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GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND ENGLISH LITERATURE: EXPLORING EFL PERSPECTIVES IN ALGERIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Literature is often credited with cultivating empathy, intercultural awareness, and critical reflection, which are key dimensions of global citizenship education (GCE). However, this relationship has been predominantly examined in Global North contexts, leaving its relevance to Global South settings, where curricular priorities often differ, insufficiently understood. In Algeria, for instance, the national undergraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) literature curricula typically emphasise literary knowledge and textual analysis over explicit global citizenship (GC) objectives, creating a gap between literature's educational possibilities and their curricular realisation. This study explored how Algerian EFL literature teachers and undergraduate students perceive the relationship between English literature and GC. Specifically, it examined how they conceptualise GC, how they perceive its connection with English literature, what GC competences they associate with literary study, and what constraints shape this process. Adopting a qualitative case study design, data were collected from two literature teachers and seventeen second-year undergraduate students through open-ended questionnaires and analysed thematically. Findings reveal convergence between students and teachers in conceptualising GC as encompassing global awareness, empathetic engagement, and ethical responsibility. Both groups of participants associated literary study with critical thinking, perspective-taking, and moral reasoning. However, these outcomes were largely sporadic, emerging through individual teacher initiative or student motivation rather than systematic curricular integration, and were constrained by rigid syllabi, limited instructional time, language barriers, and lack of clear GC objectives. The study highlights a critical tension: although literature has an inherent potential to foster GC, this potential remains contingent on the interplay between literary engagement, pedagogical mediation, learner agency, and institutional conditions. While the small scale of the sample precludes generalisation, this tension is conceptually relevant to other EFL contexts where literature curricula remain silent on GC aims. The findings thus contribute to Global South scholarship on literature and GCE, offering a starting point for examining how literary instruction might be aligned with GC goals in comparable settings. The implications point to embedding clear GC objectives, diversifying literary canons to include global and local perspectives, and implementing pedagogy and assessment that valorise ethical and empathetic engagement alongside literary analysis.

Keywords: Global citizenship; literature; global competences; perceptions; standardised curriculum

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1. Introduction

The call to integrate global citizenship education into foreign language curricula has become increasingly urgent in recent years. Advocates argue that in a world marked by interconnectedness and rapid social change, students require not only linguistic competence but also the ability to engage critically with issues of diversity, inequality, and interdependence (OECD, 2018; Oxfam, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). Among the many sites where this integration might be realised, the literature classroom has attracted growing attention. This is because literature, by virtue of its narrative and imaginative qualities, appears to offer a natural gateway into unfamiliar perspectives and complex cultural realities (Nussbaum, 1997). By drawing readers into alternative worlds and viewpoints, inviting them to engage with perspectives that unsettle their own assumptions, literary texts can nurture forms of empathy, intercultural sensitivity, and critical awareness, which scholars widely regard as foundational to meaningful civic and global engagement (Hu, Lee, & Harji, 2023; Martin & Esteve-Faubel, 2021).

The potential of literature to support civic and global learning, however, is neither inherent nor guaranteed, for it depends on two critical mediators. First, much rests on how the very idea of global citizenship is defined, since different definitions embody divergent educational aims, ranging from universalist emphases on shared human values to more critical approaches that interrogate inequality and power relations (Massaro, 2022). Second, outcomes depend on how literary texts are actually approached in the classroom. For example, the same text that stimulates reflection on justice and global issues may equally be read in ways that emphasise linguistic form or aesthetic appreciation alone. Thus, while the theoretical potential of literature to serve GCE is considerable, the practical realisation of this potential is far from automatic.

This is particularly visible in the Algerian higher education context, where GCE is absent from the national standardised literature curricula. Algerian universities provide students of English with extensive exposure to Anglophone cultural and literary traditions, with the central aim of developing textual analysis and interpretive skills. The national curricula, however, do not specify objectives related to global citizenship or provide guidance on linking literary study to broader civic or intercultural competences. As a result, the extent to which literature fosters global competences depends heavily on the interpretive choices of teachers and the responses of students. Although previous studies have documented systemic challenges in Algerian higher education, such as rigid curricular structures and limited pedagogical innovation (Kheladi, 2019; Khaldi, 2021), little is known about how EFL teachers and students in literature classrooms actually conceive of literature's role in cultivating dispositions and skills associated with global citizenship. Without such understanding, discussions of reform risk remaining abstract and disconnected from the lived realities of teaching and learning.

This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how Algerian literature teachers and their students understand the relationship between literary study and global citizenship. It seeks to clarify the implicit ways in which civic and global competences may be negotiated in practice, even without policy direction. The inquiry is guided by four questions:

1. How do Algerian EFL literature teachers and undergraduate students conceptualise global citizenship?
2. How do they perceive the connection between studying English literature and the development of global citizenship competences?
3. What global competences, if any, do they believe are or could be fostered through engagement with English literary texts?

