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**The Relationship between Algerian EFL Learners' Proficiency in English  
and the Development of their Cultural identity**

The Case of Master One Students of English at Mohammed Saddik Ben Yahia  
University

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Master Degree in  
Didactics of English

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### **Declaration**

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "The Relationship between Algerian EFL Learners' Proficiency in English and the Development of their Cultural identity", is our own work and all the resources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signatures



Date

02/09/2021

## Dedication

**Our deepest Gratitude and Glory are to Allah for bestowing us with the strength and perseverance to complete this research despite the pitfalls we came across along the way.**

I would like to dedicate this work to:

- ✚ To myself ;
- ✚ To my beloved parents **Hassina** and **Saïd**, who have back me up, and fed my spirit with their endless love, support, and positive vibes;
- ✚ To the beautiful person who showed me how life can have infinite moments my partner, roommate, best friend, and sister **Hanane**.
- ✚ To my adorable brothers **Yassine** and **Borhane Eddine**;
- ✚ To my dear friend **Mohamed Amine** who greatly assisted me with his guidance and support.

**Lina**

I would like to dedicate this work to:

- ✚ To myself ;
- ✚ To my dear parents **Zoubida** and **Djahid**, who have believed in me and blessed me with love, support, and education;
- ✚ In memory of my grandmother and grandfather who passed away before they witnessed my graduation. May Allah accept them to his vast paradise;
- ✚ To my dearest best friend, roommate, and sister **Lina** , who is a gift from God and who never let me alone and always supports me in everything;
- ✚ To my dear siblings: **Houda**, **Imen**, **Yassine**, **Zinou**, and **Nina** who supported me;
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## Abstract

The study at hand was conducted for the sake of investigating the relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs. To meet this objective, a hypothesis was formulated stating that there is a positive relationship between the two variables. To this end, a language proficiency test was developed on the example of the Cambridge Certificate Tests for English learners to check the level of the participants' proficiency in English. Together with a cultural identity questionnaire which was developed to check the level of learner's cultural identity. These two data gathering tools were administered to a randomly chosen sample of fifty two (52) Master one students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University- Jijel. After analyzing and comparing the data gathered by means of these research tools, the researchers came to conclude that there is a positive relationship between these two variables: the higher the level of student's proficiency the more open they are to the western culture and vice versa ,except in terms of their religious beliefs. Therefore, it can be perfectly clear that the research hypothesis was confirmed for both the identifiers of gender and language, but it was rejected on the part of religious beliefs. Finally, the findings of the present study serve as grooming ground for future research to further dive into the relationship that exist between language proficiency and cultural identify in general ,and in the Algerian context in particular.

**Keywords:** Cultural identity, foreign language proficiency, gender, language, religious beliefs.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**ACTFL:** American Council on Teaching Foreign Language

**CC:** Communicative Competence

**CEFR:** Common European Framework of References

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FL:** Foreign Language

**FLT:** English Language Teaching

**ICC:** Intercultural Communicative Competence

**ICT:** Information and Communication Technology

**L1:** First Language.

**%:** Percentage

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Résumé

ملخص

## **General Introduction**

### **Introduction**

There is persuasive evidence burgeoning from foreign language research that the process of learning another language other than the native one requires from the learner the mastery of the four skills, together with the appropriate use of language in its cultural context. That is, proficiency means knowing what to use and how to use language well. This process involves also the triggering of an ongoing process of identity reconstruction among language learners. In this regard, Le Ha(2008) argued that in the process of learning a new language, learners' identities are "communicated ,extended, confirmed, constructed, negotiated ,and reconstituted"(p.25).While, Block (2007, p.113) claimed that in such settings, learners' identity does not usually experience any meaningful change because of the lack of sufficient exposure to the target language; these discrepancies concerning the relationship between language learning and identity construction sparked interest in identity with its diverse types like cultural identity. This latter which refers to a "shared culture ... which people with a shared history and common ancestry hold in common", that help in giving a sense of unity in the community ( Hall, Braziel, & Mannur, 2003, p. 234) .

### **1. Background of the Study**

In the last few decades, there have been many contributions to foreign language (FL) research concerning cultural identity and learning, we can list the following:

Seppälä(2011) investigated the effect of leaning English on the cultural identity of Chinese students. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to 78 students together with interviews with and eight participants. The findings highlighted the influence of English language learning on Chinese students' cultural identities. The findings detected the impact of

English language learning on Chinese students' cultural identities, in a way that they perfectly know both cultures which expanded their worldview.

