometimes used in Arabic or French. I also picked up the habit of saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ frequently, which reflects the politeness norms in English-speaking cultures. Another change is in academic work: I have adopted the practice of structuring essays with clear introductions, thesis statements, and conclusions, which is a very English-language academic style.” Another participant noted specific behavioural changes: “One example is sarcasm or telling jokes, I feel that I am influenced by the way English people tell jokes. Another example is kindness, I am clearly influenced by the way they treat each other, say thank you, sorry, excuse me to show respect.” Some participants adopted only linguistic elements without cultural change: “I have only noticed that I unconsciously use English words in my everyday conversations. For example, I often say ‘hello’ or other English greetings, even when speaking in my native language. but nothing related to culture or habits.” Whereas, a significant portion resisted cultural influence: “I am selective especially when it comes to culture because it can affect religion. I can copy how language is spoken, pronounced but not culture.”

In addition, responses to question 13 (Is there anything else you would like to share about your language learning identity?) reinforced the theme of cultural negotiation. 8 participants (50%) emphasized maintaining local identity while learning English, 4 participants (25%) described English as adding a new layer to identity, 2 participants (12.5%) focused on intellectual benefits without cultural change, and 2 participants (12.5%) provided negative responses. One participant emphasized balanced identity stating that “Learning English or any other language should reinforce one’s linguistic identity which will offer the opportunity to live in an intercultural world, but it should never lead to acceleration or a total shift from original self.” Another described additive identity: “I see myself as a bridge between my local community and the world. Learning English has not replaced my original identity, but rather

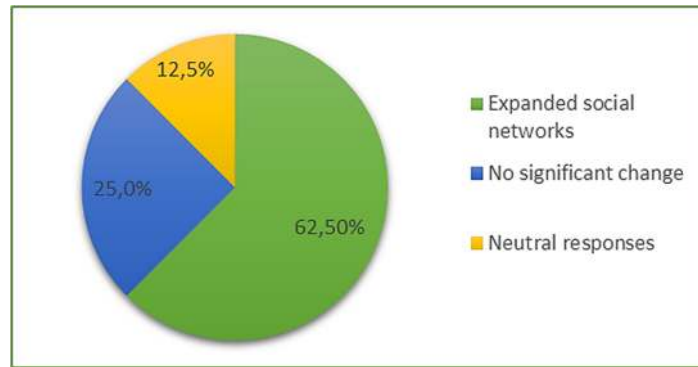
added a new ‘layer’ to it that makes me feel more versatile,” and a third participant cautioned against cultural appropriation reporting: “Unlike my case, I notice that some people learn the culture before the language when it comes to dressing up like them, having their intonation and doing their habits like celebrating their holidays but they have limited language proficiency and that is very wrong.”

The data indicate that participants negotiate cultural influences selectively. Most of the participants adopt specific behaviours or communication styles, while they consciously maintain their core cultural identity. Additionally, English is used as a tool for global engagement rather than cultural replacement, and positioned as complementary rather than replacing Arabic and French in their linguistic repertoire.

#### **2.2 .4.4 Social and Academic Influences**

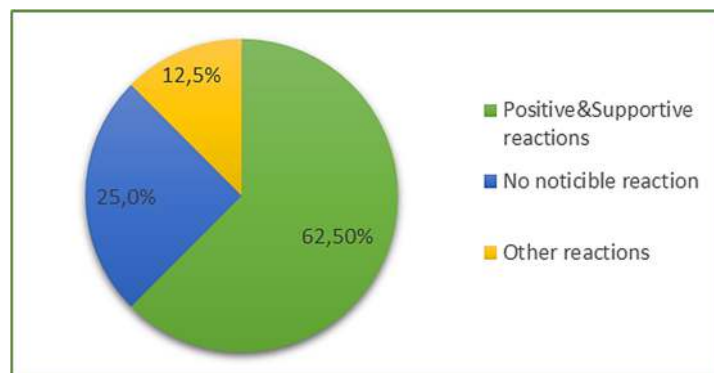
The present section explores how different social networks, teachers, peers, colleagues, and students have played a role in shaping participants’ language learning experiences and their social identities. Regarding the social influences, data were collected through question 6 and question 8. Whereas results concerning the academic influences were obtained from responses to question 1, question 9, and question 10.

First, responses in relation to the social influences were generated through question 6 (How has learning English changed the type of people you interact with or the conversations you have?) examined changes in social interaction patterns. Of 16 participants, 10 participants (62.5%) reported that English expanded their social networks or conversation topics. Some participants mentioned connecting with international or diverse people such as “It has allowed me to connect with classmates, teachers, and professionals from different countries who do not speak Arabic or French,” and others mentioned academic network expansion: “English has completely diversified my social circle. I now interact with people from different countries through online forums and professional networks. Our conversation have shifted from local topics to global issues.” 4 participants (25%) denied significant change in their social interaction: “Learning English has not really changed the type of people I interact with and the conversation I have. However, I now like to talk more with classmates or friends who are interested in English,” and 2 (12.5%) participants provided neutral responses.



**Figure 13.** *Shifts in Interaction Patterns and Conversation Types After Learning English.*

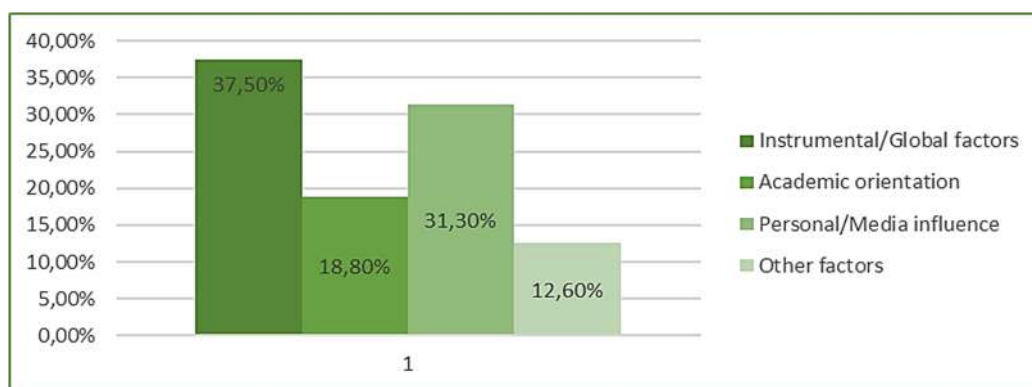
In addition, question 8 (How have your friends or family reacted to changes they have noticed in you since you became more proficient in English?) aimed to address the role of social feedback from family and friends. 9 participants (56.3%) reported positive and supportive reactions from family and friends, with some starting: “My friends and family have reacted quite positively to the changes they’ve noticed in me since I became more proficient in English. They often comment on how my confidence has grown, especially when I’m able to explain ideas or translate for them in situations where English is needed. Some of my friends admire that I can access international content—like movies, articles, or online discussions—and share it with them, which makes me feel proud,” and “My family is very proud; they often ask me to translate documents or movies for them. They see my English proficiency as a sign of success and hard work.” 4 participants (25%) reported no noticeable reaction or change such as “I do not think they have noticed any change as I never communicate with them in English,” 2 participants (12.5%) described friends imitating or being influenced by them, and 1 participant (6.3%) provided a neutral response.



