FORUM DE L'ENSEIGNANT Journal
e-ISSN: 2437-0576 ISSN: 1112-5101
Volume: 22, Special Issue: 1 / October 2026 pp. 47-64

Digital Writing and Cultural Identity among EFL Students: A Case Study at the University of Skikda

Received: 20/07/2026; Accepted: 27/10/2026; Published: 31/10/2026

BENCHEIKH Ikram [1], * BOUGHERIRA Meriem [2],

1 University of Skikda, i.bencheikh@univ-skikda.dz ORCID: (https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0315-1201)

2 University of Skikda, m.bougherira@univ-skikda.dz ORCID: (https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8322-4826)

Abstract:
The increasing integration of digital platforms into language learning has transformed EFL students' writing practices and reshaped the ways they construct and express their cultural identities in online environments. This study examines students' perceptions and practices regarding digital writing and identity construction through a questionnaire administered to learners from the Department of English at 20 Août 1955 University of Skikda. Specifically, it examines how digital writing practices shape EFL students' cultural identity and the challenges they face in digital environments. The findings reveal that digital spaces enhance writing development, motivation, and opportunities for self-expression through translanguaging and multimodal communication. Nevertheless, concerns related to technological dependence, cultural homogenization, and unequal access to digital resources persist. The study sheds light on the importance of fostering critical digital literacy and identity-aware pedagogical practices in EFL education.

Keywords:
Cultural Identity;
Digital Writing;
EFL Writing;
Translaguaging;

* *Corresponding author: Bencheikh Ikram*
Doi:

Introduction

In the contemporary digital era, online communication has become an integral component of students' daily lives, significantly influencing how they interact, exchange ideas, and construct their identities. The widespread adoption of social media platforms, collaborative applications, and digital technologies has also reshaped educational practices, particularly in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, where learners increasingly write beyond traditional classroom settings. These digital spaces promote creativity, collaboration, and self-expression while exposing students to multilingual and multicultural interactions. Nevertheless, the growing reliance on digital writing raises concerns regarding cultural identity, linguistic practices, and the influence of globalisation. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions: How do digital writing practices relate to EFL students' cultural identity, and what challenges do students encounter when engaging in digital writing environments? The study addresses these questions through a case study at the University of Skikda.

1. Literature Review

1.1 Digital Writing in EFL Education

Writing is a fundamental component of EFL learning that enables students to communicate ideas, develop academic literacy, and demonstrate language proficiency. Since writing requires accuracy, coherence, and organization, it remains a key objective of English language education, preparing learners for effective academic and professional communication.

Despite its importance, writing remains one of the most complex productive skills for EFL learners. This complexity is frequently illustrated in EFL contexts by limited opportunities for meaningful written communication, limited exposure to real English input, uneven learner proficiency, and classroom practices that may put accuracy and product completion ahead of writing development. (Hardiyanto et al., 2026).

In EFL education, writing extends beyond the mere production of grammatically accurate texts; it enables learners to articulate ideas, express personal perspectives, and engage in academic discourse. As Hyland (2016) argues, writing contributes to the clarification of knowledge, the development of critical understanding, and the expression of thoughts and emotions. Therefore, it functions not only as a communicative skill but also as an important tool for self-expression and academic growth. In addition, Elsit (2023) highlights the inclusive

potential of digital writing tools, noting that features such as text-to-speech and speech-to-text improve accessibility for learners with disabilities and those who face challenges with traditional writing practices. By accommodating diverse learning needs, these technologies contribute to more accessible and inclusive educational environments.

1.2 From Traditional Writing to Digital Writing

The continuous evolution of digital technologies in recent years has reshaped educational practices worldwide, particularly in writing, where traditional approaches have gradually given way to more dynamic, collaborative, and technology-mediated forms of communication.

According to Eslit (2023), digital writing tools have become increasingly popular, and they have revolutionized the way we write and communicate. Regardless of these technological developments, writing continues to occupy a central position in education and remains an indispensable component of language learning. As Karaoulas (2024) argues, despite this digital shift, writing remains a fundamental aspect of education, underscoring the continued importance of developing effective writing skills.

Moreover, research consistently indicates that the effective use of technology in educational settings may promote greater student engagement and improve learning outcomes. Drawing on forty years of empirical studies, Tamim et al. (2011) concluded that technology exerts a moderate positive effect on learning, largely because it fosters higher levels of student engagement.

1.3 Cultural Identity in Digital Spaces

The widespread adoption of digital technologies, particularly social media platforms and other online environments, has significantly transformed the ways individuals communicate, interact, and express their identities. Beyond facilitating communication, digital spaces have become influential environments that shape cultural practices and provide new opportunities for identity construction in an increasingly interconnected world.

According to Patel (2025), digital platforms are no longer merely communication technologies but complex cultural ecosystems where meanings are co-constructed, identities are negotiated, and belonging is expressed through digital interaction. Patel further argues that these platforms enable individuals to participate in global exchanges while preserving aspects of their local cultural identities. Consequently, digital environments play a significant role in shaping self-perception, intercultural communication, and the continuous negotiation of cultural identity.