Altugan(2014) conducted a study to examine the relationship between cultural identity and learning for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus curriculum subjects. This research was done in a deductive approach; which is a qualitative study using focus group discussion. The study has been set in 8 large mixed comprehensive schools from Nicosia, Morphou, Kyrenia and Famagustain North Cyprus where students are from different cultures. The findings revealed that cultural identity is an important factor in learning and that it should be taken into consideration. Furthermore, developing an intercultural understanding is a crucial step that both teachers and students should take in order to ensure effective learning outcomes.

Bazrafshan(2015) did a study for the sake of measuring the impact of cultural identity and attitudes towards foreign language pronunciation learning in the Iranian context. To accomplish this, 60 Iranian EFL students studying at a high school in Sabzevar were selected; they were school boys and girls aging between 16 and 18 years of old. A language learning attitude questionnaire and a cultural Identity questionnaire were given to the sample for the sake of measuring their attitudes and cultural identity towards pronunciation learning. The results of the study revealed that the participants hold positive attitude towards pronunciation leaning. Besides, learning pronunciation and cultural identity are strongly linked among Iranian EFL students.

Hosseinpur and Farahani (2017) explored the impact of cultural intelligence and cultural identity on Iranian EFL learners' use of politeness strategies. To this end, fifty two intermediate language learners were asked to answer the questionnaires of cultural intelligence, L1 cultural identity, and discourse completion tasks. After analyzing the data, no interaction effect of cultural intelligence and cultural identity levels was detected on the use of politeness strategies.



In spite of the major researches that have been done in the field of cultural identity and language leaning, a major gap can be seen in the area of the relationship between learners' proficiency and cultural identity especially in the Algerian context; mainly because each one of the previous studies investigated a specific aspect of proficiency but none of them really tackled proficiency in a general manner, so, this study intend to fill such gap.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The main goal of foreign language learning, which used to be the mastery of FL structure, has been changed into utilizing it communicatively. Being able to communicate effectively in English requires from the learner to be knowledgeable about its culture, with reason that language and culture are inseparable. This connection, however, may not be always positive, when English values clash with the native ones, forcing the non-native speaker to make a compromise. In this regard, cultural attachment and identity become a problem due to the fact that cultural values, beliefs, and norms can sometimes hinder one's learning and use of a foreign language especially in Muslim countries.

Accordingly, it has been noticed that despite the fact that the mastery of the English language has been greatly covered in Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University, very little attention is paid to students' cultural identity. This latter encompasses elements such as: "location, gender, race, history, nationality, language, sexuality, religious beliefs, ethnicity, aesthetics etc." (Aristova, 2015, p. 154).

## **3. Aim of the Study**

The present study aims at investigating the relationship between Master one Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity, emphasizing three identifiers namely: gender, language, and religious beliefs.

#### **4. Significance of the Study**

The study at hand is highly significant for syllabus designers, decision makers, and educators, in the sense that it contributes to fostering their awareness about the whole process of teaching and learning foreign languages. Furthermore, it bridges the gap in the literature concerning the nature of the relationship that exists between EFL proficiency and the cultural identity in an Algerian context. Additionally, it could inspire them to come up with appropriate implementations of teaching foreign languages, and to make judicious decisions for any sort of improvement in our language educational system.

#### **5. Research Question**

For the sake of efficiency in handling the matter at hand, the present research work raises the following question:

-Is there any relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs?

#### **6. Research Hypothesis**

To answer the above mentioned research question, the following hypothesis is formulated:

-There is a positive relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs.

#### **7. Methodology of Research**

In order to test the validity of the current research hypothesis, a cultural identity questionnaire was developed to check the level of learner's cultural identity. Together with a language proficiency test which was designed on the example of the Cambridge Certificate Tests for English learners, to check the level of the participants' proficiency in English. These

two data gathering tools were administered to a randomly chosen sample of fifty two (52) Master one students of English at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University- Jijel.

## **8. Structure of the Study**

The current research work is divided into two main chapters. The first chapter, which is composed of two sections, represents the theoretical part. The first section deals with EFL learners' proficiency, while the second one tackles cultural identity. The second chapter, however, has to do with the practical part of the overall study, and it is composed of two sections. The first section is devoted to the methodology of the study; the second section describes data analysis and discussion of the findings. The chapter ends by stating the limitations of the study together with suggesting a number of pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for teachers and future researches.