**Figure 14.** *Social Reactions to Linguistic Development: Perspectives from Family and Friends.*

Second, responses to question 1 (What motivated you to start learning English?) provided insights concerning the academic influences. 6 participants (37.5%) cited instrumental/global factors (dominance, utility, international reach) such as “My main motivation was a desire to

connect with different cultures. Learning English allows me to communicate with people from all over the world, understand global media without translations, and gain a deeper perspective on diverse sociocultural backgrounds,” 5 participants (31.3%) mentioned personal fascination or enjoyment and media influence (books, movies): “For me personally, the motivation came from a love of the language and the desire to read great works in their original language and watch movies.” 3 participants (18.8%) noted academic orientation or university requirements. 1 participant (6.3%) mentioned teacher and media influence, and another (6.3%) cited travel aspirations.



**Figure 15.** *Motivation for Learning English Among Participants.*

Another question that contributed to the collection of data is question 9 (How have your teachers, peers, colleagues or students influenced your language learning, confidence, and sense of identity when using English?). Majority of participants reported positive influences on confidence and identity, including encouragement from classmates, professional challenges from classmates, and inspiration from students. One participant described multiple influences: “My classmates, colleagues, and students influence my confidence and identity in English in very meaningful ways. When I interact with classmates, their encouragement and shared struggles remind me that learning is a collective journey, which boosts my confidence. Colleagues often challenge me to use English in professional contexts, helping me see myself as capable and competent in academic or workplace settings. My students, on the other hand, inspire me to model good English use; teaching them reinforces my own skills and makes me proud of my progress.” Another noted early teacher influence: “To be honest, I have been autonomous since I was a child when it comes to English, but my middle school teachers really supported me to learn more and more and they used to read my short stories that I wrote in English.”

Moreover, question 10 (How has the content of your English courses (Textbooks, topics, examples) affected your view of Algerian culture and your own identity?) also collected responses regarding the theme of academic influences. Some participants reported that English

course content prompted reflection on and appreciation of Algerian culture: “The content of my English courses has influenced the way I view Algerian culture and my own identity in interesting ways. Textbooks and topics often highlight global issues, literature, and cultural practices from English-speaking countries, which makes me reflect on how Algerian traditions compare and what makes them unique... This comparison has helped me appreciate my culture more deeply, while also seeing myself as part of a wider, interconnected world,” or “The content of my English courses, especially the textbooks and topics focused on Western contexts, made me more aware of cultural differences. It encouraged me to reflect more critically on other cultures and my own identity.” Others expressed dissatisfaction with outdated textbooks, while 1 participant denied any effect on culture or identity stating explicitly: “No they did not affect my culture and identity.”

Question	Examples from Participants Responses
Question 9 (teachers, peers, colleagues, and student influence)	Teacher support, Peer encouragement, Professional challenges from colleagues, Student inspiration
Question 10 (content of English courses influence)	Cultural reflection on identity, Critical awareness of cultural differences, Concerns about outdated textbook materials

**Table 5.** *Impact of Teachers, Peers, and Course Content on Participants’ Language Development and Identity.*

The data related to this theme demonstrate that social and academic networks play a crucial role in shaping participants’ language confidence and identity. On the one hand, family and friends’ reactions that offer an important emotional support and validation, and on the other hand, teachers, colleagues, and students who provide positive influence.

## 2.2 .5 Document Analysis Findings

### 2.2..5.1 Institutional Representation of English

This section presents data from four Algerian university program descriptions. Bouira University’s *Master Didactique et Langues Appliquées* (2025/2026), Tlemcen University’s *Licence Langue Anglaise* (2015-2016), Béchar University’s *Master Langue et Culture* (2016-2017), and Guelma University’s *Master Didactique des Langues Étrangères* (2014-2015). The findings illustrate how English is institutionally framed as an academic discipline across different degree levels and geographical contexts.

The Bouira University Master’s program *Didactique et Langues Appliquées* (2025-2026)

represents English through applied linguistics and language pedagogy, positioning it as a discipline oriented toward educational practice and technological innovation “*Formation à Distance*” favouring “*le mode virtuel via les plateformes tel que Moodle.*” The program aims to “consolidate communicative and written language,” “recognize and distinguish key concepts in foreign language didactics,” and “developing skills in producing multimedia teaching materials.” It explicitly connects to “*les réformes pédagogiques engagées par le Ministère de l’Education Nationale,*” targeting formation of “*des acteurs sociaux dans plusieurs domaines à l’instar de l’économie, le journalisme, la traduction et l’interprétariat, le marketing, les sciences de la communication ainsi que les métiers artistiques,*” with particular emphasis on digital competencies for “*l’enseignement interactif de l’Anglais,*” , positioning graduates to lead innovation in digital language education.

The Tlemcen University Licence’s program *Langue Anglaise* (2015-2016) represents English as a discipline that combines linguistic competence with literary and civilizational knowledge. According to the program description, it “ *vise à offrir une formation de base dans le domaine des littératures et des civilisations du monde anglophone en plus de l’objectif primaire qui est celui de développer des aptitudes linguistiques permettant à l’étudiant de s’exprimer clairement dans la langue anglaise aussi bien à l’écrit qu’à l’oral.*” The curriculum emphasizes learner autonomy and group work skills “*consolider des techniques d’apprentissage qui privilégient, d’une part, l’autonomie de l’étudiant dans la réalisation de ses travaux et l’esprit de travail en groupe.*” The program explicitly states that “a final objective is obviously the alignment of the Algerian university system with the current international system and, through this, openness to the world of research and the ease of integration of our students into foreign universities.” Employment-oriented objectives include the stated goal to “offer a diploma responding to demand in the job market in which the English language is taking on unprecedented importance” and to “meet needs for English language in certain sectors, particularly tourism and intercultural fields, globalization requirements,” this pragmatic orientation signals that the program of Tlemcen University responds to labour market demands.

The Béchar University Master’s program *Langue et Culture* (2016-2017), positions English within a broader framework of language and culture studies. The program description states that “the main goal is to train teachers mastering aspects related to the culture and linguistics of English-speaking countries; as well as specialists capable of serving.” The curriculum mobilizes multiple disciplines, as the document explains the training of graduates in the Master of Language and Culture: “*la formation de diplômés en Master de Langue et Culture,*

*met l'accent sur une bonne connaissance de l'approche linguistique de l'Anglais et mobilise d'autres disciplines, comme l'histoire des pays anglophones, la didactique de l'Anglais, sociologie, la littérature, etc.*" The program aims to form "multidisciplinary didacticians who master both the English language and its different linguistic approaches, as well as the aspects inherent to English and African." This interdisciplinary and geographically expansive vision distinguishes the program from more narrowly conceived language degrees.

The Guelma University Licence's program *Langue Anglaise* (2014-2015) represents English as a research-oriented discipline within the LMD framework, aiming to "*assurer une formation générale destinée aux étudiants à vocation de chercheur*" as "a first step before the Master's and Doctorate." The curriculum organizes English studies around three axes—language, civilizations, and literature—with the objective of consolidating competencies for subsequent research engagement. The program emphasizes "knowing how to formulate scientific reasoning, orally and in writing, in," "training oneself in the collective dimension of research," and "training in academic rigor and intellectual judgment." Employment-oriented objectives include pathways to "*Enseignement de l'Anglais dans les différents secteurs de l'éducation nationale,*" "*Enseignement de l'Anglais technique dans les entreprises nationales et privées,*" and "rapid integration into the modern communication circuit (media, advertising, Internet)," these multiple exit routes reflect the program's deliberate balance between scholarly precision and occupational adaptability.

