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Navigating Hybrid Identities: the Impact of English Language Learning on Self-Perception and Cultural Identity among Algerian EFL Learners

التنقل بين الهويات الهجينة : تأثير تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية على تصوّر الذات والهوية الثقافية لدى المتعلمين الجزائريين للغة الإنجليزية

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the impact of English language learning on the self-perception and identity of Algerian EFL learners. Using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative data from pre- and post-instruction questionnaires were combined with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews. Results reveal significant increases in openness to global cultures and modest gains in confidence regarding cultural identity. However, connection to native culture showed a slight decline. Qualitative analysis revealed the development of hybrid identities, enhanced global awareness, increased confidence in self-expression, and the preservation of cultural integrity. These findings emphasize the dynamic negotiation of local and global identities in post-colonial settings. The study suggests that EFL pedagogy in Algeria should integrate intercultural communication training, affirm learners' cultural backgrounds, and valorize native languages to promote additive bilingualism. This approach helps prepare students for global engagement while maintaining strong cultural ties.

Keywords: Cultural Identity, Self-Perception, Hybrid Identities, Language Learning, Post-Colonial

ملخص البحث

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية على تصوّر الذات والهوية لدى المتعلمين الجزائريين للغة الإنجليزية. باستخدام منهج مختلط، تم دمج البيانات الكمية المستخلصة من استبيانات قبل وبعد التعليم مع رؤى نوعية تم جمعها من خلال مقابلات شبه هيكلية. تكشف النتائج عن زيادة ملحوظة في الانفتاح على الثقافات العالمية، وزيادات متواضعة في الثقة بالهوية الثقافية، مع تراجع طفيف في الاتصال بالثقافة الأصلية. كما أظهرت التحليلات النوعية تطور الهويات الهجينة، وزيادة الوعي الثقافي العالمي، وتعزيز الثقة في التعبير عن الذات، مع الحفاظ على الهوية الثقافية. تؤكد هذه النتائج على التفاوض الديناميكي بين الهويات المحلية والعالمية في السياقات ما بعد الاستعمارية. تقترح الدراسة أن مناهج تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزائر يجب أن تتضمن تدريباً على الاتصال الثقافي، وتعزيز الخلفيات الثقافية للمتعلمين، وتقدير اللغات الأصلية لتعزيز ثنائية اللغة الإضافية، مما يساعد الطلاب على التفاعل العالمي مع الحفاظ على روابط ثقافية قوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الثقافية، تصوّر الذات، الهويات الهجينة، تعلم اللغة، ما بعد الاستعمار

1. Introduction

In an era marked by unprecedented global interconnectivity, English has emerged as the principal lingua franca facilitating communication across international business, academia, science, and technology (Crystal, 2003). This widespread influence has prompted a surge in English language education worldwide, particularly within nations where English is not the native tongue. The growth of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reflects not only practical considerations tied to globalization but also complex socio-political dynamics and cultural exchanges (Canagarajah, 2005). For learners situated outside English-speaking contexts, mastering English involves more than acquiring communicative competence; it profoundly shapes their sense of self, cultural identity, and their positioning within diverse social worlds.

Algeria offers a particularly rich context to explore the relationship between English language learning and identity transformation. As a North African country characterized by profound linguistic and cultural diversity, Algeria's identity is shaped by the interplay of indigenous Berber traditions, Arab-Islamic influences, and a complex colonial legacy under French domination. Its linguistic landscape is layered and politically nuanced: Modern Standard Arabic holds official status, Berber languages enjoy constitutional recognition, French remains a dominant legacy language, and English is gaining ground as a language linked to globalization and academic advancement (Boudraa, 2015). This multifaceted and politically charged linguistic milieu provides a unique vantage point to examine how English learning impacts learners' self-understanding and identity negotiation.

