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CYBERCULTURE AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AMONG ALGERIAN EFL LEARNERS: INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY NEGOTIATION

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Abstract: In an increasingly interconnected world, the emergence of cyberculture, defined by socio-digital behaviours, values, and practices, has fundamentally reshaped the educational landscape. For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Algeria, digital platforms serve as more than just academic tools; they are primary sites for intercultural communication and identity negotiation. However, despite the pervasive nature of digital engagement, there is a notable research gap regarding how these experiences contribute to the development of global citizenship within the specific socio-cultural context of the MENA region. This study aims to investigate the influence of cyberculture on Algerian EFL learners' academic lives, social transformations, and their sense of global belonging. Employing a mixed-methods descriptive design, data were collected from 95 university students across various academic levels (License, Master, and Doctorate) through an adapted online questionnaire (Cronbach's alpha = .84). Quantitative findings reveal that 94.7% of participants perceive cyberculture as a positive force for social and educational transformation, with 89.5% reporting the formation of new digital identities and social statuses. Qualitative thematic analysis further demonstrated that 72% of students experienced increased empathy through cultural exposure, while direct digital engagement facilitated significant intercultural exchanges. The results highlight a critical tension: while students are socially integrated into global digital networks, they express a need for enhanced digital literacy to navigate challenges such as cultural homogenisation, misinformation, and "context collapse." The study concludes that cyberculture acts as a potent catalyst for social transformation, directly contributing to the cognitive and socio-emotional pillars of global citizenship as defined by UNESCO. The implications suggest that Algerian higher education must move beyond technical ICT training to incorporate critical digital intercultural instruction. By specifically integrating the dimension of identity negotiation from a non-Western perspective, this research offers a unique contribution to the discourse on digital education, providing a robust model for educators to strategically leverage digital spaces in cultivating globally interconnected citizens.

Keywords: Algerian EFL learners; cyberculture; global citizenship; identity negotiation; intercultural communication.

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1. Introduction

Cyberculture, comprising the behaviours, beliefs, and practices derived from the Internet, has profoundly transformed the ways in which the world communicates. It is no longer merely a set of technological tools; rather, it is a socio-digital phenomenon that reshapes how humans connect, negotiate identities, and accommodate cultural differences (D'Silva & Atay, 2019; Trufanova, 2023). The motivation for this study stems from the rapid, yet under-theorised, digital transition within Algerian society, where the Internet has become the primary site for socialisation. For EFL learners in particular, involvement with digital platforms is now essential to their language learning and social lives (Miller, 2021). As English functions as the lingua franca of the digital world, Algerian students are increasingly immersed in global networks that challenge their traditional cultural frameworks, necessitating a closer examination of how they navigate these new digital realities.

Recent literature has pointed to the potential of online spaces for developing intercultural communicative competence (Dooly & Darvin, 2022; Louahala, 2023) and critical digital literacies (Brocca et al., 2024). However, the majority of the extant literature still focuses on Western contexts or on the technical use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom. In Algeria, although the impact of online celebrities on the lifestyle of learners has been recognised (Khelkhal & Ouahmiche, 2022), alongside the importance of social media in linguistic identity (Zahaf, 2024), there remains a conspicuous silence regarding the psychological and socio-emotional dimensions of digital engagement. This research is conducted because existing scholarship has largely overlooked the intricate process of identity negotiation and the development of global citizenship among learners in the MENA region. By ignoring how students move between local cultural standards and global digital expectations, current educational models fail to address the hybrid identities that modern EFL learners are actively constructing. Without empirical data on these internal transformations, the transition from a local student to a globally competent citizen remains poorly understood.

To address this significant vacuum, the present study explores the impact of cyberculture on the academic and sociocultural changes of Algerian university EFL learners. Such an inquiry is justified by the urgent need to move beyond a purely technical conceptualisation of the Internet, instead treating it as a dynamic cultural environment where global values and responsibilities are actively forged. In doing so, this research seeks to contribute to the knowledge relevant to fast-digitising societies in the MENA region, providing fresh insights into intercultural communication and identity formation while enriching international scholarship on digital education with much-needed diversity (Ammour, 2024; Muschert & Ragnedda, 2024). To explore this phenomenon, the study addresses the following three consolidated research questions:

1. How does engagement with cyberculture influence the development of academic skills relevant to global citizenship among Algerian EFL learners?
2. To what extent does cyberculture shape the social lives of these learners and their capacity for identity negotiation during cross-cultural digital engagements?
3. How do Algerian EFL learners perceive the role of digital environments in facilitating a sense of global identity and shaping the future of intercultural education in Algeria?