4. What constraints within Algerian higher education shape or limit this process?

By foregrounding both teachers' and students' classroom perspectives in a Global South context, this study contributes empirical insight into the implicit dynamics through which global citizenship learning may emerge, remain constrained, or be reinterpreted within literature education, offering implications for curriculum design, pedagogy, and future research in higher education.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Global Citizenship Education: A Contested Field

Global citizenship education (GCE) has gained increasing prominence in both educational policy and academic research over the past two decades. Nonetheless, systematic research shows that the concept remains deeply contested, lacking a single, universally accepted definition (Carmona et al., 2022). Definitions of GCE shift across political, cultural, and institutional contexts, reflecting various assumptions about what global citizenship entails, which dimensions of learning it prioritises, and how education is expected to contribute to global social life (Massaro, 2022; Santamaría-Cárdaba, 2021).

At the policy level, international organisations articulate GCE through distinct, and sometimes competing, emphases. UNESCO (2015) conceptualises global citizenship education in humanistic terms, framing it as fostering a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity, while emphasising political, economic, social, and cultural interdependence between the local, national, and global (p. 14). This framing privileges identity formation, ethical awareness, and ontological transformation, what learners become rather than what they can demonstrably do. Oxfam (2015) similarly defines GCE as developing "inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people" who contribute to a more just and peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect (p. 1). By contrast, the OECD (2018) advances a more operationalised perspective through its notion of global competence, defined as the capacity to "examine local, global and intercultural issues, understand and appreciate different perspectives and world views, interact successfully and respectfully with others, and act responsibly towards sustainability and collective well-being" (p. 5). Although these organisations all invoke responsibility and interconnectedness, their underlying logics differ markedly, indicating that GCE is not a unified construct but a field shaped by divergent policy rationalities. While UNESCO and Oxfam prioritise ethical and affective formation, the OECD foregrounds transferable competencies and assessable outcomes.

In response to this operational ambiguity and the absence of conceptual consensus, scholars have developed analytical typologies to map the competing orientations embedded in GCE discourse and practice. Most influentially, Andreotti (2006, 2014) differentiates between "soft" forms of GCE, which focus on awareness-raising, empathy, and charitable responses to global inequality, and "critical" forms of GCE, which emphasise historical responsibility, power relations, complicity, and the structural conditions that reproduce injustice. This distinction does not merely describe pedagogical variation but functions as an epistemological lens for interrogating how global problems are framed and how learners are positioned in relation to them. Similarly, Oxley and Morris (2013) distinguish between cosmopolitan approaches that emphasise universal values, shared humanity, and cultural openness, and advocacy-oriented approaches that foreground political engagement, social justice, and structural critique. However, these typologies, as noted by Pashby et al. (2020), have been developed within, and applied predominantly to, Global North institutions. Even though they illuminate how GCE is theorised at the level of policy and principle, they do not address how its meanings are interpreted, negotiated, or enacted within specific disciplinary contexts. From

this perspective, the relevant question is not whether GCE can be coherently defined, but how its contested meanings are taken up in practice. This shift in emphasis moves attention away from further refinement of abstract models toward the situated understandings through which global citizenship is rendered meaningful in particular fields of study.

2.2. Literature: A Pedagogical Space for GCE

Within the broad field of global citizenship education, literature has frequently been identified as a discipline with particular potential to foster dispositions associated with global citizenship. This positioning draws on longstanding assumptions within literary theory and educational philosophy that engagement with literary texts enables readers to encounter diverse perspectives and reflect on social relations beyond their immediate contexts. Rather than transmitting fixed civic norms, literature is often understood as inviting interpretive engagement with qualities widely regarded as central to global citizenship.

One argument that has been widely invoked to explain why literary engagement is seen as pedagogically relevant to global citizenship derives from Martha Nussbaum's (1997) concept of "narrative imagination." This means the capacity to imaginatively place oneself in the situation of others, "to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have" (pp. 10–11). Importantly, Nussbaum does not frame her concept as passive identification or sentimental empathy. Rather, she emphasised that engagement with fictional characters in novels is always mediated by judgment, reflexivity, and the reader's own ethical standpoint. As she explained, "the narrative imagination is not uncritical, for we always bring ourselves and our own judgments to the encounter with another" (p. 11). Therefore, understanding another's perspective involves both imaginative identification and evaluative distance. For Nussbaum, this dual process is essential to responsible judgment, because:

> We do not know what we are judging until we see the meaning of an action as the person intends it, the meaning of a speech as it expresses something of importance in the context of that person's history and social world. (p. 11)

From this perspective, literary reading is positioned as a practice through which learners can be trained to suspend premature evaluation, to decipher and interpret meaning from within their own and others' situated context. This conception has been influential in educational debates because it frames literature not as a tool for moral instruction, but as a space for cultivating interpretive, ethical, and reflective dispositions frequently linked to global citizenship.