The expansion of digital media has reshaped identity construction by providing new spaces for self-expression while simultaneously influencing cultural values and social practices. Digital media defines how people express who they are and how it affects customs and beliefs (Bala, 2023). As digital platforms become increasingly integrated into everyday life, they enable users to represent themselves through language, images, and other multimodal forms of communication as they interact with diverse cultural communities.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1 Digital Writing

The widespread integration of digital technologies into everyday communication has established digital writing as an essential mode of written expression across educational, professional, and social contexts. In its simplest form, digital writing refers to "writing using a digital environment or tool" (Kruse et al., 2023). Likewise, Lawrence (2022) defines it as "writing for the web and social media" but emphasizes that it extends beyond online platforms. He further describes digital writing as an interdisciplinary field that draws on concepts from computer science, psychology, graphic design, the philosophy of technology, and rhetoric. Consequently, digital writing involves not only the production of digital texts but also the technological, cognitive, visual, and communicative processes that shape written communication in digital environments.

2.2 Cultural Identity

Identity is a complex and fluid concept that has long been the subject of scholarly debate due to its evolving and complex nature. Rather than being fixed, identity is continuously shaped by a range of factors, including personal experiences, cultural norms, and historical contexts (Koçak, 2023). Within this broader framework, cultural identity represents a specific dimension of identity that reflects an individual's sense of belonging to a particular cultural community through shared values, beliefs, traditions, and linguistic practices. From a social perspective, cultural identity can be understood as "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (Hogg & Abrams, 2006), highlighting its role in shaping both individual self-perception and social relationships.

2.3 Digital Writing and Cultural Identity

Digital writing and cultural identity are interconnected through the linguistic and social practices that shape online communication. Digital platforms provide spaces where individuals express themselves, interact with diverse audiences, and negotiate their sense of cultural belonging through

language and digital interaction. Radwan (2022) examines the relationship between social media use and cultural identity, while Stebner et al. (2017) discuss digital media in relation to relationship building and community engagement. These perspectives provide a starting point for understanding digital environments as spaces in which communication and cultural affiliations may intersect.

For EFL students, this relationship is particularly relevant because digital writing enables them to communicate in English while also drawing on other linguistic resources, including Arabic, Darija, and French. Their language choices, use of multiple languages, and interactions with different audiences may provide insight into how they express themselves and perceive their cultural identities online. Similarly, students' perceptions of whether digital writing allows greater freedom of self-expression, connects them with international communities, or influences their cultural values can help illuminate how they understand their participation in digital environments. However, these practices do not necessarily indicate that digital writing changes students' cultural identities; rather, they offer ways of examining students' reported experiences and perceptions of identity expression and cultural belonging.

In this study, the relationship between digital writing and cultural identity is examined through students' language practices, identity expression, global connections, and perceptions of social media's influence on local culture. These dimensions operationalise cultural identity for the purposes of this investigation by examining observable language practices and participants' self-reported perceptions. Accordingly, the study explores how digital writing relates to cultural identity among first-year EFL students at the University of Skikda without assuming a direct causal relationship between digital communication and changes in cultural identity.

Methodology

3.1 Population

The questionnaire was developed by the researcher in accordance with the objectives of the study and its focus on digital writing practices and cultural identity among EFL students. It included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Before the main data collection, the questionnaire was piloted with 30 students to assess the instrument prior to its wider administration. No modifications were made following the pilot test, as the questionnaire was retained in its original form for the main study. The

final questionnaire was completed by 74 first-year Licence students from the Department of English at 20 Août 1955 University of Skikda, Algeria.

3.2 Tools of Investigation

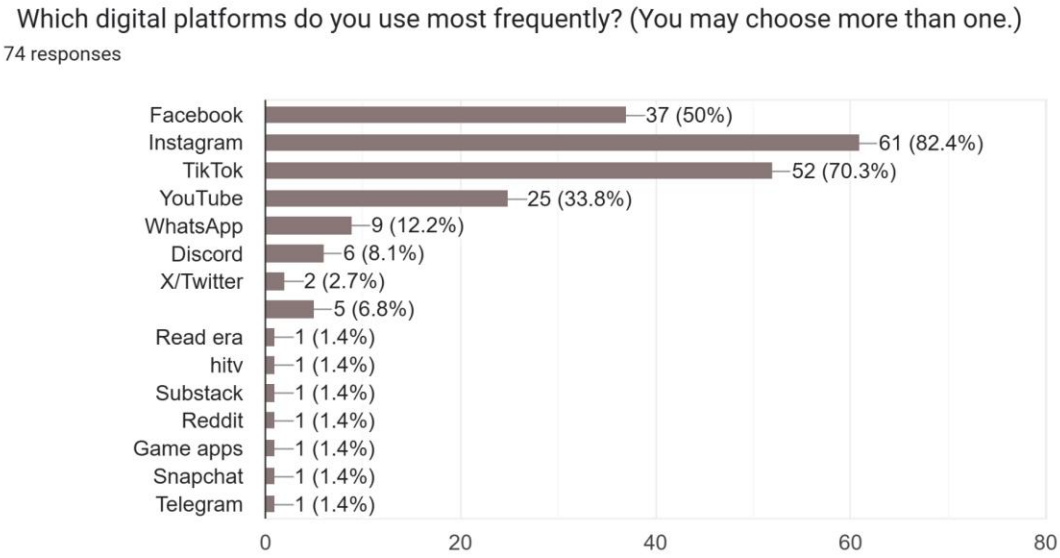
An online questionnaire was designed using Google Forms and administered to first-year students in the Department of English at 20 Août 1955 University of Skikda. The questionnaire consists of six sections. The first introduces the study and invites students to participate voluntarily. The second collects demographic information, including participants' age, daily internet use, and the digital tools and social media platforms they use most frequently. The third section, "Digital Writing Practices," examines students' use of digital writing tools and platforms. The fourth, "Cultural Identity and Language Use," explores their language choices and multilingual practices in digital environments. The fifth, "Digital Writing Challenges," investigates the difficulties students encounter while writing digitally. Finally, the sixth section, "Digital Writing and Cultural Identity," includes open-ended questions exploring students' perceptions of how digital writing and online platforms influence the expression and construction of their cultural identity.