Within Algerian higher education, English is commonly regarded as a vital tool unlocking international opportunities, access to global knowledge, and pathways to socio-professional advancement. Yet, the impact of acquiring English transcends utilitarian purposes, deeply affecting learners' sense of belonging, processes of cultural negotiation, and evolving self-concepts. These identity shifts unfold within the shadow of Algeria's colonial history and amid ongoing global power asymmetries. In post-colonial contexts such as Algeria, English language learning serves as both a bridge to global networks and a potential source of tension with indigenous cultural and linguistic identities (Pennycook, 1994).

This probe investigates how learning English influences the self-perception and identity of Algerian EFL learners. It focuses on discerning the extent to which English acquisition prompts transformations in learners' feelings of cultural belonging, personal and collective identity, and orientations toward both local and global cultural systems. By situating this inquiry within Algeria's distinctive socio-political and linguistic context, the study offers a contribution to discussions on language, identity, and power dynamics in EFL education.

Adopting a mixed-methods design, this study integrates quantitative data collected via pre- and post-instruction questionnaires with qualitative insights drawn from semi-structured interviews. The participant pool consists of 78 Master One language sciences students enrolled at Setif 2 University, offering a comprehensive dataset to investigate the complex identity dynamics experienced by advanced EFL learners.

The study addresses four key research questions: In what ways does English learning influence Algerian EFL learners' self-perception? Furthermore, how does acquiring English affect learners' connections with their native culture and engagement with global, particularly English-speaking, cultures? In addition, to what extent does English language learning foster hybrid or fluid identity

formations among Algerian EFL learners? Finally, how does Algeria's socio-political and linguistic landscape shape learners' experiences of English acquisition and identity evolution?

Insights garnered from these questions aim to inform pedagogical practices and language policies that respect and support the intricate identity negotiations confronting Algerian learners amid globalization.

2. Theoretical Perspectives on Language and Identity

The intersection of language learning and identity formation has been extensively explored within the domains of applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and educational research, revealing the intricate and often transformative relationship between these two constructs. Identity, once regarded as a static and stable characteristic, is now broadly understood as a dynamic, multifaceted, and socially constructed phenomenon (Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). This shift in conceptualization underscores the importance of understanding identity as a fluid process, continuously evolving and negotiated in relation to social interactions, cultural contexts, and power dynamics. Language, in this conceptualization, is not simply a neutral tool of communication; it is a critical medium through which individuals negotiate, perform, and redefine their identities.

Norton's (2000) seminal work in this area highlights identity in language learning as an ongoing, complex negotiation influenced by power relations and social contexts. Her concept of "investment" frames language learning as a dynamic process where learners' commitment to the target language is shaped by their access to social and symbolic capital. This framework challenges earlier models that positioned language learning solely as a cognitive process or a practical endeavor, emphasizing instead how learners' engagement with a second language is shaped by a desire to gain resources—both tangible and symbolic—that are tied to the emerging identities associated with that language. In this way, language learning becomes not only a matter of acquiring a skill but also a crucial site where competing allegiances between heritage identities and the newly emerging identities tied to the target language are navigated.

Kramsch's (1993) expansion of these ideas emphasizes the inextricable connection between language and culture, arguing that any pedagogical approach to language learning must acknowledge the cultural underpinnings that each language carries. Languages are imbued with cultural values, ideologies, and worldviews that go beyond their functional use in communication. Learning a new language, therefore, exposes individuals to new cultural scripts that can prompt significant shifts in self-reflection and self-understanding. In this sense, language learning does not just expand the linguistic repertoire but also reconfigures the cognitive and affective dimensions of identity, as learners begin to internalize and reflect on the cultural contexts embedded in the language.

Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) introduce a sociocultural lens, framing second language acquisition as a mediated psychological process. According to this perspective, language learning involves the internalization of social and cultural tools that, over time, transform learners' identities. This transformative process is not only linguistic but also psychological, as learners adopt new ways of thinking, perceiving, and interacting with the world. The sociocultural perspective suggests that learning a foreign language is a deeply identity-altering experience, which fundamentally reshapes learners' self-perceptions, their cultural affiliations, and their positioning in relation to broader social structures.