In a related but distinct vein, reader-response and reception-oriented theories further complicate how literature's educational significance is understood. Hans-Robert Jauss (1982) reconceptualised reading as a dialectic process of production and reception. Accordingly, the literary text does not convey a singular, predetermined meaning to all readers. Instead, its meaning remains incomplete until it encounters the readers' "horizon of expectations", i.e., a mental set composed of the readers' prior knowledge, cultural values, and historical positioning. Because each reader, at any given time in history, reads from a distinct perspective, meaning is not an inherent property of the text to be transmitted to a passive learner. Rather, the act of reading literary texts becomes a site of active negotiation, wherein the text serves as a stimulus that invites readers to test alternative value systems against their own "horizon". While this process may challenge, reinforce, or reconfigure a reader's understanding of self and other, the outcomes are contingent upon the pedagogical framing and the institutional context in which the reading takes place.

A growing body of empirical research supports these theoretical claims, although findings vary significantly across contexts. Martin, Esteve-Faubel, and Esteve-Faubel (2021), for example, demonstrated that guided discussion of a Shakespearean text enabled students to critically reject revenge and racism while articulating empathy and a sense of shared humanity. Similarly, Hu, Lee, and Harji (2023) found that authentic literature-based assessment practices enhanced students' sensitivity to cultural diversity and perceptions of global responsibility. By contrast, studies conducted in exam-driven educational systems highlight the limits of literature's civic potential. Tladi and Makombe (2017) in South Africa, and Zhou and Aziz (2020) in Malaysia, reported that although prescribed literary texts contained themes relevant to critical citizenship, assessment practices prioritising factual recall curtailed opportunities for ethical reflection and critical engagement. Collectively, these studies confirm that literature can be a powerful tool for GCE, but its outcomes depend on pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment practices.

In a nutshell, this body of scholarship positions literature not as an inherently transformative medium, but as a potential space for fostering global citizenship–related dispositions. While theoretical accounts emphasise literature's capacity to support empathy, reflexivity, and ethical inquiry, to mention a few, empirical studies reveal substantial variation in how these possibilities are realised in practice. What remains comparatively underexplored is how literature educators and learners themselves conceptualise the relationship between literary study and global citizenship, particularly in higher education EFL contexts where English literary studies are shaped by local linguistic, historical, and ideological conditions.

2.3. The Algerian Context

As the conceptual literature has shown, GC is already a contested construct within the Global North contexts where it was initially articulated. Its meanings, therefore, cannot be presumed to circulate unchanged when GCE-related ideas are taken up within educational systems shaped by different colonial histories, nation-building projects, and linguistic negotiations. In this regard, Algeria offers a particularly instructive case. As a postcolonial nation, its education system operates within a complex multilingual landscape, where Arabic and Tamazight hold official status, French remains institutionally entrenched due to colonial legacy, and English has gained prominence more recently as a means of enhancing academic mobility, research access, international visibility, and graduate competitiveness within global academic and labour markets (Rouaghe et al., 2025).

Within this context, the study of English literature takes on important significance. Following the 2021 Programmes Revision implemented by Comité Pédagogique National du Domaine Lettres et Langues Étrangères (CPND-LLE) (the National Pedagogical Committee for Letters and Foreign Languages), the undergraduate literature curricula for first, second, and third years were standardised, predominantly canon-oriented, drawing largely on British and American texts, and assessed primarily through written examinations. More importantly, these curricula for first, second, and third years make no reference to global citizenship, civic education, or intercultural competences, positioning literature as a disciplinary subject focused on textual analysis, literary history, and canonical knowledge.

Students therefore engage with Anglophone texts that are neither indigenous nor aligned with the former colonial language, but are interpreted through their own linguistic, historical, and cultural horizons. From a reception-theoretical perspective (Jauss, 1982), this creates a "third cultural space" in which meaning emerges through readers' interpretive engagement. However, whether and how students and educators perceive this engagement as connected to global citizenship cannot be assumed; any connections, if at all, are likely to arise from pedagogical practice rather than curricular mandate.

Existing research in Algerian higher education offers limited insights into this enquiry since most studies addressing global citizenship examined mainly general English language teaching. Salem (2021), for instance, focused on Oral Expression courses and reported that teachers and students held largely positive but "soft" views of GC, centred on values such as tolerance rather than on structural critiques of inequality. Similarly, Khaldi (2021) reported that university teachers associated GCE with respect and intercultural awareness but faced major barriers, including rigid curricula and limited pedagogical tools. Kheladi (2019) addressed literature more directly. He criticised the dominance of traditional, exam-focused practices that limited opportunities for fostering civic values and skills, advocating dialogic and cooperative approaches instead. While international scholarship frequently positions literature as a promising site for fostering global citizenship, there is little empirical evidence from the Algerian context addressing how this relationship is understood by those directly involved in teaching and learning literature. This absence is particularly consequential given the distinctive linguistic, historical, and institutional conditions shaping English literary studies in Algeria. This study addresses this gap by examining how Algerian EFL literature teachers and their undergraduate students themselves perceive the relationship between literary studies and GC.