2. Literature Review

With globalisation and the spread of the internet, culture has become the main way we make sense of the order and disorder of the modern world. As national boundaries have been reduced by globalisation, online connection has also transcended the physical bounds of

community (Acerbi, 2019). Cyberspace in this context is a virtual landscape, a new social habitat that enables dynamic changes and interaction among many worldwide communities. This section indicates the intricate interrelationship between cyberculture, intercultural communication, and the subtle process of identity negotiation, with specific regard to the effect of such factors on individuals' capacity to act as global citizens in the context of digital transformation.

2.1 Operationalising Global Citizenship: The UNESCO and OECD Frameworks

The concept of "Global Citizenship" (GC) has evolved from a philosophical ideal to an educational obligation (Kymlicka, 2020). In a more interconnected society, what happens in one place often has effects throughout the globe. To go beyond a loose description, this study uses the framework of Global Citizenship Education (GCED) by UNESCO (2015). According to UNESCO, GCED covers three separate learning domains:

The Cognitive Domain: This covers the acquisition of information about global issues and the complicated links between local and global processes. This means that the EFL student has to be able to critically analyse the information he or she encounters in the target language.

The Socio-emotional Domain: This is about developing a sense of belonging to a shared humanity, sharing ideals and obligations, based on human rights and empathy. It emphasises the development of intercultural competences and the ability to value variety.

The Behavioural Domain: Acting efficiently and responsibly on local, national, and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.

The OECD Global Competence Framework (2018) also considers "Global Competence" as a multi-dimensional capacity. It entails exploring local, global, and intercultural concerns; understanding and valuing others' perspectives and world views; interacting open-mindedly and effectively with people in a range of intercultural contexts; and acting for collective wellbeing. These frameworks cannot be separated from digital literacy in the digital age. As Pangrazio and Sefton-Green (2021) suggest, global citizenship entails the development of the crucial capacity to operate within "algorithmic governance" and misinformation, so that digital interaction remains an act of informed agency rather than passive consumption.

2.2 Foundational Theories of Cyberculture: Castells, Lévy, and Jenkins

To understand the Algerian EFL student's digital experience, one must engage with the foundational theorists of the information age. In his seminal work, "The Network Society," Manuel Castells (2010) argues that the main social structures of contemporary society are no longer organised around physical institutions, but around digital networks. Castells presents the idea of the "Space of Flows" as opposed to the "Space of Places." For Algerian learners, the physical 'Space of Places' (the local university or home) is gradually being replaced by the 'Space of Flows': the instant exchange of information, symbols, and English-language media that makes up their digital reality. Culture is not a static legacy in modern network society but a dynamic flow through which users have to navigate.

In parallel with Castells, the hypothesis of "Collective Intelligence" was proposed by Pierre Lévy (1997). Lévy imagined cyberspace not simply as a technical infrastructure but as a venue for "virtualisation". The Internet, he said, makes it possible to have a shared cognitive arena in which knowledge is built together. This is seen with EFL learners in online forums, wikis, and collaborative gaming environments where English is the lingua franca for creating shared understanding. For Lévy, cyberculture is the ensemble of technologies, behaviours and

values that emerge from the augmentation of human intelligence via digital connection. It is a "cosmopedia" area where learners can access the entire sum of human knowledge, going beyond the restrictions of local libraries or traditional curricula.

Henry Jenkins (2006) identifies this atmosphere as a “Participatory Culture.” Traditional media made audiences passive consumers, while digital platforms promote “produsage,” the simultaneous production and consumption of culture. Algerian EFL learners involved in “Convergence Culture” are not only studying English but also using it to generate memes, join international fan communities, and engage in “digital storytelling”. Active involvement is a key element of global citizenship, requiring learners to negotiate meaning and value across many cultural groupings.

2.3 Identity Negotiation in the Digital Cocoon: Turkle and the Multiple Self

The process of identity formation has been fundamentally altered by what Sherry Turkle (1995) described as the "multiplicity of self." In her early work, Turkle argued that the Internet acts as a “laboratory for identity,” a space in which people might experiment with different versions of themselves through “identity play.” The digital persona of an EFL learner, frequently conveyed in English, may be more empowered or “global” than their offline, local self.

However, Turkle’s latest work (2011) adds a more critical perspective, indicating that we may be “constantly connected” but also “alone together.” The notion of the “digital cocoon” or “filter bubble” implies that cyberculture may paradoxically buttress restricted identities if users are only exposed to like-minded persons. This creates a contradiction in the Algerian context between the vital relationships associated with the ‘relational self’ and the ‘global self’ made possible by digital technology. Negotiating this identity is a major problem for learners. They need to navigate the “transport” to increased openness in relationships while meeting the requirement to preserve a sense of local cultural integrity (D’Silva & Atay, 2019; Trufanova, 2023).