## **Chapter One: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

The first chapter of the literature review is dedicated only to shedding light on the essential theoretical aspects connected to EFL students' proficiency and cultural identity development. The main purpose of the first section is to investigate English proficiency in foreign language learning; therefore, it is necessary to first expound the concept. With that being said, the first section starts with providing some definitions of proficiency. Additionally it tackles those essential components that comprise it. Then, it outlines the different ways to measure it throughout the years. The succeeding section, on the other hand, discusses cultural identity in foreign language learning. It kicks off with shedding light on the relationship between language, culture, and identity. Afterwards, it moves to providing definitions of cultural identity, together with its identifiers. Next, it tackles cultural identity development stages. Additionally, it clarifies the concept of "culture" within" cultural identity." Besides, the section highlights English, globalization, and cultural identity. Finally, the section discusses certain dichotomies like: cultural literacy and cultural liberty, cross cultural awareness and cultural assimilation.

### **Section One: Proficiency in Foreign Language Learning**

#### **Introduction**

This section begins with providing various proficiency definitions, and the main components that comprise it .Additionally, it casts light on the history of measuring language proficiency.

### **1.1.1. Definition of Language Proficiency**

The main goal of foreign language teaching was and has been to produce proficient learners. Consequently, proficiency gained a spectrum of interest when designing a language program. In this regard, Hadley (2001, as cited in Holster, 2014, p.2) wrote that attaining a high level of proficiency has been always the quest of foreign language learning and teaching. Subsequently, it is impossible to find any program that is oriented towards ‘incompetence’ or ‘non-proficiency’.

It is undeniably deemed necessary to understand the concept of proficiency from different points of view. As Tendero(2010, as cited in Tavakkoli et al., 2014, p. 1886) asserted that the term of language proficiency is superficially understood by ordinary people as a simple one which describes the person’ easiness in utilizing the language especially in speaking and writing .However, contrary to what one may think, the term is much more complicated than that. In this regard, Richard, Platt and Platt (1992, as cited in Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012, p. 113) defined proficiency as the extent to which learners use language skills; for instance, writing, speaking, and understanding the language. In other words, language proficiency is concerned with the degree to which the learners have grasped language. Furthermore, Language proficiency refers to the extent to which the learner has mastered the use of a language. As Hamayan & Damico (1991) stated that acquiring proficiency in a specific language is supposed to be a cline and is “the degree of control one has over the language in question” (as cited in Tavakkoli et al., 2014, p. 1886). Furthermore, Language proficiency is defined as an individual’s skill in language use for a specific purpose, and it can be measured through the application of a proficiency test (Richards, Platt & Platt, 1992, as cited in Gharbavi & Mousavi, 2012, p.111).

### **1.1.2. Components of Language Proficiency**

Language proficiency is composed of the four skills together with the communicative skills. According to Stem(1991), language proficiency has to do with ‘ the four skills’, i.e. Listening, speaking , reading ,and writing, besides speech act rules, language functions, and context (Gharbavi& Mousavi, 2012,p.113).In this regard, Spolsky (1989) explained that language tests involve measuring both a subject’s language knowledge and his/her proficiency in the use of that language (as cited in Razmjoo,2011,p.87).

#### **1.1.2.1. The Four Skills**

Skills are often divided into two opposite/interrelated categories, productive and receptive skills. According to Sekhar Rao (2016), “in order to be proficient in a language like English, one ought to undergo practicing the four skills-LSRW since English is a skill oriented subject. The four major skills of language learning, listening, speaking, reading, and writing provide the right key to success” (pp 5-6).Therefore, for the sake of acquiring English proficiency, one must have the competencies in speaking, writing, listening, and reading.

#### **❖ Productive Skills**

Productive skills refer to those kinds of competencies that allow the learner to produce something new and not just repetition. They are also considered as active skills, due to the fact that every result generated via that type requires more energy. These competencies include both speaking and writing.

#### **➤ Speaking**

Speaking, in general, is one of the core skills of English; however, when talking about it in a more specific way, many different definitions may arise along the way.

Chaney (1998: 13) defined speaking as “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts”. In the same vein, mastering speaking takes time and practice to achieve it, as Luoma (2004) asserted: “speaking

in a foreign language is very difficult and the competence in speaking takes a long time to develop” (p. 1). This line of thought is in conformity with Thornbury’s contention (2005) that “speaking is much more complex than it involves both a command of certain skills and several types of knowledge” (p. 1).