3.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from the closed-ended questions were analysed using descriptive statistics, particularly frequencies and percentages, to identify patterns in students' digital writing practices, language choices, and perceptions of cultural identity. The results were organised into figures to facilitate their presentation and interpretation. The qualitative responses to the open-ended questions were analysed thematically through a manual process in which the researcher read the responses, grouped similar answers, and identified recurring themes related to digital writing, multilingual communication, identity expression, and cultural identity. The qualitative findings were then considered alongside the quantitative results to provide a more comprehensive understanding of participants' perceptions and experiences.

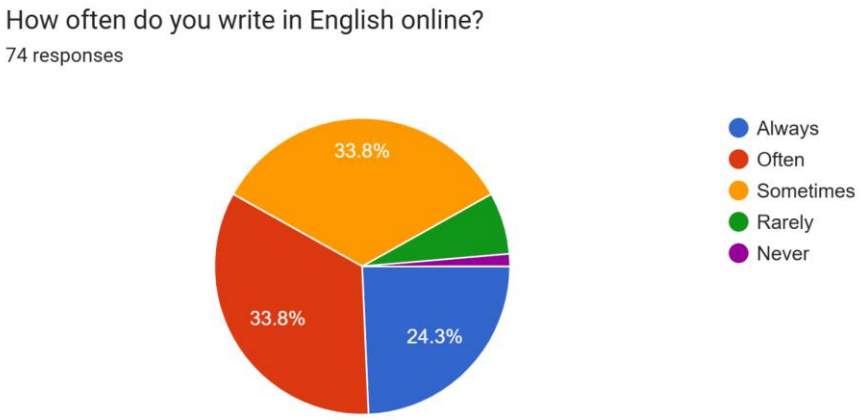
3. Results and Discussion

Figure 1. Most Frequently Used Digital Platforms



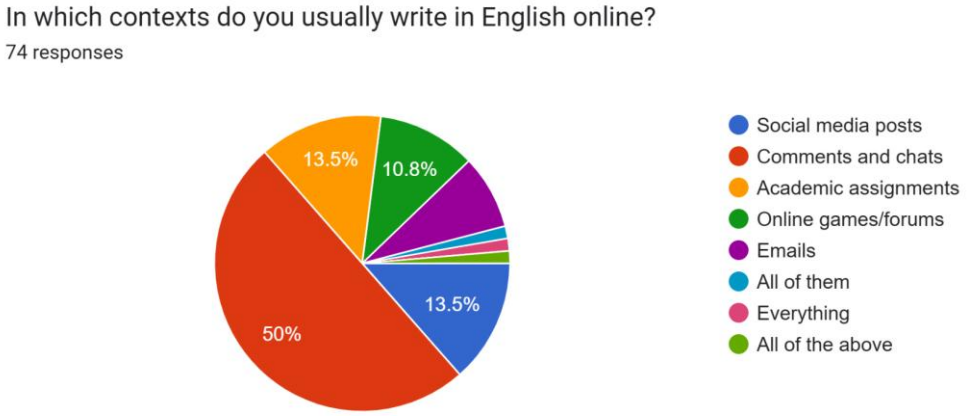
1/ Social media applications were among the most commonly used digital platforms in students' daily lives. Instagram was the most frequently used platform (82.4%), followed by TikTok (70.3%), Facebook (50%), and YouTube (33.8%), highlighting the important role of social media in students' everyday digital engagement.