Negotiating identity in cyberculture is not a single transition. It reflects what Bhabha (1994) called “the Third Space,” redefined in a digital setting. This is a hybrid realm in which local Algerian values and global digital conventions encounter, collide, and eventually blend. Users are involved in a sophisticated type of cultural ‘translation’ through their curation of self-presentation on social media (McCulloch, 2019), determining which pieces of their identity to broadcast to a worldwide audience.

2.4 Intercultural Communication and the "Thickening" of Media Culture

Intercultural communication (IC) is no longer an uncommon event of physical travel but a regular event mediated by screens. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) gives rise to a “thickening phenomenon” in digital media culture (Humphreys & Baker, 2021). This is about how cultural patterns from different civilisations are stacked and made apparent in the same digital environment. Hence, the lines between civilisations are blurred.

For the EFL learner, English is the main bridge across these borders. Nevertheless, as Baker (2016) and Holliday (2022) point out, linguistic competence does not guarantee intercultural awareness in digital environments. It demands "intercultural communicative competence" (ICC), the capacity to work with the subtleties of communicating with people who do not have the same cultural or linguistic background. ICC evolves in the dynamic arenas of online platforms through trial and error. Early discussions about digital interaction tended to point to its shallowness, while current viewpoints highlight that online spaces can build deep empathy when users engage in “critical digital storytelling” or become part of transnational social movements (Dooly & Darvin, 2022).

2.5 Digital Literacy as a Pragmatic Necessity in Algeria

In the Algerian EFL context, cyberculture is deeply ingrained in the educational system, yet it remains under-theorised. The Internet is an extension of academic tools that facilitate "gathering" of information (McCulloch, 2019). However, the shift from a typical industrial model of education to an "open arena" of engagement is not without its obstacles. The development of intercultural relationships is needed for 21st-century survival in modern media literacy, including cyberculture (Pangrazio et al., 2020).

The Algerian university student is placed in a particular socio-linguistic context. English is the global aspirational and digital "cool" language, but it has to share space with Arabic (official) and French (historically dominant). Cyberculture is a 'neutral' space on the internet where you can practise English, free of the colonial baggage of the French language and the limits of academic Arabic. But this engagement is not a neutral one. It carries the values of the "Global North"; hence, learners need to be critical of the media they consume (Ammour, 2024; Zahaf, 2024).

2.6 The Dark Side of Cyberculture: A Critical Perspective

To avoid an overly optimistic view of digital engagement, it is essential to address the potential negative effects of cyberculture. Reviewing the literature through a critical lens reveals several risks:

1. **Misinformation and Algorithmic Bias**: Digital platforms are not neutral; they are governed by algorithms that often prioritise engagement over truth. This can lead to the "racialisation" of certain groups or the spread of "racism without race" (Mesouani, 2025).
2. **Cultural Homogenisation**: There is a persistent fear that the "global" culture promoted by the Internet is merely a repackaged version of Western consumerism, which may lead to the erosion of local Algerian traditions (Muschert & Ragnedda, 2024).
3. **Digital Exclusion**: The "digital divide" remains a reality in the MENA region. Global citizenship is only available to those with the economic and technical means to participate, potentially creating new forms of social stratification.
4. **Online Radicalisation and Polarisation:** The same networks that build bridges can also be used to build walls, facilitating the rise of "echo chambers" where ethnocentrism is reinforced rather than reduced.

The literature establishes that cyberculture is not merely a tool but an ontological shift in how human beings exist and interact. Grounded in the network society (Castells) and collective intelligence (Lévy), digital spaces offer a participatory arena (Jenkins) for identity negotiation (Turkle). This digital life is the main space where the Algerian EFL learner performs global citizenship. From the UNESCO (2015) domains, it can be shown that digital interaction nurtures the learner's cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural development. But this expansion depends on "critical digital literacy," the capacity to handle the potential of the digital age while being cognisant of its systemic threats. This study aims to anchor these high-level theories in the actual reality of the Algerian university student, exploring how they personally cross the bridge from their local identity to their global digital future.

3. Methodology

This section outlines the methodological framework adopted for the study, detailing the research design, participant selection, data collection instruments, and analysis procedures.

3.1 Research Design and Justification

The study employed a mixed-methods descriptive research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This design was chosen because cyberculture and identity negotiation are multifaceted, subjective phenomena that cannot be captured by numbers alone. The quantitative component allows for the identification of broad patterns and the measurement of consensus regarding the effects of digital engagement on global citizenship (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Meanwhile, the qualitative component provides a nuanced exploration of the "how" and "why" behind these perceptions, capturing the lived experiences of learners as they navigate intercultural spaces. By combining these approaches, the study achieves "triangulation" of data, where qualitative narratives validate and provide depth to the statistical trends, leading to a more holistic interpretation of how digital engagement contributes to fostering a globally aware generation (Denscombe, 2017).