3. Methodology

This study proceeded from a methodological premise that follows directly from the conceptual review discussed earlier. Given that GCE is a contested construct, its educational significance cannot be assumed in advance but must be examined as it is understood by those who teach and study within specific disciplinary contexts.

3.1. Research Paradigm and Design

The study is grounded in an interpretivist qualitative paradigm, which posits that social phenomena, including educational constructs like global citizenship, are constructed and understood only through the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences (Guba & Lincoln, 2018). This epistemological stance is essential as it prioritises understanding how teachers and students themselves make sense of GCE within their lived educational and disciplinary context, rather than measuring predefined outcomes or competencies. Aligned with this paradigm, a qualitative case study design was employed. The case study allows for an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon, the perceived link between literature and global citizenship, within its natural institutional and curricular setting. The "case" is bounded as undergraduate English literary studies within a single Algerian public university operating under a nationally standardised literature curriculum.

3.2. Context

The research was conducted in the English Department of Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimi University, in Bordj Bou Arréridj, a public institution that implements the same standardised undergraduate literature curriculum applied across all Algerian universities. This curriculum prioritises literary history, canonical knowledge, and textual analysis, and makes no explicit reference to global citizenship, civic education, or intercultural learning outcomes. Literature teaching practices may extend beyond formal curricular prescriptions. Classroom activities often include thematic discussion, contextualisation of literary movements, and reflection on social and ethical issues embedded in texts. This combination of curricular silence and pedagogical flexibility provides a meaningful setting to examine whether teachers and students perceive connections between literature and global citizenship in the absence of institutional guidance, and to identify any forms of informal or unintended GCE-related learning that may emerge through disciplinary practice rather than curricular design.

3.3. Participants

Participants comprised EFL teachers and undergraduate students directly engaged with the standardised English literature curriculum, following the 2021 CPND-LLE reform. Given the exploratory qualitative case study design, two literature teachers were purposively selected as information-rich cases based on their expertise, familiarity with the revised curriculum, and direct experience teaching the target student cohort. Their inclusion enabled an in-depth exploration of how the curriculum is interpreted and enacted in classroom practice. On the other hand, seventeen second-year undergraduate students were recruited through convenience sampling. This cohort was selected because they had completed four consecutive semesters entirely under the post-2021 curriculum, unlike first-year students with limited exposure or third-year students whose studies spanned different curricular phases.

3.4. Procedures

3.4.1. Data Collection

Data were collected during the 2024–2025 academic year using two online questionnaires, one administered to literature teachers and the other to undergraduate students. Both instruments were developed using Google Forms and distributed electronically via institutional email. Both were qualitative and comprised only open-ended items. This design was intended to elicit participants' understandings, experiences, and reflections in their own terms, without constraining responses with predefined categories or imposed definitions of global citizenship.

Although tailored to participants' respective roles, the questionnaires were designed as parallel instruments grounded in the same conceptual focus. The student questionnaire comprised eight open-ended items exploring students' experiences of studying English literature, personal understandings of global citizenship, perceived connections between literary study and global or social concerns, competences developed through literary engagement, challenges encountered, and recommendations for strengthening these connections. The teacher questionnaire contained ten open-ended items examining comparable issues from a pedagogical perspective, focusing on teaching background, conceptualisations of global citizenship, perceptions of the literature curriculum, instructional practices, perceived competences, instructional constraints, and suggestions for curricular and pedagogical improvement. This parallel structure enabled comparison between teachers' and students' perspectives across each of the study's research questions.

Prior to full administration, both questionnaires underwent expert review by two experienced EFL teachers who evaluated their content relevance, clarity, and alignment with the study's objectives. The reviewers considered the instruments appropriate and did not recommend any substantive revisions. The student questionnaire was additionally piloted with four undergraduate students drawn from the target population, but excluded from the final dataset. After completing the questionnaire, the pilot participants were invited to comment on the clarity of the questions and identify any ambiguous or difficult wording. Their feedback confirmed that the items were clear and comprehensible, requiring only minor linguistic refinements to improve readability. Because both questionnaires consisted exclusively of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich narrative responses rather than standardised measurements, the pilot served a different purpose from pilot testing in quantitative research. It was intended to establish interpretive clarity and enhance the credibility of the data collection process rather than assess psychometric reliability or internal consistency. The trustworthiness of the data collection process was therefore strengthened through expert review, participant feedback, and iterative refinement of the questionnaire wording.

Moreover, before participation, all respondents received an information sheet detailing the study's aims, the voluntary nature of participation, and ethical safeguards, including anonymity and confidentiality. Participants who agreed to take part subsequently provided electronic informed consent before completing the questionnaire.

3.4.2. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using inductive thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework (2006, 2019). Analysis began with repeated reading of responses to achieve familiarisation, followed by inductive coding. Related codes were subsequently clustered into broader themes to capture recurring patterns across the dataset. Themes were reviewed and refined through iterative comparison with the original data to ensure coherence and analytical accuracy. Throughout the analysis, teacher and student responses were compared to identify any convergences and divergences in how global citizenship and its relationship to literature were constructed. Given the exploratory scope of the study, the emphasis was placed on interpretive depth and transparency rather than statistical generalisation.