## **2.2 .5.2 Cultural and Identity Discourses**

This section addresses findings concerning how programs construct and transmit cultural and identity content, revealing distinct approaches to embedding civilizational knowledge and intercultural competence within their curricula. First, Bouira's program incorporates cultural and identity content through its emphasis on intercultural communication and sociolinguistic dimensions. The module of Culture, Language and Communication addresses the relationship between language, culture, and communication, examining "Edward T. Hall: High-context vs. Low-context Cultures," "Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory," and "Language and Social Identity (Gender, Ethnicity, Class, Age)." The curriculum engages with critical perspectives on "Language and Power: Institutional Discourse, Political Language" and "Linguistic Human Rights," alongside "Multilingualism, Code-switching, and Bilingual Identities." The Sociolinguistics module examines "Language Variation and Social Identity" and "Language Attitudes and Stereotypes," while Language Didactics emphasizes "Intercultural Competence in Language Teaching" and "Promoting Cultural Awareness through Language Education,"

constructing English as embedded in complex social, cultural, and power relations.

Second, the Tlemcen program incorporates cultural content through modules such as Study of Civilisation Texts, which the document states “enabling students to immerse themselves in the English language within its historical and cultural context.” The British Civilization component covers lectures about “the British Culture of the Beginning of the 20th Century,” “The First World War Period,” “Post First World War and the Twenties,” “Culture of the Thirties,” “The British Participation in the Second World War,” “The Wave of Independencies,” and “End of Empire.” The Parallel American Civilization content addresses “America Enters the 20th Century,” “The American Participation in the Great War,” “Post First World War and the Age of Disillusion,” “The Isolationism Period and the Roaring Twenties,” “The Age of Depression,” “Roosevelt and the New Deal,” “America and the New World Order,” “The Clash of Civilizations,” and “The 21st Century America.” The program links language learning to cultural immersion, as *“l’étudiant est formé pour acquérir des compétences linguistiques qui lui permettent non seulement de rédiger des compositions, des articles et des lettres dans cette langue, mais aussi de comprendre en parallèle les cultures et civilisations des pays anglophones,”* which is an approach that binds linguistic mastery inseparably to cultural understanding.

Third, the Béchar Master’s program distributes civilization content across three semesters with dedicated modules for British, American, and African civilizations. The British civilization content spans from “Roman Britain” through “The Normans,” “Medieval Britain,” “The Tudors,” “The Stuart Era,” and “The Industrial Revolution.” The American civilization module addresses “The Age of Discovery,” “The American Constitution,” “The American Civil War,” “The Depression of 1929,” and “The Civil Rights Movement.” The African civilization component includes “The Races of Africa,” “The Kushites,” “The Slave Trade,” “European Exploration 1770-1870,” and “The Colonial.” The program additionally offers Cultural Studies module examining “Western Cultural Studies” with attention to “British Tradition,” “American Culture and Identity,” “Ethnicity and Immigration,” and “African Cultural Studies” with “particular attention to North Africa.” This deliberate geographical expansion challenges the conventional privileging of Anglo-American narratives within English degree programs.

Finally, the program of Guelma’s university incorporates cultural content through dedicated Civilization modules examining “The Context of Political Life in Britain and the United States,” including “Political ideas, Institutions and Values,” “Constitutional Principles,” and “The Health of Democracy on Both Sides of the Atlantic.” The Semester 6 module addresses

“Governance Beyond the Centre,” comparing “The British Unitary and American Federal Systems,” political parties, and “Democracy in Theory and Practice.” Literary studies engage post-colonial perspectives through “Focus on Post-Colonial Theory” with case studies of novels, and examine “Minor literature” including “American minor literatures” such as Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple*, providing critical tools for analysing questions of identity, race, and cultural representation.

### **2.2.5.3 Alignment with Students’ Experiences**

The section presents results in relation to how university programs structure student experiences in ways that intersect with processes of cultural and identity transformation, examining how curricular design, professional training, and pedagogical encounters position students to navigate shifting linguistic, cultural, and professional identities. The program of Bouira structures student experience around research methodology, technological competency development, and professional preparation across four semesters, with the fourth semester “entirely devoted to carrying out research, culminating in the production of a dissertation.” A distinctive feature is heavy emphasis on technological competencies: “Free and Open-Source Software,” “Computer Programming,” and “Artificial Intelligence.” Professional pathways target “*Secteur de l’enseignement public*,” “*Secteur de l’enseignement privé*,” “*Ingénierie pédagogique - multimédia - e-Learning*,” and “*Domaine de la radio, de la publicité, et du marketing*,” with particular emphasis on forming graduates “*aptes à réaliser des plates-formes didactiques destinés à l’enseignement interactif de l’Anglais*” in response to the growing demand for digitally competent language educators.

The Tlemcen Licence’s program structures student experience around developing four language competencies. The document states that “The student will be required to achieve a satisfactory level in both written and oral skills, as well as an exemplary understanding of discourse in this language.” The curriculum provides pathways to further study, as it aims to offer the opportunity to continue the Master’s studies: “*donner aux étudiants l’occasion de poursuivre des études de Master dans différentes spécialités comme les sciences du Langage, littérature et civilisation, traduction et les sciences de la communication*.” Professional preparation includes “*Préparation aux Concours d’Enseignement* (Middle/Secondary Education), “Master’s/Doctorate,” and “Academic Research” as the intended destination for students demonstrating exceptional scholarly aptitude.

The Béchar Master’s program addresses what it describes as “*un énorme déficit en matière d’enseignants capables*” in secondary education, aspiring to reduce the gap by preparing

students for teaching: “*contribuer un tant soit peu à combler ce déficit, en formant nos étudiants aux métiers de l’enseignement et de la recherche.*” Additional professional pathways include “*traduction littéraire, professions culturelles impliquant la connaissance approfondie de la langue, de la littérature, de la civilisation et des arts des pays anglophones (presse, audiovisuel, documentation, musées, institutions culturelles, communication).*” The fourth semester consists entirely of apprenticeship “*tribunal, notaire, traducteur assermenté, entreprise sanctionnée par un mémoire,*” enabling students to “apply the teaching tools they have learned and become familiar with their future work environment,” thereby ensuring that academic preparation translates into professional competence.

Finally, Guelma’s program structures student experience around intensive research methodology training and professional preparation within a six-semester. Professional pathways include “*la possibilité d’exercer la fonction d’enseignant (établissements secondaires et moyens, ambassades, centres culturels),*” “*celui de formateur,*” and “*l’industrie du tourisme,*” supported by an apprenticeship with opportunities at “*tribunal, notaire, traducteur assermenté, entreprise.*” The program maintains international partnerships with University of Lille, University of Strasbourg, and University of Limoges, and emphasizes “*l’étroite coopération entre le département des lettres et des langues et des institutions éducatives,*” a strategy that expands graduate opportunities across diverse employment sectors.

## **2.2.6 Conclusion: Integrated Findings (Triangulation)**

This chapter has presented findings from multiple data sources examining the relationship between English language learning and identity construction among Algerian university students. The integration of questionnaire data from 112 participants, semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, and analysis of four official university program documents reveals several consistent patterns across the study.

The quantitative data from the questionnaire demonstrate that English learning contributed to an expanded sense of global identification among participants. A substantial majority (83.9%) reported that English learning increased their sense of global belonging, while 78.6% associated English proficiency with enhanced professional opportunities. Furthermore, 67.8% of participants indicated predominant engagement with English-language media, suggesting significant exposure to Anglophone cultural content outside formal educational contexts. Emotional experiences with English varied considerably: approximately half of the participants (50.9%) viewed English as a language enabling emotional distancing and logical

self-analysis, while 62.5% described situations of empowerment and 37.5% reported experiences of tension or discomfort when using English in different social contexts.