Figure 2. English Language Use Online



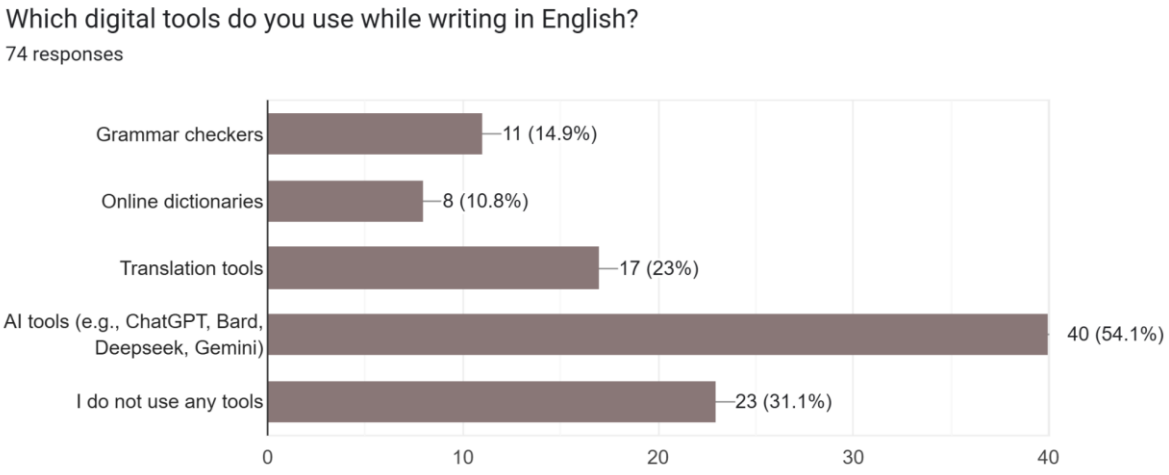
2/ Regarding online language use, 33.8% of participants reported that they always use English in online interactions, while an equal proportion (33.8%) reported using it often. By contrast, 24.3% stated that they never use English for online communication, while the remaining participants reported using it sometimes or rarely. These findings reflect the multilingual nature of students' digital communication practices.

Figure 3. Contexts in Which Students Write in English Online



3/ English was primarily used for comments and chats, as reported by 50% of participants. Social media interactions and educational purposes, such as completing academic assignments, were each reported by 13.5% of respondents. The remaining participants used English for gaming, email communication, or a combination of the listed activities, indicating that digital writing occurs in both personal and academic contexts.

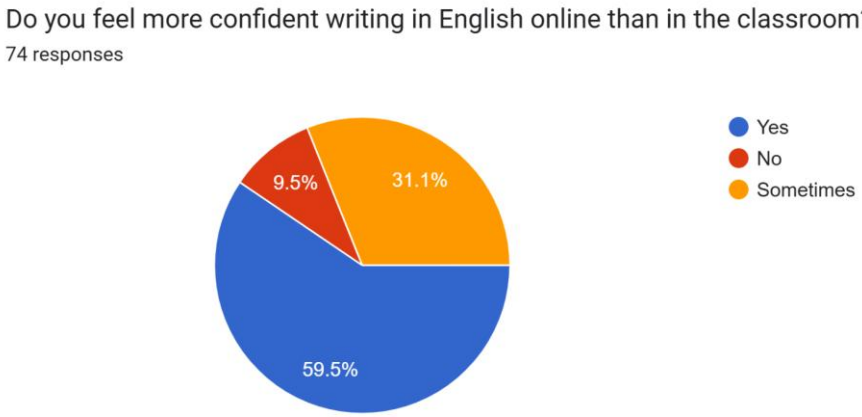
Figure 4. Digital Tools Used While Writing in English



4/ The findings indicate that AI tools were the most frequently reported digital writing support tools, used by 54.1% of participants. Translation tools were used by 23% of respondents, followed by grammar checkers (14.9%) and online dictionaries (10.8%). However, 31.1% of participants reported that they did not use any of the listed tools. These results suggest that students vary in their use of

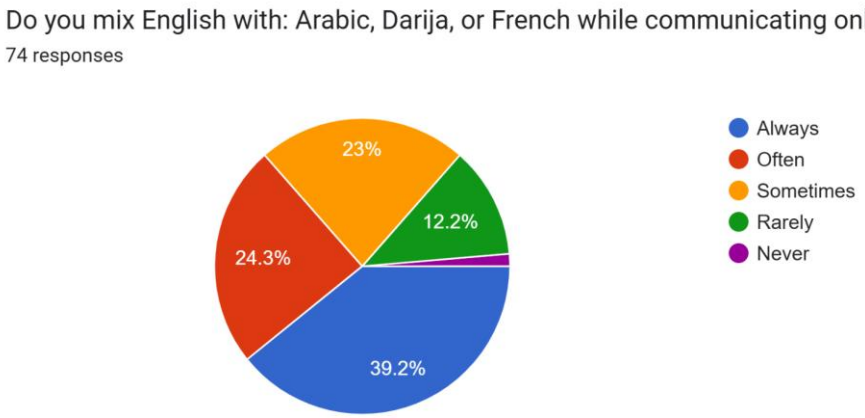
digital writing support, with AI tools emerging as the most commonly reported option among the tools listed.

Figure 5. Confidence in Writing in English Online



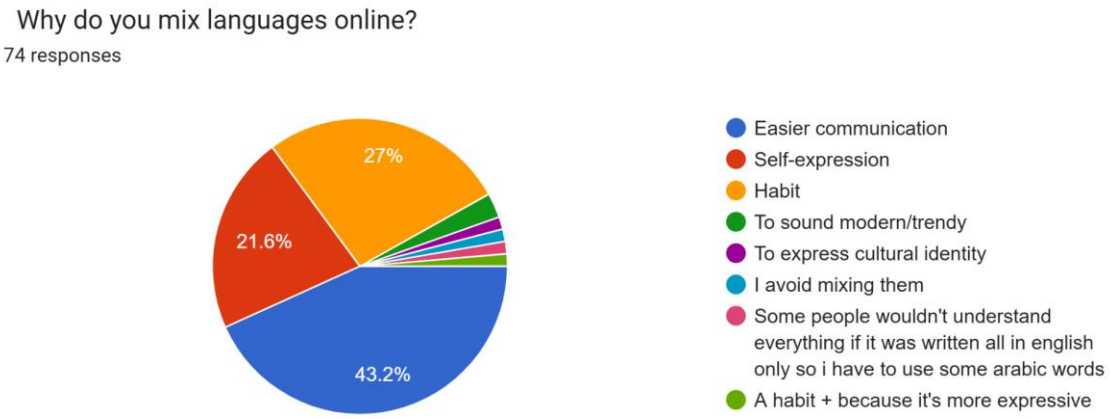
5/ Regarding confidence in digital writing, 59.5% of participants reported feeling confident when writing in English in digital environments, while 31.1% indicated that they felt confident only sometimes. In contrast, 9.5% reported not feeling confident.