3.2 Participants and Research Setting

The study's participants comprised 95 EFL students enrolled in public universities across Algeria. As shown in Table 1, the sample included a diverse range of academic levels and age groups.

Table 1

Participant Demographics (N=95)

Variable	Category	*n*	%
Gender	Female	65	68.4
	Male	30	31.6
Age Group	18–22	48	50.5
	23–27	32	33.7
	28+	15	15.8
Academic Level	License (Undergraduate)	40	42.1
	Master's	36	37.9
	Doctorate (PhD)	19	20.0
Geographic Region	Center (Algiers, Bejaia, etc.)	52	54.7
	East (Constantine, Setif, etc.)	28	29.5
	West & South (Oran, Ouargla, etc.)	15	15.8
Total		**95**	**100.0**

The selection of participants utilised convenience sampling, focusing on students readily accessible through university digital networks. While this non-probability method limits the generalisability of the findings to the entire Algerian student population, it was deemed appropriate for this exploratory study. The primary criterion was active engagement with the Internet, ensuring that respondents possessed firsthand experience necessary to provide meaningful insights into cyberculture. To mitigate potential bias, efforts were made to recruit participants from multiple academic levels and geographical regions within Algeria.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Data were collected via an adapted online questionnaire structured into two sections:

3.3.1 Quantitative Scale: Perceptions of Cyberculture

Adapted from Koçak and Serarslan (2020), this 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 5=Strongly Agree) assessed perceptions across academic, social, and intercultural dimensions. To ensure the instrument's reliability within the Algerian EFL context, a

Cronbach's alpha test was performed. The scale yielded a coefficient of .84, indicating high internal consistency and reliability.

3.3.2 Qualitative Section: Open-Ended Inquiry

A dedicated section with four open-ended questions targeted the "socio-emotional" and "behavioural" domains of global citizenship. Questions focused on:

1. Direct intercultural connections made online.
2. Challenges encountered during cultural exchange (e.g., miscommunication, bias).
3. Changes in global awareness and belonging.
4. Visions for the future of digital education in Algeria.

3.3.3 Pilot Study and Instrument Revision

A pilot study was conducted with 15 EFL students (not included in the final sample). The outcomes led to several critical revisions:

- Linguistic Clarity: Terms like "Cyber Public Sphere" were clarified to include examples such as "International Facebook groups or Twitter hashtags" to ensure students understood the sociological concept in terms of their daily usage.

- Contextual Relevance: One item regarding "online shopping culture" was replaced with "digital academic collaboration" to better align with the study's focus on global citizenship and education.

- Time-to-Complete: The survey was shortened to ensure an average completion time of 10 minutes, reducing respondent fatigue.

3.4 Procedures and Data Analysis

The questionnaire was disseminated via secure digital platforms (Microsoft Teams, Facebook University Groups) in April 2023. Informed consent was obtained electronically, ensuring anonymity and the right to withdraw.

3.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Numerical data derived from the closed-ended questions were analysed using SPSS Version 26. Descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were calculated to summarise the participants' responses and identify prevalent trends regarding their perceptions of cyberculture's effects. This descriptive approach provided a systematic overview of the consensus among Algerian EFL students concerning digital identity and global engagement. Data were organised into thematic clusters (Academic, Social, and Intercultural) to allow for a clearer interpretation of how cyberculture practices are distributed across the student population. The results of this analysis are detailed in Table 2 in the following section.

3.4.2 Qualitative Analysis (Transparency & Rigour)

Thematic analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2022) six-phase approach. To ensure transparency:

Coding Process: An initial set of 42 codes was generated (e.g., "empathy," "stereotyping," "language barrier"). These were then grouped into five overarching themes.

Reliability: Coding was performed independently by the researcher. To assess inter-coder reliability, a second researcher coded 20% of the transcripts. An agreement rate of 88% was achieved, and discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

Data Saturation: By the 75th response, no new themes were emerging, indicating that the sample size (n=95) was sufficient for qualitative depth.

The integration of these findings during the discussion phase aimed to bridge the gap between statistical trends and the subjective reality of identity negotiation in a digital world.

4. Results

The findings of this study, derived from a cohort of 95 Algerian EFL university students, provide a comprehensive view of how cyberculture influences their academic trajectory and social identity. This section details the statistical trends from the quantitative survey and the thematic insights from the qualitative open-ended responses, focusing on their collective contribution to empowering global citizenship.

4.1 Quantitative Findings: Statistical Trends and Clustered Analysis

The quantitative data provide a broad overview of students' perceptions regarding the transformative power of digital environments. Table 2 presents the frequencies and percentages for the eight core statements regarding cyberculture's impact.