Regarding cultural identity, questionnaire findings indicate that majorities resisted abandoning local cultural practices and linguistic expressions, with negative responses exceeding positive responses on statements concerning cultural abandonment (47.3% versus 33.1% for Statement 4), linguistic avoidance (44.6% versus 32.2% for Statement 5), and perceived identity challenge (47.3% versus 30.4% for Statement 7). However, significant minorities acknowledged cultural questioning (30.4%) and linguistic code-switching (42%), particularly in relation to expressions suggesting fatalism or passivity. Local culture was predominantly conceptualized as an anchoring and protective force during English learning, with 49.1% describing their local culture as an anchor or foundation, and 25.9% emphasizing its protective functions. Teacher and peer influence appeared predominantly confidence-enhancing (29.2%), while curriculum content primarily broadened perspective without altering core identity (37.5%).

The interview data corroborate and extend these patterns. A majority of interview participants (62.5%) reported experiencing some form of identity shift when speaking English, describing feelings of increased confidence, assertiveness, professionalism, or emotional expressiveness. Emotional experiences with English proved highly context-dependent, with academic and teaching settings generally providing comfort (43.8% and 18.8% respectively) while performance situations and informal native-speaker interactions generated more tension. Cultural negotiation emerged as a selective process: while 43.8% explicitly denied adopting cultural attitudes from English-speaking countries, 37.5% acknowledged adopting specific behaviours or communication styles including politeness expressions, direct communication patterns, and academic writing conventions. Social networks expanded for 62.5% of interview participants, and 56.3% reported positive and supportive reactions from family and friends regarding their English development. Motivations for learning English were predominantly instrumental or globally oriented (37.5%) or driven by personal fascination and media influence (31.3%).

The document analysis of university program descriptions reveals institutional framing of English as an academic discipline combining linguistic competence with literary, civilizational, and technological knowledge. The Bouira Master program emphasizes applied linguistics and digital innovation through “Distance Learning” and “the virtual mode via platforms such as Moodle,” targeting “social actors in several fields such as economics, journalism, translation and interpreting... etc.” The Tlemcen Licence program stresses “openness to the world of research

and the ease of integration of our students into foreign universities” alongside “the alignment of the Algerian university system with the current international system.” The Béchar Master program mobilizes multiple disciplines including “the history of English-speaking countries, English didactics, sociology, literature, etc,” aiming to form “multidisciplinary didacticians who master both the English language and its different linguistic approaches, as well as the aspects inherent to English and African civilizations.” The Guelma Licence’s program represents English as a research-oriented discipline within the LMD framework, emphasizing “knowing how to formulate scientific reasoning,” and “training in academic rigor” while offering pathways to “teaching technical English in national and private companies” and “rapid integration into the modern communication circuit.” These institutional discourses position English as a vehicle for international integration, technological adaptation, and professional versatility while maintaining explicit attention to cultural specificity, intercultural competence, and research-oriented training.

Across all three data sources, the central patterns indicate that English learning contributed to expanded global identification and professional orientation among Algerian university students, that identity negotiation reflected both adaptation to new cultural influences and the active maintenance of local cultural continuity, and that emotional and social factors played significant roles in shaping participants’ language use experiences. The convergence of findings suggests that participants navigate between global English-speaking identities and local linguistic and cultural identities through processes of selective adoption, cultural anchoring, and context-dependent identity performance.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Discussion of the Results**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This study investigated the effect of English language learning and identity re/construction among Algerian university students, examining how learners navigate the tensions between global English-speaking identities and local linguistic and cultural identities in a complex postcolonial, multilingual context. The research was guided by three interrelated questions: (1) How does EFL learning influence the identity re/construction of Algerian university students? (2) What role do classroom practices, peers, curricula, and teachers play in shaping these identity changes? (3) How do learners negotiate tensions between their local linguistic identities and global English-speaking identities? These questions were designed to move beyond surface-level descriptions of language attitudes and to capture the lived experience of students who must position themselves between competing cultural and linguistic systems on a daily basis.

The study adopted a mixed-methods explanatory design, integrating questionnaire data from 112 participants, semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, and analysis of 3 official university program documents. The theoretical orientation drew on poststructuralist and sociocultural perspectives, specifically synthesizing Pavlenko's (2001) concept of the multilingual self, Norton's (2013) theory of investment and imagined communities, and Kramsch's (2009) formulation of the third space and multilingual subject. This framework positions identity not as fixed or essential but as dynamic, socially constructed, and perpetually negotiated through language use. Rather than viewing identity as a stable object that language merely describes, the study treats it as an ongoing process that language actively produces, reshapes, and sometimes destabilizes.

The Algerian context presents a particularly complex terrain for this investigation. Students navigate between Standard Arabic (official and religious), Algerian Arabic/Darija (daily communication), Berber/Tamazight (indigenous heritage), French (colonial legacy and professional necessity), and now English (global instrument and academic medium). This multilingual ecology means that English does not enter a linguistic vacuum but an already crowded and ideologically charged field. In other words, students are not simply adding one new language to a blank slate; instead, they must fit English into an existing mental and social map where every language already carries heavy historical and emotional weight. Understanding how students construct workable identities within this complexity constitutes the central contribution of this study.

### 3.2 Overview of Key Findings

The findings reveal several interconnected patterns that directly address the research questions. First, EFL learning influences identity construction through additive hybridity rather than replacement: students add English as a professional, global layer while actively maintaining local cultural foundations. Majorities resist abandoning local practices (47.3% negative responses to cultural abandonment), though significant minorities engage in selective cultural questioning (30.4%) and linguistic code-switching (42%). Rather than viewing these behaviours as signs of confusion or indecision, the data frame them as deliberate strategies through which students manage the boundaries between who they are locally and who they might become globally.

Second, the data indicate that students experience what this analysis terms “asynchronous subjectivity”—performing future professional identities in present academic contexts. While 83.9% associate English with enhanced global belonging and 78.6% with professional opportunities, 62.5% of interview participants simultaneously report feeling like different people when using English, describing increased confidence, assertiveness, and professionalism. This temporal complexity suggests that investment in English involves not merely delayed gratification but immediate identity performance. In other words, students are not just waiting for a future payoff; they are living inside a transformed version of themselves right now, even if that transformation feels temporary or performed.

Third, classroom practices, teachers, and peers function predominantly as confidence-enhancers (29.2%) though occasionally as sources of mixed influence (25%). The classroom operates as both psychological crucible and social theatre where students enact emerging English-using identities. Curriculum content primarily broadens perspective without altering core identity (37.5%), though the shift to English Medium Instruction creates implementation tensions between promised global inclusion and risks of local exclusion. These tensions remind us that the classroom is never a neutral space; it is a site where global and local forces meet, and where students must constantly adjust their sense of self to fit the linguistic rules of the educational setting.

Fourth, learners negotiate local-global tensions through selective adoption, cultural anchoring, and protective identity work. Local culture is deployed as a protective mechanism, with 49.1% describing it as an “anchor” and 25.9% emphasizing its protective functions. This negotiation occurs within a field of competing linguistic hierarchies—English (global), French (colonial), and Arabic (national)—that students must navigate strategically. Rather than choosing

sides in a simple battle between tradition and globalization, students appear to be building personal systems of balance, taking what they find useful from English while using local culture as a brake against unwanted change.

### 3.3 Interpretation of The Results

#### 3.3.1 English Learning and Global Identity Formation

The strong association between English proficiency and global belonging (83.9% agreement) aligns with existing research on English as symbolic capital in postcolonial contexts (Maraf, 2024; Norton, 2013). However, the Algerian data complicate straightforward narratives of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) or neoliberal subject formation (Block, 2014; Flubacher & Del Percio, 2017). While students do frame English in instrumental terms—access to professional opportunities, international education, global media—this economic rationality is saturated with affective dimensions that pure investment frameworks cannot capture. The desire to belong to a global community is not just about money or status; it is also about feeling recognized, competent, and connected to a world that often seems larger and more promising than the immediate local environment.