Together, these perspectives suggest that language learning, particularly in a foreign language context, is far more than a cognitive exercise or a practical skill. It is a transformative experience that involves navigating competing cultural ideologies, negotiating multiple social identities, and,

ultimately, reshaping one's sense of self and place in the world. Language acquisition, then, must be understood not only as a means of communication but as a medium for the continuous redefinition of individual and collective identity.

2.1 Language and Identity in the Algerian Context

Algeria presents a particularly complex context in which to explore the interplay between language learning and identity formation. The country's linguistic ecology is shaped by a deep colonial and post-colonial history that continues to influence the cultural and political dimensions of its society. Following independence in 1962, Algeria pursued an Arabization policy aimed at restoring Arabic as the symbol of national identity, countering the influence of French, the language of the colonial rulers (Boudraa, 2015). Despite these efforts, French continues to maintain significant prestige within Algerian society, particularly in the domains of education, administration, and business. This results in a diglossic linguistic environment where Arabic and French coexist, often in a power-laden relationship that reflects broader socio-political dynamics (Benrabah, 2013).

In recent decades, however, English has emerged as a new symbol of modernization, internationalization, and access to global knowledge, particularly within the realms of higher education and scientific research (Bouguessa, 2018). The global prominence of English has positioned it as a crucial tool for engaging with the global knowledge economy, but this rise has also prompted critical questions about its potential impact on Algerian cultural and linguistic identities. While English is framed as a means of social and professional advancement, its increasing prominence raises concerns about its role in displacing indigenous languages and cultural traditions, a process that echoes the historical dynamics of French colonialism.

The coexistence of Arabic, Berber, French, and English in Algeria creates a complex and often conflicting set of linguistic ideologies. These overlapping language ideologies shape learners' perceptions of their linguistic repertoires and their own cultural identities. Research by Boudraa (2015) and Benrabah (2013) indicates that Algerian learners often face significant tensions as they attempt to reconcile their national identity with the aspirations tied to foreign languages, particularly English and French. These tensions are not merely linguistic but also political and cultural, reflecting broader struggles over national identity and autonomy in the wake of colonialism. For Algerian learners, English acquisition is not simply a matter of learning a foreign language; it is a deeply political act that involves negotiating multiple and sometimes contradictory cultural and linguistic affiliations.

In this context, English learning can be viewed as both an opportunity and a challenge for Algerian learners. On one hand, it provides access to global networks and resources that are essential for academic and professional success. On the other hand, it raises questions about the potential erosion of local cultural values and the diminishing status of indigenous languages. As such, the Algerian context offers a unique opportunity to explore how learners navigate these complex cultural and linguistic dynamics and how English language learning shapes their evolving sense of identity.

2.2 Impact of English Learning on Self-Perception

A substantial body of research has demonstrated that foreign language learning can have profound effects on learners' self-perception, particularly in terms of their cultural identity and social positioning. Kramsch (1993) argues that learning a foreign language expands learners' intercultural competence and broadens their self-awareness by enabling them to access multiple cultural frames of reference. This expanded cultural repertoire often enhances self-confidence and agency, as learners

gain new tools for navigating and understanding the world around them.

However, as Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) caution, the global dominance of English can also engender feelings of cultural alienation or dislocation, particularly in post-colonial contexts where English is associated with power imbalances and historical domination. Learners in such contexts may experience internal conflicts as they reconcile the global identity offered by English with the pull of their native cultural roots. This tension is particularly evident in Algeria, where English learning may evoke ambivalence: on one hand, it offers pathways to global engagement, but on the other, it may challenge learners' ties to their linguistic and cultural heritage.

This ambivalence is reflected in Pennycook's (1994) analysis of English as a contested cultural-political force. English, in this view, is both an empowering and marginalizing force. It offers learners access to global knowledge and opportunities but also carries with it the potential for cultural displacement and loss of local identity. In Algeria, this duality is particularly poignant, as learners navigate between the desire for global success and the need to preserve their cultural authenticity. The complex emotional and cognitive processes involved in this negotiation are central to understanding the impact of English learning on self-perception and identity.