Figure 6. Use of Arabic, Darija, and French in Online Communication



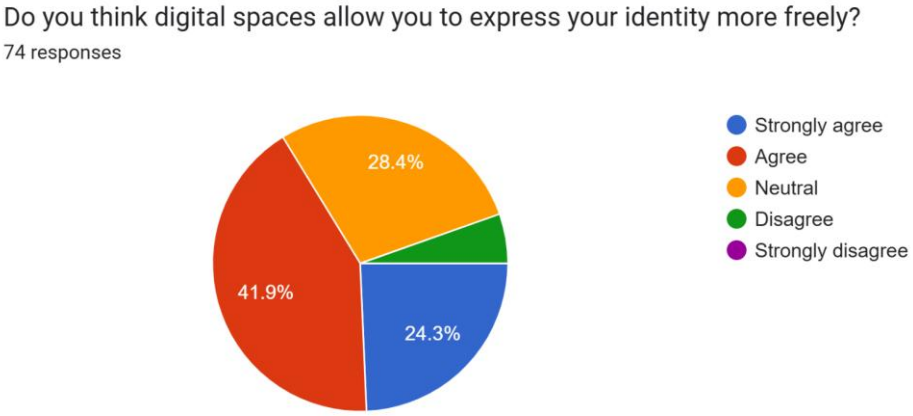
6/ Regarding multilingual practices in digital communication, 39.2% of participants reported that they always combine English with Arabic, Darija, and French, while 24.3% indicated that they do so often and 23% sometimes. In contrast, 12.2% reported mixing languages rarely, while the remaining participants stated that they never do so.

Figure 7. Reasons for Using Multiple Languages Online



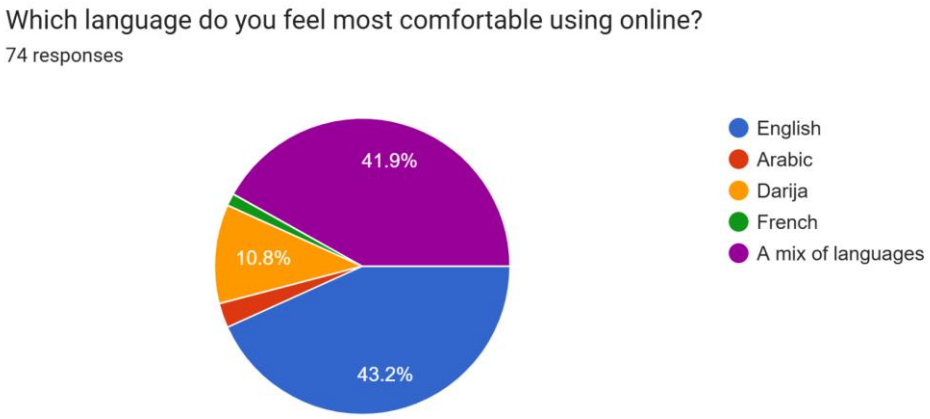
7/ Regarding students' reasons for using a mix of languages in digital communication, 43.2% of participants reported doing so to facilitate communication, while 27% attributed this practice to habit. Meanwhile, 21.6% indicated that they used multiple languages for self-expression. The remaining participants cited other reasons, including appearing modern or trendy, expressing cultural identity, and communicating with different audiences.

Figure 8. Digital Writing and Freedom of Identity Expression



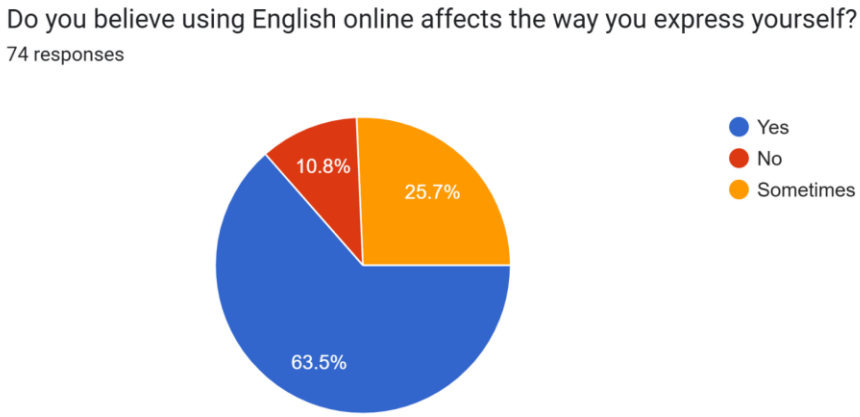
8/ Regarding the role of digital writing in identity expression, 41.9% of participants agreed that digital writing enables them to express their identity more freely than in traditional settings, while 24.3% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 28.4% expressed a neutral position, and the remaining participants disagreed.