4. Results

4.1. Students' Questionnaire

This section reports themes generated from undergraduate students' open-ended questionnaire responses using a thematic analysis approach. The findings present how students conceptualised global citizenship, how they connected English literature to global issues, and the competences they associated with literary study.

Theme 1: Conceptualising Global Citizenship: Awareness, Empathy, and Responsibility

Students defined GC as a multi-layered identity moving from cognitive awareness of global issues to an affective sense of connection with others, and a sense of ethical responsibility extending beyond national boundaries.

Students commonly defined global citizenship in terms of awareness of shared global problems, such as "climate change, inequality, war, and human rights" (P1; P10; P16). Many emphasised affective connection, describing global citizenship as "recognizing that we're all part of one human family on a shared planet" (P14) and "caring about lives that aren't our own" (P11). Respect for cultural diversity was repeatedly highlighted. For example, one participant stated that global citizenship means "respecting and appreciating diverse cultures" (P3), while another stressed "understanding and respecting different cultures, and caring about global issues like inequality, war and human rights" (P8). Responsibility and action were also identified. One student noted that global citizenship involves "understanding that my actions can affect the world beyond Algeria" (P1), while another described it as "being willing to speak out against injustice no matter where it happens" (P12). One student framed global citizenship as a moral stance rather than formal participation, stating that even when they could not directly act, they sought "to stand with the truth and act in the best way I see as right" (P5).

Theme 2: Literature as a Catalyst for Global Reflection: Texts, Characters, Devices, and Historical Contexts

This theme reflects students' accounts of how specific literary elements functioned as direct triggers for connecting texts to global and local issues.

In fact, students drew direct lines between historical and political themes and modern struggle, and cited numerous texts that prompted reflection on injustice, inequality, and

human suffering. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was frequently referenced, particularly Huck's moral dilemma about helping Jim, which made students reflect on "challenging unfair laws" (P6) and "choosing conscience over society" (P17). Participant 10 similarly reported that "Huck's moral choices... made me reflect on justice and standing up against unfair rules", while Participant 2 stated that this dilemma made them think about "racism and injustice that still exist today".

Texts centred on women's experiences generated strong affective responses. *Daisy Miller* was repeatedly linked to women's constrained choices, with students connecting the character's conflict to "women today who feel trapped by family expectations" (P4; P13). *Pride and Prejudice* similarly prompted reflections on "gender roles, marriage expectations, and social inequality" that students viewed as ongoing concerns (P15; P2).

Common Sense led students to think about "freedom, justice, and revolution" and to draw parallels with "the Algerian revolution and other movements worldwide" (P1; P9). One participant explicitly connected it to current suffering, stating: "People in Gaza are like Americans suffering under the British king… suffering even worse with hunger and genocide" (P5).

Students also highlighted the role of literary devices in shaping critical awareness. Satire was cited as an analytical lens, with one participant (P15) stating, "learning about satire... helped me see how media can sometimes hide the truth or show only one side", while some others agreed that "Satire taught me to see hypocrisy in today's media." (P10; P17).

Theme 3: *Divergent Perceptions on Literature-GC Connection*

Students perceived the literature-GC connection in markedly different ways, reflecting a spectrum from robust, internalised linkage to complete disconnect. These experiences are shaped both by the direct engagement with texts and by mediated interactions through class discussion, forming four discernible pathways.

Sub-theme 1: The Organic and Integrated Connection: Through the Text Itself

Some students experienced the connection autonomously, with literary texts themselves serving as direct catalysts for GC reflection. They independently drew personal and often profound analogies between literary narratives and contemporary global issues. In one case (P7), the participant connected the novel *The Kite Runner* to what she called "the plight of refugees" through independent reading outside the formal curriculum.

Sub-theme 2: The Pedagogy-Dependent Connection: Class Discussion as Essential Bridge

Other students perceived the connection only when activated through class discussion and teacher facilitation. Without these mediating interactions, the connection remains dormant or unclear. One participant reported that "Teachers often focus more on literary devices or historical context, and they don't always make the link between the text and current global issues." Some students (P1; P4; P5) explicitly credited their teacher's facilitation of thematic discussion, as they found her "literature classes were the most beneficial... we [were] guided through what to do and how to do it."

Sub-theme 3: The Blocked Connection: Barriers Overwhelming Potential

Some students encountered obstacles that inhibit meaningful connection, regardless of whether the engagement is with texts or classroom dialogue. These include:

- Language and Complexity: “I often face challenges with the complexity of texts, which can make it hard to grasp their global implications” (P13). Similarly, participant 4 stated that “The language some text was writing with the old english they was defecult.[sic]”

- Cultural and Contextual Distance: participant 5 admitted, “Since we are arabs, it's sometimes difficult to link to our culture and Algerian context, so sometimes these things can lead to confusion.” Likewise, participant 14 struggled “with finding many resources that explain the real meaning behind the literary study... in relation with global citizenship.”