Table 2

Perceptions of Cyberculture's Impact on Academic and Social Life (N=95)

Statement	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1. Cyberculture positively influences societal norms and education.	56.8	37.9	3.2	1.1	1.0
2. Internet usage significantly impacts daily social behaviors.	56.8	37.9	4.2	1.1	0.0
3. Digital platforms shape new identities and social statuses.	45.3	44.2	7.4	3.1	0.0
4. Internet engagement rebuilds social identity and cognitive skills.	41.1	37.8	15.8	4.2	1.1
5. Cyberculture fosters a public sphere that shapes perspectives.	43.2	46.3	8.4	2.1	0.0
6. Critical engagement with digital content is vital for academia.	25.3	32.7	21.1	14.7	6.2
7. Media literacy is crucial for effective intercultural contact.	36.8	36.7	15.8	8.6	2.1
8. Cyberculture is central to Algeria's future Distance Education.	18.9	30.5	10.8	16.7	23.1

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Cluster 1: Societal and Behavioural Consensus (Statements 1 and 2)

The results demonstrate a near-unanimous recognition of cyberculture as a catalyst for social change. A combined 94.7% of participants agreed that cyberculture positively influences societal norms and that internet usage has fundamentally altered their daily behaviours. This high consensus indicates that for the Algerian EFL learner, digital engagement is not a peripheral activity but an essential component of their lived reality. This aligns with the "Behavioural" domain of global citizenship, where digital participation becomes the primary mode of social action.

Cluster 2: Identity Formation and the Digital Public Sphere (Statements 3, 4, and 5)

The data suggest a profound shift in how students perceive their "self." Approximately 89.5% of respondents affirmed that digital platforms facilitate the creation of new identities and social statuses. Furthermore, 78.9% agreed that digital engagement helps rebuild their social identity and cognitive skills. These results point toward a process of identity negotiation, where learners are not just consuming information but are actively curating global versions of themselves within what 89.5% of participants identify as a "cyber public sphere."

Cluster 3: Literacy, Criticality, and Institutional Futures (Statements 6, 7, and 8)

A significant divergence occurs in the domain of critical literacy and institutional application. While 73.5% acknowledge that media literacy is vital for intercultural contact, only 58% strongly agree or agree that they critically engage with digital content for academic purposes. More tellingly, Statement 8 regarding the future of "Distance Education" in Algeria received the highest rate of disagreement (39.8%), with a further 10.8% remaining neutral. This suggests a "skeptical adoption" of cyberculture: while students are socially immersed, they express doubt regarding the readiness of the Algerian institutional framework to fully integrate these digital transformations.

4.2. Qualitative Findings: Themes and Conceptual Linkages

The thematic analysis of the open-ended responses provides a deeper, "thick" description of the processes behind the statistics. Five themes emerged, directly mapping to the research questions (RQs) regarding academic skills, social identity, and global perceptions.

Theme 1: Transcending Parochialism through Digital Exposure (Links to RQ2)

This theme reflects the students' transition from a localised perspective to a globalised curiosity, directly addressing the extent to which digital spaces shape their social capacity for cross-cultural engagement. Many respondents noted that before their deep engagement with cyberculture, their cultural world was relatively restricted by geographical and traditional boundaries. Digital platforms have effectively functioned as "windows" to the world, allowing learners to witness diverse lifestyles without physical mobility.

Narrative Insight: Participants described social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube) as primary sources of cultural discovery. As Participant 32 (Master's) noted: *"Before the internet, I only knew about Algerian culture. Now, through Instagram and YouTube, I see how people live in Korea, Brazil, or India, and it makes me curious to learn more about their traditions."* This shift represents a fundamental move toward the "socio-emotional" domain of global citizenship. It demonstrates that cyberculture does not merely provide information; it fosters a psychological openness and an emotional readiness to engage with "the other," which is a prerequisite for effective identity negotiation in intercultural settings.

Theme 2: Language as a Bridge for Active Exchange (Links to RQ1 and RQ2)

The findings emphasise that English is no longer just a subject to be studied but a tool for behavioural engagement and socialisation. In relation to RQ1, this theme highlights how digital spaces facilitate the development of academic and linguistic skills relevant to global citizenship through "produsage", the simultaneous production and consumption of culture. Students are utilising language exchange apps and gaming servers to build tangible connections, moving from passive learning to active participation.

Narrative Insight: Participant 18 (Bachelor) explained: *"I practice my English with people from different countries in chat groups. We share our daily lives, and sometimes we discuss global events. It feels like making friends across the world."* This response illustrates how cyberculture provides an authentic environment for practicing intercultural communicative competence. By using English to negotiate shared meanings in real-time, students satisfy the "Behavioural" pillar of global citizenship education, demonstrating that their academic skills are being transformed into social agency.