Figure 9. Language Associated with Greater Comfort Online



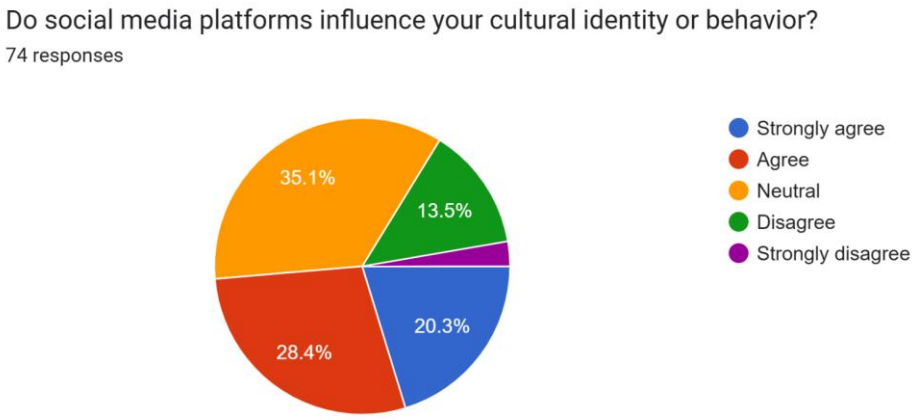
9/ Regarding language preferences in digital communication, 43.2% of participants reported feeling more comfortable using English, while 41.9% preferred using a combination of languages. Meanwhile, 10.8% indicated a preference for Darija, and the remaining participants reported using Arabic or French.

Figure 10. Influence of English on Self-Expression



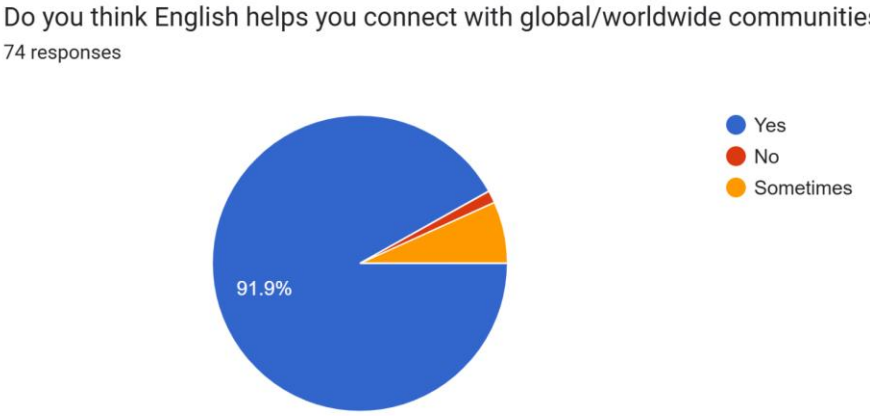
10/ Regarding the influence of writing in English on students' online self-expression, 63.5% of respondents reported that writing in English affects how they express their thoughts and emotions online. Meanwhile, 25% indicated that this occurs sometimes, while 10.8% stated that it does not.

Figure 11. Influence of Social Media on Cultural Identity



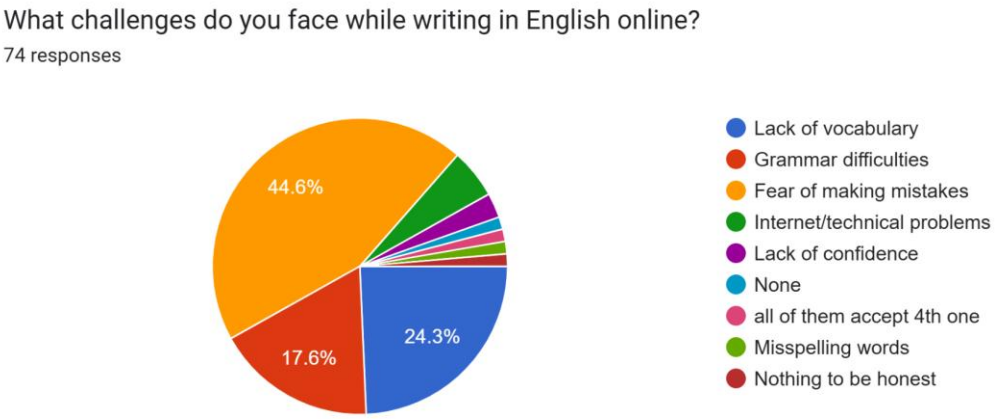
11/ Regarding the perceived influence of social media on cultural identity and behaviour, 35.5% of participants expressed a neutral position, while 28.4% agreed and 20.3% strongly agreed that social media influences their cultural identity and behaviour. The remaining participants disagreed with the statement.