2.3 Identity Negotiation in EFL Contexts

Norton's (2000) concept of identity negotiation provides a crucial framework for understanding how EFL learners, particularly in multilingual and post-colonial contexts like Algeria, manage their shifting identities. According to this framework, learners do not passively adopt the identities associated with the target language. Rather, they actively negotiate multiple identities shaped by social relations and power dynamics. In the context of English language learning, this negotiation involves balancing attachments to native languages and cultures with the symbolic capital associated with English. Learners construct hybrid identities that integrate local and global influences, reflecting the fluid and multifaceted nature of contemporary identities (García & Wei, 2014).

Empirical studies on EFL learners in similar contexts support this view, demonstrating that language learning fosters the development of hybrid identities, greater intercultural awareness, and changes in self-expression (Duff, 2010; Pavlenko, 2003). These studies highlight the role of language learning as a process of identity transformation, one that facilitates learners' engagement with both local and global cultural resources. However, research on EFL learners in Algeria remains relatively limited, underscoring the need for context-specific investigations that can shed light on how Algerian learners experience and negotiate their identities in relation to English.

This gap in research is particularly significant, as Algeria's unique sociolinguistic and post-colonial context provides a valuable case study for examining the intersections of language learning, identity negotiation, and cultural politics. By focusing on Algerian EFL learners, this study aims to contribute to the broader field of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics by offering new insights into how learners in post-colonial contexts navigate the complex terrain of language and identity.

While existing literature offers a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding the relationship between language and identity, few studies have specifically addressed the experiences of Algerian EFL learners. Given the country's unique sociolinguistic situation, this study fills a significant gap by exploring how English learning influences self-perception and identity formation in this context. By employing a mixed-methods approach and focusing on advanced university learners, this study provides nuanced insights into the processes of identity transformation, cultural negotiation, and the pedagogical implications of English education in Algeria. It situates learners' experiences within the broader socio-political and historical forces shaping language ideologies and

identity construction, contributing to the growing body of research on language, identity, and power dynamics in post-colonial EFL contexts.

3. Research Methodology and Design

To thoroughly investigate the complex interplay between English language learning and identity construction among Algerian EFL learners, this study employed a mixed-methods research design. Such an approach, as outlined by Creswell and Plano Clark (2017), integrates quantitative and qualitative methods to harness the strengths of both, thereby facilitating a comprehensive understanding of phenomena situated within social and cultural contexts. The quantitative dimension involved administering structured questionnaires at two critical junctures-priors to and following one semester of English instruction-to capture measurable changes in learners' self-perception and cultural attitudes over time. This longitudinal element provided empirical evidence of shifts linked to English learning. Complementing this, qualitative data were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a purposively selected subset of participants. This phase aimed to delve into learners' subjective experiences, nuanced perceptions, and identity negotiations, which are often difficult to fully capture through quantitative instruments alone (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The integration of these methods allowed for triangulation, thereby enhancing the validity of findings and enabling the research questions to be addressed from both statistical and interpretative perspectives.

The study sample comprised 78 Master One students enrolled in the Language Sciences program at Setif 2 University in Algeria. All participants were actively engaged in an intensive English language course designed to elevate their proficiency for academic and professional contexts. The cohort was not gender balanced, with 60 females and 18 males, ranging in age from 22 to 28 years. Participation was entirely voluntary, with all ethical safeguards in place-including informed consent, assurance of confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any time- in strict accordance with the university's research ethics protocols.

As part of the data collection and analysis tools, two questionnaires were meticulously developed to measure participants' self-perception and identity-related attitudes at two pivotal points: the beginning (pre-test) and the end (post-test) of the semester. These instruments were adapted from validated scales commonly used in language and identity research (Norton, 2000; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). Each questionnaire consisted of Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) probing key dimensions, including:

- ✓ Confidence in cultural identity
- ✓ Connection to native culture
- ✓ Openness to global cultures
- ✓ Confidence in expressing oneself in the native language
- ✓ Openness to exploring new cultural perspectives

Items were carefully phrased to ensure clarity, cultural appropriateness, and neutrality. Prior to the main study, the questionnaires were piloted with a small group of students to verify reliability and comprehensibility.