The interview data reveal that 37.5% cite instrumental/global motivations, but 31.3% emphasize personal fascination, media influence, and “love of the language.” Students describe English as enabling emotional distancing and logical self-analysis: “a detached language that will let you analyse your feelings logically” and “removing the cringe from the mother tongue.” These findings extend Norton’s (2013) concept of investment by demonstrating that students invest not merely in anticipated future returns but in immediate psychological states—modes of selfhood that English seems to facilitate. In other words, the payoff is not always delayed until graduation or employment; sometimes the reward is felt in the very moment of using English, when a student experiences a sudden sense of clarity, confidence, or emotional control that feels harder to reach in their native languages.

The institutional discourse analysis reveals how universities reinforce global identity narratives. The Tlemcen Licence program emphasizes “l’ouverture sur le monde de la recherche” and “*l’adéquation du système universitaire Algérien avec le système international actuel.*” The Béchar Master mobilizes disciplines including “*l’histoire des pays anglophones, la didactique de l’Anglais, sociologie, la littérature,*” while the Tiaret Master addresses “*l’approche interculturelle.*” These framings position English as a vehicle for international integration while maintaining attention to cultural specificity. Institutions thus promise students that English will

open doors without forcing them to abandon their heritage, creating an official narrative of balanced progress that students must then test against their own lived experience.

However, the data suggest a gap between institutional promise and lived experience. While 67.8% of questionnaire respondents indicate predominant English media engagement, suggesting substantial exposure to Anglophone cultural content, 47.3% resist statements about local identity being challenged. This pattern indicates that students are not passively absorbing globalizing narratives but actively managing their relationship to them. The global identity formation documented here is selective and strategic rather than wholesale adoption. Students appear to be saying yes to the practical and emotional benefits of English while quietly, and often invisibly, saying no to the cultural package that sometimes travels with it.

Comparison with Khaldoun's (2021) findings at Chadli Bendjedid University reveals both convergence and divergence. Khaldoun found that 90% of students acknowledged English changing their identity, with specific adoption of Western festivals and individualistic values. The present study similarly documents cultural questioning (30.4%) but emphasizes the protective and anchoring functions of local culture that Khaldoun's framework of "regret or unease" does not fully capture. While both studies agree that English reshapes student outlooks, the present findings place greater weight on how students actively resist full cultural conversion. The difference may reflect methodological variation—Khaldoun's quantitative survey versus this study's mixed-methods approach—or temporal change in student attitudes. Either way, the comparison shows that identity change is not a one-way street and that local culture remains a powerful counterforce even among students who embrace global outlooks.

### **3.3.2 Language and Emotional Expression**

The findings on emotional expression reveal the context-dependent nature of language-mediated identity. Approximately half of questionnaire respondents (50.9%) view English as enabling emotional distancing, describing it as a "detached language" that facilitates logical self-analysis. This pattern aligns with Pavlenko's (2001) research on the multilingual self, where second languages can serve functions of emotional regulation that differ from first language experiences. However, this distancing is not experienced as coldness or emptiness; for many students, it represents a welcome break from the intensity of emotional expression in their mother tongue, offering a space where they can think before they feel.

However, the interview data complicate any simple dichotomy between "emotional" mother tongue and "detached" English. Participants describe highly variable emotional experiences: 62.5% describe empowerment situations (successful communication, translation

assistance, academic achievement) while 37.5% describe tension situations (fear of judgment, showing off, thesis defence stress). The same participant may experience both poles: “I felt capable and proud” in international group projects but “excluded and hesitant” in casual conversations with native speakers. These contradictory experiences within the same individual show that emotional response to English is not a fixed personality trait but a fluid reaction to the social pressures of each specific situation.

This variability suggests that emotional experience with English is not determined by language structure but by social context and identity performance demands. Academic settings provide comfort for 43.8% of interview participants, who cite the “precision and structure” of English in these contexts. Performance situations—presentations, thesis defences—generate anxiety not because of English itself but because of the evaluative gaze and the stakes of identity performance. In other words, the fear is not of the language but of the judgment that comes with using it, and of the possibility that a mistake might expose the student as an impostor who does not truly belong in the English-speaking world.

The concept of “wearing a mask” emerges in participant descriptions: “sometimes it can feel like I am wearing a ‘mask’ of a more outgoing personality.” This metaphor captures the performative dimension of language-mediated identity—the sense of adopting a persona that is not false but not fully natural either. The mask enables behaviour (confidence, assertiveness) that participants value but also creates awareness of temporal dissonance between performed and habitual selves. In other words, students know they are acting a part, and while this acting can be useful, it also reminds them that they are not quite the same person in English as they are in Arabic or French. This gap between performed and felt identity creates a subtle but persistent tension that runs through their daily experience, making every English interaction a small exercise in self-management.

The data suggest that English serves as what this study terms “emotional technology”—a tool for managing affective states rather than merely communicating information. Students deploy English for self-reflection, emotional distancing, and professional performance in ways that extend beyond communicative functionality. This finding extends sociocultural theories of language socialization by demonstrating that adult L2 learners actively construct emotional uses of language rather than merely acquiring culturally predetermined patterns. They are not just learning grammar and vocabulary; they are learning how to feel, or how not to feel, through a new linguistic medium. This emotional dimension of language learning deserves greater attention because it shapes whether students continue to invest in English or begin to resist it.

### 3.3.3 Cultural Negotiation and Identity Change

The cultural negotiation findings challenge both celebratory and alarmist narratives of globalization. Majorities resist abandoning local practices (47.3% negative responses to cultural abandonment statements), yet significant minorities engage in cultural questioning (30.4%) and linguistic code-switching (42%). This pattern suggests neither wholesale cultural preservation nor erosion but strategic selectivity. In other words, students are not becoming Westernized, nor are they frozen in tradition; they are making careful, often invisible choices about which habits to keep, which to modify, and which to quietly set aside.

The qualitative data illuminate this selectivity through specific examples. Nineteen respondents abandoned expressions suggesting fatalism or passivity, replacing them with English alternatives emphasizing agency: “الصبر مفتاح الفرج” (patience is the key to relief) ... I use this proverb less because English discourse frequently highlights action, initiative, and problem-solving.” Twenty-three participants reported routine replacement of greetings and casual expressions with English equivalents. These changes are not random but patterned: students abandon what they perceive as constraining (fatalism) while maintaining what they value (patience as virtue). The selectivity reveals a hidden logic of self-improvement, where English is used not to reject culture wholesale but to edit it according to personal standards of what seems healthy, modern, or effective.

The interview data on cultural adoption reveal similar selectivity. Of 16 participants, 37.5% acknowledged adopting specific behaviours—politeness expressions, direct communication, academic writing conventions—while 43.8% denied cultural adoption. Those who acknowledged adoption emphasized functional rather than identitarian changes: “I have become more comfortable with direct communication... I also picked up the habit of saying ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ frequently.” These are presented as communicative strategies rather than identity transformations. Students seem to view these adaptations as tools they pick up and put down depending on the situation, not as deep changes to who they are at the core.

However, the data also contain warnings about excessive cultural adoption. One participant cautioned: “Unlike my case, I notice that some people learn the culture before the language when it comes to dressing up like them, having their intonation and doing their habits like celebrating their holidays but they have limited language proficiency.” This observation identifies a risk that Kramsch’s (2009) framework of the third space does not fully address: the possibility that cultural hybridity becomes inauthentic performance rather than critical mediation. When students adopt outward signs of Anglophone culture—clothing, accent, holidays—without

the linguistic or critical depth to match, the result can feel hollow or performative. The multilingual subject's vantage point is not automatically empowering; it can become disorienting when cultural adoption outpaces linguistic competence or critical understanding. This warning reminds us that hybridity is not always a success story; sometimes it is a source of confusion or superficiality that leaves the learner stranded between cultures without full membership in either.