Theme 3: The Deconstruction of Ethnocentric Stereotypes (Links to RQ2)

One of the most potent themes was the role of direct dialogue in reducing bias, which is central to the capacity for identity negotiation during cross-cultural digital engagements (RQ2). Cyberculture allows for personal storytelling that counters the monolithic and often biased narratives found in traditional media. Through one-on-one interactions, learners are forced to confront their own ethnocentric assumptions and adjust their internal "grammar of culture." "

Narrative Insight: Participant 67 (Doctorate) shared a transformative experience*: "I used to have certain ideas about people from a specific country, but after talking to them online, I realised my ideas were just stereotypes. They are very friendly and open."* This highlights the identity negotiation process where the learner does not simply adopt a new culture but actively deconstructs prejudices. This real-time evidence allows students to reframe their social identity as part of a diverse global community rather than a closed local group.

Theme 4: Developing a Sense of Global Accountability (Links to RQ3)

This theme moves toward the "Cognitive" and "Behavioural" domains of citizenship, addressing how learners perceive their role in a global identity. Cyberculture, by providing instantaneous updates on international crises, shifts the learner's focus from local concerns to shared global responsibilities. Students reported that following international activists and social movements broadened their understanding of systemic global issues.

Narrative Insight: Participant 45 (Master's) articulated this shift: *"Social media helps me see that many problems are not just local; they are global. I follow activists from different countries, and it makes me think about what I can do even from Algeria."* This suggests that cyberculture fosters a global identity in which learners feel a sense of accountability toward international movements such as climate action and human rights. This perception of the "self" as a global actor is a critical finding for RQ3, suggesting that digital environments are reshaping the very definition of citizenship for Algerian youth.

Theme 5: Context Collapse and Digital Frustration (Links to RQ1 and RQ2)

In contrast to the positive themes, this theme addresses the "Dark Side" of digital interaction, providing a necessary balance to the findings. It serves as a crucial counter-narrative, showing that digital spaces can also be sites of confusion, "context collapse," and ethnocentric friction. This theme is directly linked to the academic skill of critical digital literacy (RQ1).

Narrative Insight: Respondents reported challenges such as "ghosting," linguistic misunderstanding, and exposure to offensive content. Participant 8 (Bachelor) remarked: *"Sometimes it's hard to understand jokes or sarcasm online with people from other cultures, leading to confusion. We need to be more careful... and recognise that not everything online is true."* This underscores the urgent need for critical digital literacy, an academic skill that the quantitative data suggested is still in development. The frustration expressed here highlights

the limits of "accidental" intercultural contact and suggests that without pedagogical mediation, digital engagement can lead to cultural withdrawal rather than global citizenship.

When the quantitative trends are merged with these qualitative narratives, a clear picture of the Algerian EFL learner emerges. Quantifiably, students are "Digital Believers" who find tremendous social and personal value in cyberculture. Qualitatively, they are "Active Negotiators" who use these digital spaces to deconstruct prejudices and establish a global sense of self. However, a significant "Literacy Gap" persists. While students are emotionally and socially engaged with the global world, they remain institutionally cautious and acutely aware of the complications arising from international miscommunication and digital skepticism. Taken together, these findings answer the research questions by revealing that cyberculture is the primary laboratory for global citizenship in the Algerian university context, yet it requires more structured educational supervision to transition from "accidental" to "informed" global citizenship.

5. Discussion

The results of this study provide an interesting picture of the “digital awakening” that is taking place among the Algerian EFL student body. This research transcends a simple assessment of internet usage, revealing instead how cyberculture has become an ontological habitat, a space where learners do not merely "go" but where they "exist" and "become." The discussion synthesises the quantitative consensus with qualitative lived experiences and examines the role of digital participation as the major laboratory for global citizenship and identity negotiation in a non-Western context.

5.1 The Socio-Digital Transformation: From Tools to Environments

The overwhelming quantitative agreement (94.7%) on the beneficial impact of cyberculture indicates that Algerian EFL learners have evolved beyond viewing the internet only as a source of academic material. Instead, they see it through the perspective of Manuel Castells’ (2010) “Space of Flows.” For these students, the physical borders of the Algerian university are increasingly crossed by worldwide digital networks, which command their social behaviours and cultural beliefs. This evidence supports Lévy’s (1997) notion of “Collective Intelligence,” which considers the digital domain as a space of cognitive emancipation.

But the disparity in Statement 8, where almost 40% expressed doubts about the future of “Distance Education” in Algeria, reveals a fundamental tension. Students are culturally and socially “digitised” but cautious about institutional preparedness. This shows that the Algerian educational infrastructure is seen as behind, whereas cyberculture has blossomed as a grassroots phenomenon among learners. This “institutional lag” mirrors a broader regional difficulty in the MENA area, where the fast adoption of digital lifestyles exceeds the formal incorporation of these technologies into educational policy (Ammour, 2024; Zahaf, 2024).