Following questionnaire administration, 10 students were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Selection criteria prioritized diversity across gender, regional background, and questionnaire response patterns. Interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were conducted in the language preferred by the participant-Arabic, English, or a combination thereof. The interview

protocol included open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth reflections on:

- ✓ The personal impact of English learning on self-concept
- ✓ Perceived changes in cultural identity
- ✓ Negotiation between native and English-speaking identities
- ✓ The envisioned role of English in future life and career

All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim to facilitate detailed analysis.

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). Descriptive statistics-means and standard deviations-summarized responses for each item at both pre- and post-test phases. Paired samples t-tests were conducted to determine the statistical significance of observed changes in participants' self-perception and identity measures. To complement significance testing, effect sizes (Cohen's d) were calculated, providing an estimate of the practical importance of the observed changes, acknowledging that statistically significant differences do not always translate into meaningful educational effects (Cohen, 1988).

Interview transcripts were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) rigorous six-step procedure: data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report production. The manual analytic process allowed for close engagement with the data, paying special attention to contextual factors, linguistic nuances, and participants' sociocultural positioning. Themes focused on identity negotiation, cultural awareness, and self-expression emerged inductively from the data. To ensure trustworthiness, the study employed member checking-where participants reviewed selected excerpts for accuracy-and peer debriefing sessions with colleagues. An audit trail was maintained to document analytic decisions and enhance transparency.

4. Data Analysis

This section presents the findings from the study, which were derived from both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative results, based on pre- and post-learning questionnaires, provide insights into the shifts in self-perception and identity experienced by Algerian EFL learners after one semester of English instruction. Following the quantitative analysis, qualitative data from semi-structured interviews are presented to offer a deeper understanding of the learners' experiences and the emerging themes related to identity transformation. The results are organized into two main subsections: quantitative findings and qualitative insights, each discussing key variables and their implications.

4.1 Quantitative Findings

To assess the impact of English language learning on the self-perception and identity of Algerian EFL learners, quantitative data were collected using pre- and post-instruction questionnaires. These questionnaires measured key dimensions of self-perception and identity, including confidence in cultural identity, connection to native culture, openness to global cultures, confidence in expressing the native language, and openness to exploring cultures. The descriptive statistics for these variables are summarized in Table 1, which presents the mean scores and standard deviations both before and after the English instruction.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Self-Perception and Identity Variables Pre- and Post-English Learning (N = 78)

Variable	Pre-Learning Mean	Post-Learning Mean	Change	Pre-Learning SD	Post-Learning SD
Confidence in cultural identity	4.1	4.3	+0.2	0.9	0.8
Connection to native culture	4.2	4.1	-0.1	0.7	0.6
Openness to global cultures	4.0	4.1	+0.1	0.8	0.7
Confidence in expressing native language	4.8	4.7	-0.1	0.5	0.4
Openness to exploring cultures	3.8	4.2	+0.4	0.7	0.6

The descriptive statistics from Table 1 indicate notable trends in the self-perception and identity variables after one semester of English instruction.

1. **Confidence in cultural identity:** There was a small increase in confidence in cultural identity (+0.2). This suggests that despite engaging with a foreign language, learners still maintained a strong sense of cultural self-awareness, reinforcing that language learning, particularly in post-colonial settings, doesn't necessarily lead to cultural erosion (Kramsch, 1993).
2. **Connection to native culture:** The slight decrease in connection to native culture (-0.1) indicates a subtle shift toward greater openness but still a strong attachment to their cultural roots. The small negative change suggests that learners may be moving toward a more fluid conception of their identity, possibly accommodating both local and global influences.
3. **Openness to global cultures:** This variable showed a modest increase (+0.1), reflecting a shift toward greater global engagement. While this change may not be large, it still suggests that English learning increases learners' willingness to engage with global cultural perspectives, a crucial finding for understanding identity transformation in a globalized world.
4. **Confidence in expressing native language:** The slight decrease in confidence in expressing their native language (-0.1) could be reflective of the cognitive demands of mastering English. It suggests that, while learners are becoming more proficient in English, their confidence in their native language has not significantly decreased, which aligns with findings from research on multilingualism (Pavlenko, 2003).
5. **Openness to exploring cultures:** The most notable change is observed here (+0.4), indicating a significant increase in learners' openness to exploring new cultures. This aligns with Kramsch's (1993) assertion that foreign language learning encourages intercultural competence, thus broadening learners' horizons.