The 30.4% of questionnaire respondents who reported questioning local cultural practices—particularly gender roles, marriage practices, and mental health stigma—demonstrate that English learning can facilitate critical reflection on local norms. However, 20.5% simultaneously reported defending local practices, particularly “family closeness,” “hospitality,” and “sharing food with neighbours.” This simultaneous questioning and defending indicates that cultural negotiation is not linear progression from traditional to modern but complex, recursive calibration. In practical terms, a student might criticize restrictive gender norms while fiercely defending the importance of family meals, showing that critical thinking does not require cultural betrayal and that modernization does not have to mean Westernization.

Comparison with Dekhakhena's (2025) “paradoxical path to decolonization” framing reveals tensions in how English is positioned. While Dekhakhena argues that English offers liberation from French colonial legacy, participant data suggest more cautious positioning. English is not experienced as simple decolonization but as entry into new hierarchies requiring careful navigation. The “paradox” of English in Algeria is not merely that a global colonial language replaces a specific colonial one, but that students must manage multiple colonial and postcolonial linguistic legacies simultaneously. The student is not simply swapping French for English but is learning to live with the heavy presence of all three—Arabic, French, and English—each carrying its own historical wounds and promises.

### **3.3.4 Maintenance of Local Identity**

The local identity maintenance findings constitute perhaps the most significant contribution to existing literature. While previous research has emphasized identity change and cultural questioning, this study documents systematic, majority resistance to abandonment and sophisticated protective identity work. In other words, the story here is not just about how English changes students, but about how students refuse to let it change them in ways they do not authorize. The quantitative data show that neutral responses predominated on whether English strengthens local identity (31.3%), with positive (36.6%) and negative (32.1%) responses nearly balanced. This distribution suggests that students do not experience English as

simply strengthening or threatening local identity but as requiring active management. The qualitative data reveal how this management operates: 49.1% describe local culture as an “anchor” or “foundation,” using metaphors of navigation (“English expands my horizon, but my values decide the direction”) and architecture (“My local culture provides core values”). These metaphors reveal that students think of their identity as a physical structure that needs securing, not as a fluid substance that can be poured into any available container.

The protective functions emphasized by 25.9%— “prevents me from becoming immersed in aspects that are contradictory to our values,” “saves me from changing my mentality,” “keeps me grounded”—reveal defensive dimensions of identity work that celebratory hybridity frameworks neglect. Students are not enthusiastically embracing global hybridity; they are carefully managing it to prevent erosion of valued identifications. This finding extends Canagarajah’s (1999) concept of resistance by demonstrating that resistance operates not merely against global English but through strategic deployment of local culture as protective resource. In simpler terms, students use their own culture as a shield, not because they reject the outside world, but because they know that unchecked exposure can lead to loss of self.

The additive model articulated by 16.1%— “adds another part to my local culture,” “adds to my identity rather than replacing it”—represents the clearest expression of what this study terms “additive hybridity.” However, the predominance of anchor and protective metaphors suggests that even additive conceptualizations are defensive rather than expansionist. The “multilingual subject” (Kramsch, 2009) in the Algerian context is not confidently code-switching between equally valued languages but strategically compartmentalizing to maintain stability. In simpler terms, students are not building a bigger, freer self by mixing everything together. They are building walls and compartments to make sure that learning English does not flood or destroy the self they already have.

This pattern challenges the theoretical assumption that globalization necessarily erodes local identity or that hybridity is experienced as liberation. For these Algerian students, local identity maintenance requires active, continuous labour—the “identity tax” of constant negotiation between linguistic and cultural systems. The finding suggests a need for theoretical frameworks that account for the costs and burdens of multilingual identity management, not merely its possibilities. In other words, being multilingual and multicultural in this context is not just a gift or an advantage; it is a job that never ends, and students are often tired from doing it.

### **3.3.5 Media Engagement and Social Influence**

The 67.8% of questionnaire respondents who indicate predominant English media

engagement represent substantial exposure to Anglophone cultural content outside formal education. This pattern suggests that English learning extends far beyond classroom instruction into informal, self-directed consumption that shapes identity through repeated, pleasurable engagement rather than institutional requirement. Rather than seeing media consumption as mere entertainment, the data frame it as an extension of the language classroom, where students voluntarily subject themselves to hours of linguistic and cultural immersion because they enjoy the feeling of competence and connection it provides.

The interview data on motivation reveal this informal dimension: 31.3% cite personal fascination and media influence— “a love of the language and the desire to read great works in their original language and watch movies.” English media functions not merely as language input but as identification resource, offering models of selfhood, relationships, and professional identity that students incorporate selectively. These media offer a window into other ways of living, speaking, and relating that students can observe, test, and either adopt or reject without the immediate pressure of face-to-face interaction. In other words, Netflix, YouTube, and English novels function as safe laboratories where students can try on foreign identities and see how they feel before wearing them in public.

Social network expansion documented by 62.5% of interview participants— “connecting with classmates, teachers, and professionals from different countries,” “diversified my social circle... through online forums and professional networks”—demonstrates that imagined communities (Norton, 2013) are not merely imagined but actively constructed. However, 25% denied significant social network change, suggesting that English remains compartmentalized for substantial minorities. This compartmentalization is not necessarily a failure; for some students, keeping English inside the classroom may be a deliberate strategy to protect their local social world from disruption. For these students, English is a professional tool that stays at the university door, and their home life remains untouched by it.

Family and peer reactions provide crucial validation mechanisms. The 56.3% reporting positive, supportive reactions describe instrumental recognition— “ask me to translate documents or movies,” “see my English proficiency as a sign of success”—that extends Norton’s concept of investment. Returns on English investment circulate within family networks, not merely individual career advancement. However, 25% reported no noticeable reaction, indicating that for some students, English proficiency remains invisible in local social contexts. This invisibility can be frustrating for students who have worked hard to acquire the language, as their efforts go unrecognized by the people whose opinion matters most to them. When a student’s

family treats English as irrelevant, the student may feel that a major part of their daily experience is unseen, creating a lonely gap between their academic and home identities.

The 29.2% of questionnaire respondents who report teacher and peer influence as confidence-enhancing, and the interview descriptions of “encouragement from classmates,” “professional challenges from colleagues,” and “inspiration from students,” demonstrate the classroom as community of practice (Wenger, 1998). However, the 25% reporting mixed influence and the absence of any participants selecting “I often felt judged or anxious” suggests that negative experiences, while present, are not defining for most students. In other words, the classroom is generally a supportive space, but it is not perfectly supportive, and the mixed signals some students receive may create quiet doubts about whether they truly belong in the English-speaking academic world.

### **3.4 Synthesis and Contribution**

#### **3.4.1 Theoretical Contributions**

This study makes three primary theoretical contributions. First, it develops and operationalizes the concept of “Additive Hybridity” to describe identity processes that extend beyond zero-sum frameworks of cultural replacement. The data demonstrate that Algerian students experience English learning as identity architecture restructuring—adding layers while maintaining foundations—rather than the contestation and displacement emphasized in Pavlenko’s (2001) framework. This finding suggests a need for context-sensitive theories that account for defensive, protective dimensions of identity negotiation, not merely expansionist ones.