- Assessment Pressure: Participant 16 was concerned that “There seems to be less time and energy focused on discussing issues relevant to our society... and more on discussing... what will be included on the next exam.”

Sub-theme 4: The Absent Connection: No Perceived Relevance

A minority reported no meaningful link between literature and GC, seeing the subject as culturally detached. Participant 4 explicitly admitted, “I just study it as a module which i also enjoy at the same time, i don't think beyond that or complicate things for myself.” Another respondent stated, “I feel that people are no longer interested in the issues we studied, since they are already known and shared across all cultures... literature is no longer used to express themes and topics in society as it once was.”

Theme 4: GC-related Competences Associated with Literary Study

This theme encompasses GC-related knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that students believed they had developed or could develop through studying English literature.

Critical thinking was the most cited competence. Students described learning to “read between the lines” (P2), and to recognise “deeper meanings beyond the the text” (P3). Empathy and perspective-taking were also prominent, with students reporting that literature allowed them to “live with other societies” (P4) and to “understand struggles different from my own” (P11).

Ethical and moral reasoning constituted a third dimension. Several students (P6; P10; P12; P17) described literature as something that “forces you to question what’s right or wrong” (P8).

4.2. Teachers’ Questionnaire

Analysis of the questionnaire with two English literature teachers revealed five themes reflecting their perceptions of the relationship between literature teaching and global citizenship, as well as the pedagogical practices and challenges associated with fostering GC in the classroom.

Theme 1: Conceptualisation of Global Citizenship

Both teachers conceptualised GC as encompassing awareness of global interconnection, empathy for diverse communities, and the cultivation of responsibility beyond local contexts. Teacher 1 emphasised empathy and critical thinking as central: “It involves having empathy for people from different backgrounds, being open to different perspectives…understanding that we have responsibilities beyond just our immediate community.” Teacher 2 framed GC in terms of transnational participation and moral responsibility: “To be a citizen beyond any physical boundaries…to consider the world as if it is a small village and all of us are connected.” Both accounts indicate a shared understanding of GC as relational, ethical, and cognitive.

Theme 2: Literature as a Medium for Developing GC Competencies

Both participants identified literature as a vehicle for cultivating empathy, critical thinking, and cultural awareness. Teacher 1 noted: "Literature *naturally* develops empathy because you're constantly trying to understand characters' motivations, their struggles, their joys" (emphasis added). Teacher 2 similarly observed: "Students will read about characters who undergo…difficult situations…so they will see characters struggling…they may understand other perspectives, other traditions." These responses highlight the perceived capacity of literary texts to foster the perspective-taking and analytical skills associated with GC, though Teacher 1 seems to think of that potential as inherent.

Theme 3: Pedagogical Strategies for Linking Literature and Global Issues

The teachers described a range of instructional practices aimed at connecting texts to global themes. Teacher 1 emphasised multimedia integration and thematic discussions: "I show them film adaptations…When we studied post-colonial literature, I showed them documentaries…group presentations…helps them understand that literature doesn't exist in a vacuum." Teacher 2 highlighted textual analysis in historical and thematic contexts, occasionally supplemented with film, linking literature to both global and local issues: "When we dealt with the historical context of the First World War…students…give examples in relationship to the French colonization of Algeria…oppression in the world." Both accounts indicate a deliberate, though varied, effort to scaffold students' understanding of literature as socially and culturally situated.

Theme 4: Structural and Contextual Constraints

Both teachers reported barriers that limit the systematic integration of GC within literature teaching. Teacher 1 cited curriculum rigidity, time constraints, language proficiency, and lack of formal training: "We have specific texts…pressure to prepare students for exams…students' English level varies…haven't had any training in how to integrate global citizenship." Teacher 2 similarly emphasised time and assessment limitations: "Time…is the big obstacle…we cannot ask students to write an essay…comparing…literary works and…Algeria or somewhere else in the world." These challenges indicate structural and logistical factors that shape instructional decision-making and the degree to which GC is embedded in practice.

Theme 5: Aspirations for Curriculum and Pedagogical Enhancement

Both participants proposed strategies for improving GC integration. Teacher 1 suggested expanding curricular content to include diverse literary texts, multimedia resources, project-based learning, and assessment of GC-related competencies: "We need to be more intentional about connecting literature to contemporary global issues…teacher training…change assessment methods." Teacher 2 emphasised inclusion of world literature, comparative study, and incorporation of Algerian texts in translation: "Literature should be about different cultures, not just the British and American culture…teach them Algerian works that are translated to English." These responses reflect a shared recognition of the need for systemic support, curricular diversification, and pedagogical scaffolding to facilitate students' engagement with GC.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed to explore how English literature teachers and their undergraduate students perceive the relationship between English literary study and global citizenship, with a particular focus on the ways literature can cultivate GC-related knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The research sought to find out how students conceptualise GC, the

mechanisms through which literary texts may facilitate global awareness, the pedagogical strategies teachers employ to foster these competencies, and any possible barriers constraining the GC-literature connection.