Overall, the data from Table 1 suggest that while learners still feel strongly connected to their native culture, their engagement with English has led to increased openness toward other cultures,

pointing toward the development of hybrid identities that blend both local and global influences (García & Wei, 2014).

Table 2. Paired Samples t-test Results for Changes in Self-Perception and Identity Variables

Variable	t(77)	p-value	Cohen's d	Significance
Confidence in cultural identity	2.18	.032	0.25	Significant
Connection to native culture	-1.22	.226	0.14	Not significant
Openness to global cultures	1.76	.083	0.20	Marginal
Confidence in expressing native language	-1.08	.283	0.12	Not significant
Openness to exploring cultures	3.54	.001	0.40	Significant

The paired samples t-tests in Table 2 reveal significant statistical insights into the changes observed in learners' self-perception and identity.

1. **Confidence in cultural identity:** The t-test shows a statistically significant increase in confidence in cultural identity, $t(77) = 2.18$, $p = .032$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.25$). This finding indicates that learners' sense of their cultural identity became more stable or reinforced as they learned English, supporting the idea that English learning does not necessarily disrupt local identities but can instead strengthen cultural self-awareness (Kramsch, 1993).
2. **Connection to native culture:** The change in connection to native culture was not statistically significant, $t(77) = -1.22$, $p = .226$. This suggests that, although there was a slight decrease in the connection to native culture, the effect was minimal and not significant. The learners, therefore, maintained a relatively consistent attachment to their native cultural roots, reinforcing the idea that English learning can coexist with strong local cultural affiliations (Pennycook, 1994).
3. **Openness to global cultures:** While the increase in openness to global cultures was positive (+0.1), it did not reach statistical significance, $t(77) = 1.76$, $p = .083$. However, the marginal increase suggests that learners might be on the verge of a significant shift toward global engagement. This finding implies that while the shift toward global cultures is still in progress, it may become more pronounced over time with further exposure to English and global cultural contexts (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001).
4. **Confidence in expressing native language:** This variable showed no significant change, $t(77) = -1.08$, $p = .283$. The slight decline observed in the descriptive statistics may suggest a temporary shift in focus toward English, but it does not significantly detract from the learners' overall cultural self-concept or native language use.
5. **Openness to exploring cultures:** The increase in openness to exploring cultures was highly significant, $t(77) = 3.54$, $p = .001$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.40$). This indicates that learners became substantially more open to exploring new cultures through English learning. The robust significance of this finding supports the theory that learning English fosters a greater capacity for intercultural awareness and self-reflection (Kramsch, 1993; García & Wei, 2014).

4.2 Qualitative Findings

The qualitative insights derived from the semi-structured interviews provided a deeper understanding of how Algerian EFL learners negotiate their identities as they engage with the English language. Thematic analysis revealed four primary themes: the emergence of hybrid identities,

heightened global awareness and curiosity, enhanced confidence in self-expression, and the preservation of cultural integrity.

– **Emergence of Hybrid Identities**

A key theme identified was the emergence of hybrid identities, as learners expressed the blending of their Algerian heritage with global cultural influences accessed through English. One participant shared, "Learning English opened my eyes to different ways of thinking and living, but it didn't make me forget who I am. I feel I am becoming a person who belongs to both worlds—the Algerian and the global." This supports Norton's (2000) conceptualization of identity as dynamic and negotiated, with learners actively engaging with both local and global cultural influences. This hybridity reflects the fluid, multifaceted nature of identity as learners draw on multiple cultural resources (García & Wei, 2014).