Additive Hybridity refers to the process by which language learners incorporate English into their sense of self without discarding their pre-existing local, cultural, or linguistic identities. Unlike replacement models, which assume that adopting a new language means losing something old, additive hybridity treats identity as a layered structure. In this study, students described English as adding “another part” to themselves or expanding their horizon while their values “decide the direction.” This means that English functions like a new room built onto an existing house rather than a demolition of the original structure. The concept is particularly useful in postcolonial settings where students are already managing multiple languages and where the arrival of English could easily be experienced as yet another colonial imposition. By framing the process as additive, we can see how students absorb English instrumentally and emotionally while still holding onto Arabic, French, Berber, and local cultural practices as core

components of who they are. However, the data also show that this addition is not carefree. It is guarded, monitored, and often defensive, requiring students to remain vigilant against perceived threats to their foundational identity.

Second, the study articulates “Asynchronous Subjectivity”—the temporal paradox of performing future professional identities in present academic contexts—as a characteristic experience of language learning investment. While Norton (2013) emphasizes imagined communities as future-oriented, the data reveal that students enact these futures immediately, creating productive tension between performed and habitual selves. This finding extends investment theory by demonstrating its temporal complexity and performative dimensions.

Asynchronous Subjectivity captures the lived experience of feeling like a different person when using English because the learner is not merely preparing for a future self but is actively performing that self in the present. Students described increased confidence, assertiveness, and professionalism when speaking English, even though these professional contexts were still academic classrooms rather than actual workplaces. This creates a temporal dissonance: the student knows they are not yet the professional they perform, yet the performance itself produces real emotional and psychological effects. In other words, the mask is not just a costume for the future; it reshapes the wearer in the present. This concept extends Norton’s (2013) framework by showing that investment is not simply a calculated sacrifice for future returns but an immediate, often disorienting, reorganization of selfhood across time.

Third, the study documents the “Identity Tax” of multilingual management—the continuous, recursive labour of navigating competing linguistic hierarchies. While existing frameworks celebrate multilingual competence, these data reveal its burdens: the exhaustion of “wearing a mask,” the defensive vigilance of “anchor” metaphors, and the risk of inauthenticity when cultural adoption outpaces understanding. Theoretical frameworks need to account for these costs, not merely the possibilities of hybrid identity.

The Identity Tax refers to the hidden emotional and cognitive cost of maintaining multiple linguistic and cultural systems in daily life. For the Algerian students in this study, this tax manifested as constant self-monitoring, the fatigue of code-switching between conflicting value systems, and the anxiety of ensuring that English proficiency did not drift into cultural betrayal. Every act of identity negotiation—deciding whether to use an English greeting or an Arabic one, explaining a cultural practice to a foreign peer, or defending local values against global media influence—requires mental and emotional labour. This labour is rarely acknowledged in theories that celebrate hybridity as liberation. By naming it as a tax, this study

highlights that multilingual identity management is not just about gaining new capacities; it is also about paying ongoing costs that can exhaust, constrain, and burden the learner. Recognizing this tax allows researchers and educators to develop more realistic and compassionate frameworks for supporting language learners in complex postcolonial contexts.

### **3.4.2 Empirical Contributions**

Empirically, this study provides the first systematic, mixed-methods examination of Algerian university student identity negotiation in EFL contexts. While previous research (Khalidoun, 2021; Maraf, 2024) has examined attitudes and perceptions, this study integrates psychological experience, social network dynamics, and institutional discourse to reveal the complexity of identity navigation. By combining these data sources, the study avoids the flattening effect of single-method designs and preserves the full complexity of student experience across different domains of life.

The documentation of majority resistance to cultural abandonment (47.3% negative responses) challenges alarmist narratives of globalization-driven identity erosion. The finding that students deploy local culture as protective resource, not merely residual tradition, reframes understanding of identity maintenance in postcolonial contexts. In other words, local identity is not a fading relic that students cling to out of nostalgia; it is an active, strategic resource that they deliberately mobilize to keep their sense of self intact under pressure.

The identification of context-dependent emotional variability—academic comfort versus performance anxiety, empowerment versus tension—provides nuance to frameworks that treat L2 emotional experience as uniform. The concept of English as “emotional technology” extends understanding of language functions beyond communication to affect management. By recognizing that students use English to regulate how they feel, not just what they say, the study opens new avenues for researching the emotional lives of language learners in multilingual societies.

### **3.4.3 Methodological Contributions**

Methodologically, the study demonstrates the value of narrative inquiry and positioning analysis for capturing the phenomenology of identity shift. The interview data reveal how students construct coherent narratives of self across temporal and cultural discontinuities—narratives that survey methods cannot access. The integration of curriculum analysis situates individual experience within institutional frameworks, revealing how macro-level discourse shapes micro-level identity work. This multi-level design shows that identity cannot be fully

understood by looking only at the individual or only at the institution; researchers must trace the threads that connect policy documents, classroom practices, and private emotional experience.

### **3.5 Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

Several limitations qualify these findings. The convenience sampling strategy, while justified by resource constraints and geographical dispersion, may overrepresent students with strong interest in language and identity issues. Because students chose to participate voluntarily, those who feel most confident or most troubled by their identity experiences may be overrepresented, while students who feel neutral or indifferent may be undercounted. This means that the findings may reflect the experiences of students who are already highly aware of identity issues, rather than the average student who views English as just another subject.

The cross-sectional design captures identity at one moment but cannot trace developmental trajectories. Longitudinal research following students from undergraduate through professional careers would reveal how additive hybridity and asynchronous subjectivity evolve over time. Such research would show whether the identity tax increases or decreases as students gain professional stability, or whether the defensive posture toward local culture softens into more confident hybridity. Without this temporal depth, the study can describe the architecture of identity but cannot show how that architecture changes under the weight of years.

The focus on university students in English programs excludes perspectives from students in other disciplines where English Medium Instruction is expanding. Future research should examine identity negotiation among science and engineering students for whom English is primarily instrumental rather than identificational. These students may experience English as a technical requirement rather than a cultural force, and their identity strategies may differ significantly from those of English majors who are explicitly trained to inhabit Anglophone literary and cultural worlds.

The study's theoretical frameworks, while productive, may not fully capture religious and spiritual dimensions of identity that emerged marginally in participant references to values and mentality preservation. Future research might productively integrate frameworks from Islamic psychology and decolonial theology. Religious identity is often the deepest layer of self for Algerian students, and any framework that ignores this dimension may miss the ultimate source of the "anchor" that participants describe. Incorporating these frameworks would enrich our understanding of why local culture remains so powerfully protective.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This study examines theoretical understandings of language and identity by developing concepts of additive hybridity, asynchronous subjectivity, and identity tax that extend existing frameworks. Empirically, it documents patterns of resistance to cultural abandonment and context-dependent emotional variability that challenge both celebratory and alarmist narratives of globalization. The Algerian student emerges not as victim of linguistic imperialism, enthusiastic globalizer, or passive recipient of cultural influence, but as strategic bricoleur constructing workable identities from available cultural materials. Rather than surrendering to global English or retreating into local isolation, these students engage in constant identity work—always managing, always negotiating, and always paying the identity tax of multilingual existence in a postcolonial world.

# **General Conclusion**

This study investigated the effect of English language learning and identity re/construction among Algerian university students. The research was guided by three interrelated questions: how EFL learning influences identity construction? what role classroom practices, peers, curricula, and teachers play in shaping these changes? and how learners negotiate tensions between local linguistic identities and global English-speaking identities? And three corresponding hypotheses: whether EFL learning fosters additive hybrid identities (H1), whether classroom practices validating multilingual repertoires facilitate positive identity negotiation (H2), and whether students navigate local-global tensions through selective cultural adoption (H3).