The findings reveal several key patterns. Among students, global citizenship was consistently defined as encompassing awareness of global issues, empathy for diverse communities, and ethical responsibility extending beyond national boundaries. Literary texts were identified as catalysts for reflection, with specific characters, historical contexts, and literary devices prompting students to consider contemporary issues such as inequality, injustice, and human rights. Notably, students' engagement with literature-GC connections varied along a spectrum: some experienced autonomous, text-driven connections; others required teacher-facilitated discussions to establish meaningful links; some were constrained by language, cultural distance, or assessment pressures; and a minority perceived no substantive connection at all. Across these pathways, students reported developing critical thinking, empathy, perspective-taking, and ethical reasoning as core competencies.

Teachers' perspectives corroborated and extended these findings. Both instructors conceptualised GC as relational and ethical, highlighting empathy, critical thinking, and global responsibility as central. Literature was perceived as inherently conducive to fostering these competencies, though its impact was mediated by pedagogical strategies. Teachers reported employing multimedia resources, thematic discussions, and contextual analyses to bridge literary content with global issues. Structural constraints, including rigid curricula, limited time, and assessment pressures, were consistently identified as barriers, while both teachers expressed aspirations for curricular diversification, more inclusive texts, and project-based approaches to support GC development. These findings provide the foundation for a focused interpretation, allowing the discussion to address each research question by examining how GC is conceptualised, how literature mediates its development, which competencies emerge, and what constraints shape this process.

5.1. Conceptualisation of Global Citizenship

Both students and teachers demonstrated a clear convergence in their conceptualisation of GC, despite the absence of formal curriculum objectives addressing it. Students articulated GC as a multi-dimensional construct comprising cognitive awareness, affective empathy, and ethical responsibility. Awareness was evident in recognition of interconnected global issues, including inequality, human rights violations, conflict, and climate change. Affective engagement was mediated through literary narratives, with students expressing concern for the well-being of distant others. Ethical responsibility emerged in reflections on the impact of personal action, suggesting that students perceive GC not as abstract knowledge but as a lived moral stance.

Teachers similarly emphasised ethical and relational dimensions of GC. Teacher 1 described it as "having empathy for people from different backgrounds…understanding that we have responsibilities beyond just our immediate community," while Teacher 2 framed it as "participating in anything that helps all people…considering the world as if it is a small village." These align with established frameworks of GCE, which highlight perspective-taking, ethical agency, and relational responsibility (Nussbaum, 1997; Andreotti, 2006). The convergence between student and teacher perceptions indicates that even in contexts where GC is absent from formal curricula, both groups can articulate globally oriented ethical understandings.

5.2. Literature-GC Connection

The study revealed two complementary pathways through which literature facilitates GC development. The first is an autonomous or organic connection, observed when students independently drew analogies between narrative events, historical contexts, or literary devices and contemporary global issues. For example, students linked *Common Sense* to the situation in Gaza, and Huck's dilemmas in *Huckleberry Finn* to societal injustice, demonstrating independent moral reasoning and analytical agency.

The second pathway is pedagogy-dependent, where literature-GC connections emerged primarily through teacher-facilitated discussion. Teachers described using film adaptations, historical context, and guided group presentations to help students translate textual engagement into reflections on social justice, oppression, and ethical dilemmas. These dual pathways highlight the role of textual and instructional scaffolding in translating literary experience into global awareness, corroborating prior studies on literature's role in fostering empathy and critical consciousness.

5.3.Competences Fostered through Literary Study

Both students and teachers identified empathy, perspective-taking, critical thinking, and ethical reflection as key competences arising from literary engagement. Students described interrogating human motivations, evaluating moral dilemmas, and situating socio-cultural norms across temporal and spatial contexts. Teachers confirmed that literature provides a framework for nurturing these capacities, but noted that engagement is moderated by student language proficiency, attendance, and participation.

Importantly, the study reveals that these competencies can emerge even in the absence of formal curriculum objectives, structured learning outcomes, or explicit GC instruction. This suggests that literature classrooms can generate informal opportunities for competence development outside an explicit GCE framework, consistent with Davies' (2006) observation that GCE often operates through the informal curriculum rather than through formal policy alone. However, the fragility of emergent competencies is evident; without teacher facilitation or student initiative, opportunities for ethical reasoning and global awareness may remain unrealised.

5.4.Constraints Affecting GC Integration

Both students and teachers reported convergent constraints that limit systematic GC development. Students identified linguistic complexity, cultural and contextual distance, and exam-driven classroom priorities as barriers. Teachers cited structural factors, including rigid curricula, limited instructional time, uneven student preparedness, and absence of formal GC training. These obstacles impede autonomous student engagement with global issues and restrict the embedding of GC within literary pedagogy. The convergence of student and teacher perspectives underscores that both structural and pedagogical conditions shape the realisation of GC in literature classrooms.