5.2 Identity Negotiation: The Global Relational Self

Perhaps the most noticeable result is the 89.5% agreement on the construction of new digital identities. This provides an empirical basis for Sherry Turkle’s (1995) claim that digital places are “laboratories for the self.” For an Algerian EFL learner, the English language is a passport to this digital laboratory. The “identity negotiation” the participants describe is not just about learning a language; it is about developing a “Global Relational Self” who can engage with the world without the direct watch of local traditional standards.

This is in line with Jenkins’ (2006) “Participatory Culture.” Learners are not passive beneficiaries of Western culture; they are “negotiators.” They decide which elements of their

Algerian identity to retain and which "global" features to embrace. As shown in the qualitative accounts of forging friendships beyond boundaries (Theme 2), this negotiation is commonly mediated in English. This generates what Bhabha (1994) calls a 'Third Space', a hybrid digital realm where learners can be both Algerian and global citizens at the same time. These findings confirm the view of D'Silva and Atay (2019), who argue that digital media offer an opportunity for the maintenance of local relationships, with the possibility of generating a sense of global belonging.

5.3 Fostering the Pillars of Global Citizenship

To move beyond a vague definition of global citizenship, this study explicitly links its findings to the UNESCO (2015) domains of learning:

A. The Socio-emotional Domain: Empathy and Stereotype Reduction

The qualitative Theme 3 ("Development of Empathy") provides clear evidence of the socio-emotional development necessary for global citizenship. Students said that one-on-one interaction online broke down prejudices from the media. This is an important finding because it pushes the EFL discourse from "linguistic accuracy" to "intercultural empathy". In doing so, students are able to transcend the 'large culture' barriers of nationalism and ethnocentrism through 'small culture' personal, one-on-one digital interactions, as described by Holliday (2019). This confirms the suggestion of Dooly and Darvin (2022) that digital platforms might develop a strong feeling of common humanity.

B. The Cognitive Domain: Awareness and Criticality

The "Cognitive" pillar is illustrated by the high awareness of global challenges (Theme 4). Students are now turning to cyberculture to stay abreast of climate change and human rights. This is a shift from localised students to "Global Watchdogs". Yet the "Literacy Gap" we reported in Statement 6 (where 42% were not critically engaged) remains concerning. Without critical digital literacy, learners are subject to the "Dark Side" of cyberculture (Pangrazio & Sefton-Green, 2021), such as algorithmic bias and misinformation. Theme 5 again brought out this skepticism, with students expressing annoyance at digital misunderstanding.

C. The Behavioural Domain: Active Intercultural Exchange

The "Behavioural" pillar is reflected in the "Direct Intercultural Exchange" (Theme 2). Algerian students are not simply thinking about global citizenship; they are living it out through their active participation in international forums and collaborative digital projects. This active "produsage" (simultaneous production and consumption of culture) signifies a change in the Algerian educational paradigm, from the learner as a "vessel to be filled" to the student as a "global actor."

5.4 Bridging the Digital Literacy Gap

Despite the optimism, the study highlights a pragmatic crisis: the "Digital Miscommunication" identified in Theme 5. The difficulty of deciphering sarcasm, cultural nuances, and "context collapse" indicates that being a "digital native" does not make one an "intercultural expert." This supports McCulloch's (2019) observation that the laws of digital communication are often unwritten and culturally coded.

For the Algerian EFL context, this implies that the curriculum must evolve. If 73.5% of students claim media literacy to be essential for intercultural communication, but many have trouble with the nuances of digital friction, then there is a clear mandate for Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) to be included in digital literacy training. Educators must

teach “how to negotiate meaning in a multicultural Twitter thread or a Discord server” rather than just “how to search Google.”

5.5 Cyberculture as a Futurological Framework

In brief, our research shows that for the contemporary Algerian student, the main engine of social and academic change is cyberculture. It has helped students move from “exclusive” to “inclusive” hybrid identities. The data imply that global citizenship in Algeria is not a Western import but a digital progression. Students are using the “Network Society” (Castells) and “Collective Intelligence” (Lévy) to establish bridges that were unachievable due to physical geography and political barriers.

However, the “Future Culture” of Algeria (Statement 8) remains a source of contestation. There is scepticism about distance education, whereby the culture may be ready, but the infrastructure and pedagogy are not. To truly develop global citizens, Algerian universities need to accept the reality of the “Space of Flows” and offer the vital scaffolding necessary for students to navigate the dark side of the digital cocoon. This research demonstrates that cyberculture is not an 'alternative' culture anymore, but the culture for the 21st-century student.