Figure 12. Connection with Global Communities through Digital Platforms



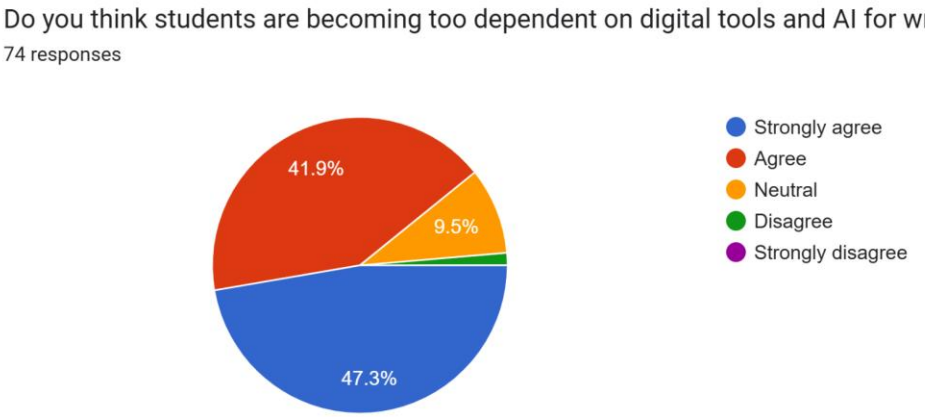
12/Regarding the role of online interaction in fostering a sense of global belonging, 91.9% of participants reported feeling connected to global or international communities through digital communication.

Figure 13. The Challenges Faced when Writing in English



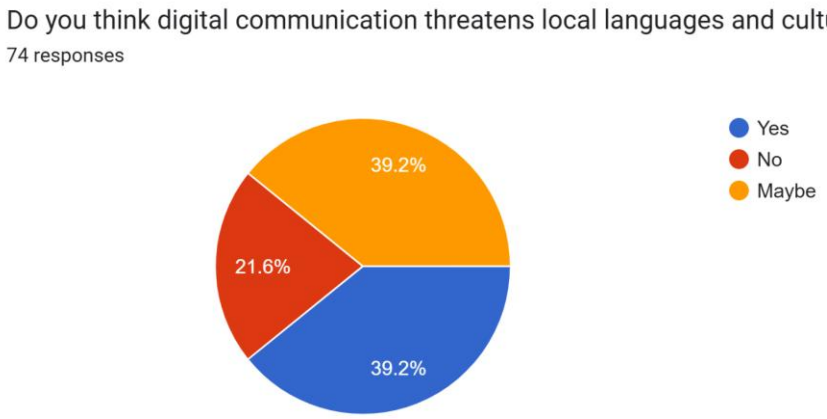
13/ Regarding the challenges encountered when writing in English in digital environments, 44.6% of participants identified the fear of making mistakes as their main difficulty. Lack of vocabulary was reported by 24.3% of respondents, while 17.6% cited grammatical difficulties. The remaining participants identified other challenges, including lack of confidence, spelling mistakes, and internet or technical problems.

Figure 14. Dependence on Digital Tools and AI for Writing



14/Regarding students' perceived dependence on digital tools and AI applications for writing tasks, 47.3% of participants strongly agreed that they relied on these tools, while 41.9% agreed. Meanwhile, 9.5% expressed a neutral position, and the remaining participants disagreed.

Figure 15. Perceived Threat of Digital Tools to Local Languages and Cultures



15/Regarding the potential impact of digital tools on local languages and cultural traditions, 39.2% of participants believed that digital communication threatens local languages and culture, while an equal proportion (39.2%) felt that it poses such a threat to some extent. In contrast, 21.6% did not perceive digital communication as a threat.

16/ 1. In your opinion, how do digital spaces influence the way students express their cultural identities?

The thematic analysis of the first open-ended question reveals that students perceive digital spaces as environments that offer opportunities for expressing, exploring, and presenting aspects of their cultural identities. A recurring theme in their responses was the freedom of expression provided by online platforms, particularly for individuals who experience shyness or fear of judgement in face-to-face interactions. Participants also emphasised the role of digital environments in facilitating intercultural communication and enabling them to connect with individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, some responses highlighted the relationship between language choice and identity expression, suggesting that students draw on English, Arabic, Darija, and other linguistic resources according to the context, subject, and ideas they wish to communicate. Nevertheless, the responses also revealed concerns about the influence of online trends and social expectations on personal and cultural identity. Some participants observed that the desire for social acceptance may encourage students to imitate popular behaviours or distance themselves from aspects of their local cultural backgrounds. Overall, the responses suggest that students perceive digital spaces as environments characterised by a tension between individual freedom and social influence, offering opportunities for self-

expression and intercultural engagement while potentially affecting how they present and relate to their cultural identities.