– **Heightened Global Awareness and Curiosity**

Participants frequently described an increased curiosity about global cultures, attributing this shift to their engagement with English-language media and literature. One student noted, "Before I started learning English seriously, I did not think much about other cultures. Now, I watch English movies, read articles, and even try to connect with people from other countries. It has made me more open-minded." This sentiment reflects the power of English learning to broaden learners' cultural perspectives, fostering greater intercultural competence (Kramsch, 1993).

– **Enhanced Confidence in Self-Expression**

Increased confidence in self-expression was another dominant theme. As one participant noted, "I used to be shy about speaking in class, but learning English made me more confident. I feel I can express myself better, whether in English or Arabic. It has improved my voice." This highlights the affective dimension of language learning, where acquiring proficiency in English also strengthens learners' self-esteem and sense of agency, aligning with Lantolf and Pavlenko's (2001) findings on the psychological benefits of language learning.

– **Preservation of Cultural Integrity**

Despite increased engagement with global cultures, many participants emphasized that their Algerian cultural identity remained central to their self-concept. One student remarked, "Learning English gave me a new way to understand the world, but it didn't change my love for my culture. I am proud of my language, traditions, and history." This underscores the resilience of learners' attachment to their native culture, reinforcing that English learning does not necessitate cultural assimilation but rather allows for the negotiation of local and global identities (Pennycook, 1994).

4.3 Discussion and Implications

This study set out to explore how learning English influences the self-perception and identity of Algerian EFL learners, with a focus on the navigation of cultural and linguistic identities within Algeria's complex socio-political environment. The findings presented in the quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal a nuanced understanding of identity transformations, particularly in post-colonial North African settings.

– **English Learning and Shifts in Self-Perception**

The results showed that, following one semester of English instruction, learners exhibited a significant increase in their openness to exploring diverse cultures, coupled with a modest boost in

their confidence regarding cultural identity. These findings resonate with Kramsch's (1993) notion of language learning as a means of broadening cultural horizons, fostering intercultural competence, and encouraging self-reflection.

– **Negotiating Identity in a Post-Colonial Context**

The qualitative data highlighted the emergence of hybrid identities, reflecting the dynamic process of identity negotiation as learners reconcile local and global influences. This supports Norton's (2000) theory that identity is a fluid and negotiated construct, shaped by both the social context and the learners' personal experiences. The learners in this study, therefore, actively engage with English to craft multifaceted identities that blend their cultural heritage with the broader global community facilitated by the language.

In sum, the results indicate that while Algerian learners experience an increased openness to global cultures through their engagement with English, they simultaneously maintain strong ties to their local cultural identity. These findings suggest that English language learning in Algeria leads to the development of hybrid identities, where learners negotiate local and global cultural affiliations, thereby contributing to the ongoing discourse on language, identity, and power dynamics in post-colonial contexts.

These insights carry profound implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) pedagogy in Algeria, particularly in light of the complex socio-cultural landscape that defines the nation. As the study reveals, language learning is not merely a cognitive or linguistic exercise but is deeply embedded within a broader framework of identity formation and emotional experiences. In Algeria, where learners must navigate the interplay between local languages and global English, educators must recognize that language instruction shapes not only linguistic competence but also personal and cultural identities. Therefore, it is essential for educators to acknowledge the transformative nature of language learning, ensuring that it is integrated into students' broader sense of self and emotional development.

To address this, educators should implement instructional approaches that affirm learners' cultural backgrounds while fostering intercultural exploration. This could involve creating spaces for students to discuss their local cultures and histories in the classroom, encouraging them to view English not as a tool that erodes their identity but as a means of expanding their horizons. Instructional strategies should seek to validate the learners' existing cultural knowledge, while also introducing them to diverse global perspectives. Such approaches can promote a sense of belonging in the classroom, increasing student motivation, and engagement, as suggested by Norton & Toohey (2011). By creating a culturally inclusive environment, teachers can mitigate the psychological and emotional strain often associated with language learning, enabling students to engage more fully with both the local and global dimensions of their identities.