To address these questions, the study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design that integrated quantitative data from 112 questionnaire respondents, qualitative data from 16 semi-structured interviews, and critical discourse analysis of four official university program descriptions. The theoretical orientation synthesized Pavlenko's (2001) concept of the multilingual self, Norton's (2013) theory of investment and imagined communities, and Kramsch's (2009) formulation of the third space and the multilingual subject.

The findings provide substantial support for all three hypotheses, though with important nuances that complicate straightforward confirmation. (H1), which posited that EFL learning fosters additive hybrid identities strengthening global belonging while preserving local affiliations, was strongly supported: 83.9% of participants associated English with enhanced global belonging, while majorities actively resisted abandoning local practices (47.3% negative responses to cultural abandonment). This establishes additive hybridity as the dominant identity pattern, not replacement. (H2), which predicted that validating classroom practices facilitate positive negotiation while native-speaker norm enforcement generates anxiety, was partially supported: teacher and peer influence appeared predominantly confidence-enhancing (29.2%), yet the data also revealed context-dependent tension and "triangulated anxiety" when students navigated competing linguistic hierarchies.

The absence of participants selecting "I often felt judged or anxious" in the questionnaire does not mean anxiety is absent; interview data revealed performance stress and fear of showing off, suggesting that negative experiences are present but underreported in survey formats. (H3), which proposed that students navigate local-global tensions through selective cultural adoption, was strongly supported: 49.1% described local culture as an anchor, 25.9% emphasized its protective function, and 37.5% of interviewees acknowledged adopting specific communicative

behaviours while 43.8% explicitly denied cultural adoption, demonstrating the selectivity and strategic calibration the hypothesis predicted.

These findings carry significant implications for practice and policy. For teachers, the evidence suggests that validating students' multilingual repertoires and treating Algerian English as a legitimate variety in process—not a deficient approximation of native-speaker norms—facilitates positive identity negotiation. Classroom practices should encourage experimentation and peer support rather than judgment, recognizing that the classroom functions as both psychological crucible and social theatre where students enact emerging English-using selves. For curriculum designers, the data indicate that content primarily broadens perspective without altering core identity, but English creates implementation tensions between promised global inclusion and risks of local academic exclusion.

Curricula must therefore balance global access with local relevance, utilizing English as a tool for empowerment without erasing the Algerian cultural perspective. For policymakers, particularly the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, this study provides student-centred empirical evidence that learning English is experienced not as simple liberation from Francophone hegemony but as entry into new hierarchies requiring careful navigation. Policy implementation must include adequate linguistic support, teacher training in culturally responsive pedagogy, and explicit safeguards for local linguistic identities.

Several limitations marked these conclusions. The convenience sampling strategy may overrepresent students with strong interest in language and identity issues. The cross-sectional design captures identity at one moment but cannot trace developmental trajectories; longitudinal research following students from undergraduate through professional careers would reveal how additive hybridity and asynchronous subjectivity evolve over time. The focus on university students in English programs excludes perspectives from students in other disciplines where the English language is expanding. Additionally, the study's theoretical frameworks may not fully capture religious and spiritual dimensions of identity that emerged marginally in participant references to values and mentality preservation.

Beyond the Algerian context, this study speaks to broader concerns. In an era where English continues its expansion as global lingua franca, postcolonial societies worldwide face similar dilemmas: how to harness English for advancement without surrendering cultural sovereignty, how to train teachers who validate hybrid identities, and how to design policies that protect local languages while engaging global networks. The Algerian case demonstrates that

students are not passive recipients but active, strategic agents who construct workable identities through selective adoption, cultural anchoring, and context-dependent performance. This challenges both the pessimism of linguistic imperialism frameworks and the optimism of celebratory hybridity accounts, offering instead a realistic portrait of identity work as continuous, recursive, and costly—but also creative and agentive.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A : Questionnaire

#### Section One : Demographics

- Age
- Gender: Male      Female
- Wilaya
- Year of study: 1<sup>st</sup> year License/ 2<sup>nd</sup> year License/ 3<sup>rd</sup> year License/ 1<sup>st</sup> year Master/ 2<sup>nd</sup> year Master/PhD
- What language (s) do you speak at home?      Arabic / Berber/ French /English
- What is your English proficiency level? Beginner (A1/A2)/Intermediate(B1/B2) /Advanced (C1/C2)

#### Section Two: Language Perception and Use

- For the following statements, please select your level of agreement: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree.
- 1.Learning English makes me feel more globally connected
  - 2.English proficiency enhances my professional opportunities
  - 3.I feel less emotional intensity when I express love or anger in English than when I do it in my mother tongue
  - 4.Since studying English, I have started celebrating/observing cultural events that are not part of my local tradition (e.g. Halloween, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day...)
  - 5.Because of learning English I now avoid using certain Algerian Arabic/Berber expressions that I used to use daily
  - 6.I feel my local cultural identity is strengthened by learning English
  - 7.I feel my local culture identity is challenged or changed by learning English
  - 8.I consume most of my news / entertainment in English
- How has learning English influenced the way you see yourself?
  - Give one example of a local cultural practice you have questioned or defended more often because of something you read/heard in English.

- What role does your local culture play in maintaining or changing your identity while learning English?
- List two local expressions or proverbs you have stopped using since you began learning English. Why?

### **Section Three:** Classroom Experience

- How have your teachers and peers influenced your English learning and how you see yourself as a language user?
  - A. They increased my confidence and helped me see myself as a competent English user.
  - B. They encouraged participation but also made me aware of my limitation.
  - C. Their attitudes strongly shaped how seriously I invested in learning English.
  - D. I often felt judged or anxious, which reduced my participation.
  - E. Their influence was minimal on my learning or self-perception.
  - F. Mixed influence depending on the situation (supportive at times, discouraging at others).
- What role did the content and the curriculum play in shaping your self-perception and sociocultural awareness?
  - A. It increased my awareness of global cultures and reshaped how I see myself.
  - B. It broadened my perspective but did not change my core identity.
  - C. It created tension between my local culture and global perspectives.
  - D. It mainly improved my language skills without affecting my self-perception.
  - E. It made me reflect more critically on both Algerian and foreign cultures.
  - F. It had little or no influence on my identity or sociocultural awareness.
- Describe a situation of empowerment and another of tension, discomfort or alienation when using English inside and outside the classroom?

### **Appendix B: Interview**

1. What motivated you to start learning English?
2. How do you view English in relation to French and Arabic in your academic and personal life?

3. In what contexts do you feel most comfortable using English? And in what contexts do you feel least comfortable?
4. When you speak English, do you feel like a different person? If yes, can you describe a situation when this happened? How does it affect your emotions?
5. Have you noticed yourself adopting any cultural attitudes, habits, or behaviours from English-speaking countries? If yes, please give examples.
6. How has learning English changed the type of people you interact with or the conversations you have?
7. Describe an experience where English proficiency made you feel empowered. (This could be in work, study, or daily life.)
8. How have your friends or family reacted to changes they have noticed in you since you became more proficient in English?
9. How have your teachers, peers, colleagues or students influenced your language learning, confidence, and sense of identity when using English?
10. How has the content of your English courses (textbooks, topics, examples) affected your view of Algerian culture and your own identity?
11. Describe a situation of empowerment and another of tension, discomfort or alienation when using English inside and/or outside classroom?
12. How do you imagine English influencing your future personal and professional life?
13. Is there anything else you would like to share about your language learning identity?

### **Appendix C: Curricula**

- Bouira University, *Master Didactique et Langues Appliquées* (2025-2026)
- Tlemcen University, *Licence Langue Anglaise* (2015-2016)
- Béchar University, *Master Langue et Culture* (2016-2017)
- Guelma University, *Master Didactique des Langues Étrangères* (2014-2015)