2. How does writing in English online affect your confidence or personality?

The thematic analysis of the second question highlights the perceived relationship between writing in English online, self-confidence, and personality development. Many participants associated online English writing with increased confidence, explaining that regular practice allows them to express their ideas more comfortably, expand their vocabulary, and communicate with a wider audience. One of the most recurrent themes concerned the reduced fear of judgement in digital environments, where the absence of immediate face-to-face interaction enables some students to feel less anxious about linguistic mistakes, pronunciation, and their level of proficiency. Interestingly, several responses suggested that English provides an alternative means of emotional and personal expression, with some participants reporting that they feel more comfortable communicating certain thoughts and emotions in English than in Arabic. Others associated writing in English with greater openness, independence, and intercultural awareness, particularly through interactions with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, these perceptions were not entirely uniform. While some respondents reported little or no influence on their confidence or personality, others acknowledged feelings of insecurity when comparing their language abilities with those of their peers. One participant also distinguished between written and spoken communication, indicating that confidence in writing does not necessarily translate into confidence in speaking. Taken together, these responses suggest that online English writing is perceived not only as a means of practising a foreign language but also as an opportunity for self-expression and the development of communicative confidence, although these experiences vary among students.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of the present study indicate that digital writing constitutes an important part of EFL students' academic and everyday communication, extending their written interactions beyond traditional classroom settings. The reported use of digital platforms suggests that students engage with English in a variety of online contexts, including social interactions and educational activities. Participants also reported varying levels of confidence in digital writing and frequent use of digital tools, particularly AI applications, to support their writing tasks. However, these findings reflect students' reported practices and perceptions

rather than objectively measured improvements in language proficiency, motivation, or writing development.

Regarding cultural identity, the findings reveal that participants perceive digital environments as spaces for self-expression and engagement with global communities. Many respondents reported combining English with Arabic, Darija, and French in their online communication, highlighting the prevalence of multilingual practices and the relevance of translanguaging to their digital interactions. Nevertheless, participants expressed differing views on the potential influence of digital communication on local languages and cultural traditions, while their responses also indicated varying perceptions of social media's influence on cultural identity and behaviour. The study further identified challenges associated with digital writing, particularly the fear of making mistakes, limited vocabulary, and grammatical difficulties. Although many participants reported relying on digital tools and AI applications, the questionnaire findings alone do not establish the extent to which such reliance affects their writing abilities.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital writing is both a communicative and sociocultural practice in the experiences of the EFL students surveyed. It provides opportunities for online interaction, multilingual communication, and perceived identity expression, while also raising concerns about linguistic challenges, dependence on digital tools, and the potential influence of global digital culture on local languages and cultural traditions. These findings should be interpreted within the context of the study and as reflections of participants' self-reported experiences and perceptions.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between digital writing and cultural identity among EFL students at the Department of English, 20 Août 1955 University of Skikda. The findings revealed that digital writing has become an essential part of students' academic and everyday communication. Digital platforms support English writing development by improving vocabulary, grammar, organization, motivation, and authentic language use while providing spaces for identity expression through translanguaging and code-switching. However, participants also expressed concerns about overreliance on digital tools, unequal access to technology, and the impact of global digital environments on local languages and cultural values.

To conclude, the findings emphasize the important role of digital writing in promoting both language development and cultural identity. Accordingly, the

study recommends integrating critical digital literacy and identity-aware pedagogical practices into EFL instruction. It also suggests that future research investigate digital writing across different Algerian universities using larger samples and additional methods, such as interviews and classroom observations.

References

Abrams, D., & Hogg, M. A. (2006). *Social identifications: A social psychology of intergroup relations and group processes.* Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203135457

Bala, A. V. (2023). Enhancing research productivity with the utilization of AI technology. KASU Press.

Eslit, E. R. (2023). Traversing the digital era: The amazing evolution of pen and paper to screens and keyboards. International Journal of Education, Language, and Religion, 5(2), 168. https://doi.org/10.35308/ijelr.v5i2.7659

Hardiyanto, A., Sunyono, Hariri, H., & Suyatna, A. (2026). Mapping a decade of EFL writing instruction research: A bibliometric and systematic review of pedagogical trends, challenges, and emerging directions. Voices of English Language Education Society, 10(1), 189–203. https://doi.org/10.29408/veles.v10i1.33770

Hyland, K. (2016). Teaching and researching writing (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Karaoulas, A. (2024). The evolution and significance of writing in the digital era: Role and necessity of written expression. International Journal of Research in Education Humanities and Commerce, 5(5), 337–347. https://doi.org/10.37602/ijrehc.2024.5525

Koçak, B. (2023). MigraMedia migration narratives in European media: Teaching, learning, and reflecting cultural identity [Book review].

Kruse, O., Rapp, C., Anson, C. M., Benetos, K., Cotos, E., Devitt, A., & Shibani, A. (2023). Digital writing technologies in higher education. Springer Nature.

Lawrence, D. (2022). Digital writing: A guide to writing for social media and the web. Broadview Press.

Patel, P. (2025). The interplay between social media and cultural identity: A study of multiculturism society. Advanced International Journal for Research, 6(6). https://doi.org/10.63363/aijfr.2025.v06i06.2265

Radwan, M. (2022). Effect of social media usage on the cultural identity of rural people: A case study of Bamha village, Egypt. Humanities and Social Sciences Communications, 9(1). https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-022-01268-4

Stebner, S., Baker, L. M., Peterson, H. H., & Boyer, C. R. (2017). Marketing with more: An in-depth look at relationship marketing with new media in the green industry. Journal of Applied Communications, 101(2). https://doi.org/10.4148/1051-0834.1001

Tamim, R. M., Bernard, R. M., Borokhovski, E., Abrami, P. C., & Schmid, R. F. (2011). What forty years of research says about the impact of technology on learning: A second-order meta-analysis and validation study. Review of Educational Research, 81(1), 4–28. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654310393361