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study has illuminated the complex mechanisms through which cyberculture influences Algerian EFL learners, serving as a significant driver for the improvement of intercultural communication, the mediation of identity negotiation, and the cultivation of global citizenship. The synthesis of the data confirms that for these learners, digital interaction is not merely an "add-on" activity but a fundamental social habitat. Quantitatively, the near-unanimous consensus (94.7%) regarding the positive impact of digital engagement on societal norms highlights a profound shift in how students perceive their digital environment. Qualitatively, the narratives reveal a transition from "accidental" exposure to "active" negotiation, where students consciously use English to deconstruct ethnocentric stereotypes and foster a sense of shared global accountability. By offering unique access to diverse cultures and possibilities for authentic communication, cyberculture enables Algerian students to overcome geographical barriers and develop the socio-emotional empathy required for 21st-century citizenship.

6.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

This research contributes to the discourse on digital education theoretically by offering empirical evidence from the under-represented Algerian context. It aligns with the paradigm of global citizenship presented by UNESCO (2015) by illustrating the contribution of digital platforms to the cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural development of learners. It also contributes to understanding identity negotiation, since Algerian EFL learners use English to construct "hybrid identities" that connect local values with global digital norms.

Some Concrete Pedagogical Recommendations:

Algerian EFL courses should use the following practical ways to go from “accidental” internet involvement to “structured” global citizenship:

1) **Virtual Exchange (VE) and Telecollaboration:** Instead of using static textbooks, departments could engage in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) projects. For example, teaming Algerian students with students in other countries on collaborative digital presentations about global issues (e.g., climate change or digital ethics) can provide a scaffolded setting for intercultural practice.

2) **Critical Digital Storytelling:** Teachers could create Critical Digital Storytelling projects where students produce digital content (vlogs, podcasts, blogs) in English, exploring their local identity for a global audience. This promotes "identity negotiation" and prompts students to think about the cultural implications of their digital presence.
3) **Digital "Context Collapse" Workshops:** As participants identified issues with sarcasm and miscommunication, curricula should include workshops on "Netiquette" and "Intercultural Pragmatics." These should focus on looking at real digital interactions in the wild (Twitter threads, Reddit discussions, etc.) to understand and navigate cultural friction and algorithmic prejudice.
4) **Information Evaluation Training:** Educators could employ "lateral reading" approaches to close the "Literacy Gap" by encouraging students to cross-check online material from many sources throughout the world, thereby reinforcing the "Cognitive" pillar of global citizenship.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

However, to put the findings into perspective, it is important to be aware of the following limitations of the present study:

- Sample Size and Generalisability: The sample of 95 students was sufficient to reach thematic saturation in the qualitative analysis. However, it is a relatively small number of students, considering the number of EFL students in the hundreds of thousands in Algeria. Thus, the results should be interpreted as indicative and not fully representative of the overall Algerian higher education sector.

- Convenience sample bias: The use of convenience sampling may have generated a "pro-digital" bias, since engaged Internet users are easier to approach. Those who were already acquainted with technology were more likely to respond, possibly drowning out the voices of students with less digital access or more critical technology attitudes.

- Self-Report Bias: The statistics were based on students' perceptions, which are subject to "social desirability bias," as students may over-report their levels of empathy or global knowledge to meet the perceived good aims of "global citizenship."

6.3 Future Research

Future research should use a longitudinal approach to follow the evolution of these digital identities as students transition to the professional workforce. Moreover, comparative research between Algerian students and their counterparts in other MENA or sub-Saharan African countries could shed light on how diverse state policies and digital infrastructures impact the development of global citizenship. Finally, an examination of the function of the teacher as a mediator in these digital spaces would give us important data on how to effectively assist the "Institutionalisation" of cyberculture in Algerian institutions.

Ultimately, this research contends that cyberculture has changed the bounds of the EFL classroom. In Algeria, the digital world is the main laboratory for the construction of the "global citizen". By recognising the transformative impact of these socio-digital spaces and arming students with the crucial tools to traverse these spaces, educators can ensure that the next generation of Algerians is not only "connected," but truly "globally competent."

Declaration on Generative AI Use. The author utilised AI tools, including Grammarly, QuillBot, and AI Studio, for language refinement, grammar correction, and structural organisation. These tools were used strictly to improve the clarity and stylistic coherence of the manuscript. AI was not employed to generate original research content, conduct data analysis, or interpret findings. The author assumes full responsibility for the final content,

ensuring its integrity and originality. This statement confirms that all research outcomes remain the result of human inquiry.

Ethical Declaration. The author declares that this study was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical standards for research involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study prior to data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were assured of the strict anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no financial, personal, or professional conflicts of interest that could inappropriately influence or bias the work reported in this paper.

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