Secondly, it is crucial for curriculum designers to explicitly incorporate intercultural communication training. Given the growing importance of globalization and the increasing interconnection of cultures, students need to be equipped with the skills to navigate these interactions effectively. This involves more than simply learning English; it requires the development of critical thinking skills that allow learners to engage with cultural diversity in thoughtful, reflective ways. Intercultural communication training can help students to recognize cultural differences, challenge stereotypes, and foster mutual respect. By addressing the dynamics of culture in language education, students will be better prepared to function in a globalized world, where effective communication across cultural boundaries is essential. Incorporating such training into the curriculum would provide learners with tools not only for academic success but also for personal growth and professional advancement.

Furthermore, the observed stability of learners' native cultural identity, as highlighted in the results, reinforces the need to maintain and valorize native languages within EFL programs. The slight decrease in connection to native culture among students did not indicate a loss of cultural identity, but rather a nuanced negotiation between global and local influences. This finding underscores the

importance of integrating the learners' native languages and cultural values into English language instruction. Teachers should be mindful of the delicate balance between fostering global competencies and preserving linguistic and cultural heritage. Curriculum designers should prioritize bilingual or content-based instruction models that integrate English and indigenous languages. Such models can help prevent the marginalization of native linguistic resources and promote additive bilingualism, as proposed by Cummins (2000). Additive bilingualism, where students maintain proficiency in both their native language and English, not only fosters cognitive benefits but also strengthens students' connection to their heritage, enhancing their overall sense of self.

Moreover, a curriculum that bridges English with indigenous languages acknowledges the complex sociolinguistic reality of Algeria, where Arabic, Berber, and French coexist alongside English. Integrating these languages into the curriculum can enrich the language-learning experience by providing students with more diverse linguistic and cultural perspectives. It also ensures that students do not have to abandon their cultural roots in order to succeed in the globalized world, thereby fostering a sense of pride and continuity with their heritage.

Incorporating these strategies into EFL pedagogy in Algeria can transform the language learning process from a mere acquisition of a foreign language into a profound, culturally responsive, and identity-affirming experience. By recognizing the central role of culture in language learning, and by creating curricula that respect and incorporate both local and global influences, educators and curriculum designers can prepare Algerian students not only to excel in English but also to thrive as culturally competent and confident individuals in an increasingly interconnected world.

While this study offers valuable insights, its scope is limited to a single university and a relatively homogeneous sample of advanced learners. Future research should broaden its scope to include diverse regions across Algeria, varying educational levels, and more heterogeneous populations to capture a fuller spectrum of learner experiences. Longitudinal research is also needed to track how identity transformations evolve over extended periods and across higher proficiency stages. Finally, comparative studies involving other post-colonial contexts in North Africa and beyond could deepen understanding of how socio-political histories influence EFL learners' identity negotiation processes worldwide.

5. Conclusion

This study has shed light on the multifaceted impact of English language learning on the self-perception and identity of Algerian EFL learners. Through a mixed-methods approach, it demonstrated that acquiring English not only increases learners' openness to global cultures but also fosters the emergence of hybrid, fluid identities that intertwine local heritage with global influences. Crucially, learners maintain a resilient attachment to their native cultural identities even as they negotiate complex tensions within Algeria's post-colonial, multilingual sociolinguistic environment. These findings underscore that language learning extends beyond mere cognitive or communicative skill development; it constitutes a profoundly social and identity-shaping process. For educators and policymakers in Algeria, acknowledging and engaging with identity issues in English language teaching is essential for cultivating inclusive, empowering, and globally competent learners. By bridging cultural rootedness and global engagement, English education in Algeria holds the promise of equipping students with the linguistic and intercultural competencies necessary for meaningful participation in an increasingly interconnected world.

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