This interpretation both aligns with and diverges from existing research. It accords with international studies showing that literature can cultivate empathy and critical awareness (Martin et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2023), as participants in this study also reported these dispositions. Nonetheless, it differs in the conditions under which these competencies appeared. Rather than arising from curricular design, they may emerge through teacher initiative or student effort, and are constrained by the same systemic barriers observed in other exam-driven systems (Tladi & Makombe, 2017), where assessment privileges technical analysis over civic engagement.

In the Algerian context, the findings accord with Salem's (2021) observation that students tend to frame GC in terms of empathy and ethical awareness, and they confirm Khaldi's (2021) account of persistent institutional obstacles. Most significantly, this study advances Kheladi's (2019) critique of traditional literature teaching by extending the discussion into the post-reform context, where a nationally unified curriculum now governs all universities. While Kheladi's observations were made at a time when syllabi were developed locally and varied across departments, the findings of this study demonstrate that similar limitations persist even under the current standardised framework, particularly with regard to the absence of explicit GC objectives.

The findings of this study underscore the fragile yet tangible potential of English literature to cultivate global citizenship competences in Algerian undergraduate students. To move from incidental to systematic development of these capacities, several implications for curriculum design, assessment, and pedagogy emerge:

- *Explicit Global Citizenship Objectives*

Future revisions of the 2021 CPND-LLE curriculum should explicitly integrate GC learning outcomes alongside existing literary knowledge and analytical objectives. Based on the present findings, these outcomes could include empathy, perspective-taking, ethical reasoning, critical engagement with global and local issues, intercultural understanding, and the ability to relate literary texts to contemporary social realities. Embedding these objectives and articulating these competences clearly would signal their importance and provide a coherent pedagogical framework for both teachers and students.

- *Reform of Assessment Practice*

Assessment instruments should incentivise the integration of global perspectives, for example through essay questions connecting literary texts to contemporary global and Algerian issues. Evaluating these competences formally would legitimise students' engagement with ethical and cross-cultural reasoning.

- *Diversification of the Literary Canon*

Expanding the canon to include world literature and translated Algerian works would broaden students' cultural horizons beyond a predominantly British and American focus, providing more opportunities for comparative reflection and global contextualisation.

- *Structured Teacher Development*

Teachers require systematic support through workshops, pedagogical guides, lesson plans, and assessment rubrics to integrate GCE meaningfully into literature classes. Professional development would move GCE practices from intuitive improvisation to intentional pedagogy.

- *Reduction of Curricular Coverage*

Reducing the number of compulsory texts would free time for debate, reflection, and action-oriented projects, allowing students to engage deeply with both literary analysis and global citizenship dimensions.

Despite the practical significance of these implications, they should be considered within the methodological scope of the present study. The study has several limitations. First, the small teacher sample (n = 2) restricts the generalisability of findings, though student responses exhibited consistent patterns. Second, reliance on retrospective questionnaires captured perceptions rather than observed classroom behaviour, limiting insight into whether global connections were genuinely developed through literary engagement. Finally, the

exclusive focus on literature classrooms constrains understanding of whether these competences transfer to other academic or real-world contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study examined how Algerian EFL literature teachers and undergraduate students perceive the relationship between English literature and GC within a standardised curriculum that contains no explicit GCE objectives. The findings reveal a central paradox: although GC is absent as a formal curricular objective, its underlying competences nonetheless emerge through literary engagement. Their development, however, is neither inherent to literary texts nor guaranteed by their inclusion in the curriculum. Rather, it arises from the dynamic interplay between the interpretive affordances of literature, teachers' pedagogical mediation, students' meaning-making, and the institutional context. This perspective repositions the literature-GC relationship from a question of whether English literature possesses the capacity to foster global citizenship to how that capacity becomes educationally realised. In doing so, the study argues that literature should be understood not as an automatic vehicle for GCE but as a pedagogical space whose transformative potential depends on the conditions under which literary encounters are organised, interpreted, and discussed. The study therefore contributes a more nuanced understanding of how GC learning can emerge even without explicit curricular mandates, while also explaining why such learning remains uneven, contingent, and vulnerable when unsupported by coherent curricular, pedagogical, and assessment frameworks.

Building on these insights, future research should investigate how literature-GC connections are enacted in classroom practice through observational studies of teacher-student interaction during literary discussion. Experimental research could further examine how ethical reasoning, intercultural understanding, and critical thinking might be meaningfully incorporated into literature assessment. Comparative studies across multiple institutional contexts and larger-scale surveys would help establish the transferability and prevalence of the patterns identified here, while longitudinal research is needed to determine whether the ethical, intercultural, and critical dispositions fostered through literary study develop into sustained forms of intercultural understanding, civic engagement, and social responsibility beyond university contexts. Collectively, these research directions would help establish a more robust evidence base for understanding the educational conditions under which English literary study can contribute to global citizenship development.

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Author 2: formal analysis, writing – review and editing.

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