### ➤ **Writing**

Many scholars and linguists have different perspectives towards what constitutes the definition of writing. To begin with, Barnaby and Bell (1984) added that “writing is a complex cognitive process that urges the writer to master a number of elements at the same time. At both the sentence level and beyond the sentence level” (p.36). In addition, Weigle(2002) defined writing as “an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience” (p.19). In other words, it is the use of graphic representations or the written reproduction of what has already been heard or spoken.

### ❖ **Receptive Skills**

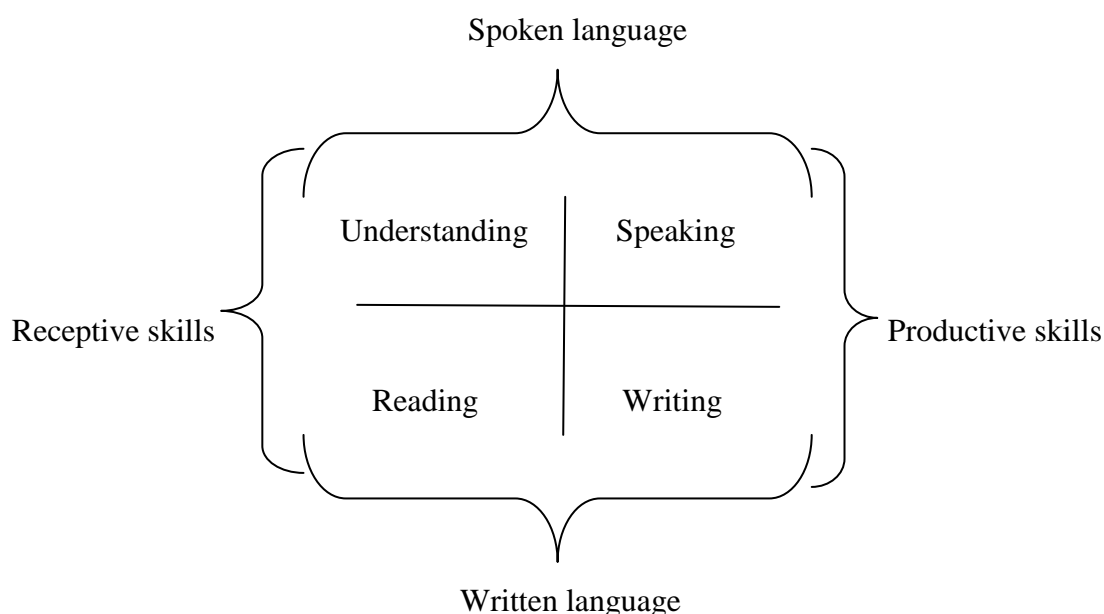
Receptive skills are processes by which people attempt to interpret and comprehend knowledge. These processes generally apply to both listening and reading.

### ➤ **Listening**

Listening has been defined by several researchers. Helgesen (2003) stated that the process of listening is a purposeful and an active one, for the sake of making sense of what is heard (p.24). In addition, “listening is one distinguished process where a fixed meaning is cognitively constructed prior to the delivery of the receiver” (Adalman, 2012, p.516). Kline(1996) explained that “listening is the neglected communication skill, While all of us have had instruction in reading, writing, and speaking, few have had any formal instruction in listening” (p.1).

### ➤ Reading

Reading is the process of encoding the information laid in a language form, where the reader receive and interpret it, as Grabe (2009) explained “reading is the process of receiving and interpreting information encoded in language form via the medium of print” (p. 14). In the same vein, Smith (2004) considered reading as “the most natural activity in the world” (p. 2). On the other hand, Walker and Ehrenstein (2000) wrote that reading is an active process in which readers link between information sources i.e. first, their previous knowledge and what the text provides. Second, develop strategies and meanings. Third, check their interpretation and use the social context to specify their response (p.4).



**Diagram 1: Inter-relationship of the Four Skills (Donn Byrne, 1979)**

In a nutshell, the four skills are made up from the combination between the receptive skills and the productive skills, or the spoken language and the written language. Therefore, one who desires to hone his proficiency must master these four skills

#### 1.1.2.2. Communicative Skills

One who desires to hone his proficiency needs additional skills together with the four skills. These skills enable him to communicate effectively and appropriately in a real situation



where he is confronted with either native speakers of English (by using communicative competence) or speakers from other cultures (via intercultural communicative competence).

### ❖ **Communicative Competence**

Communicative Competence (CC) is a concept introduced by the American sociolinguist Dell Hymes after the work of Chomsky. The latter came up with competence/performance dichotomy. Competence is defined in Longman dictionary of applied linguistics (2002, p.94) as the implicit system of rules that constitutes a person's knowledge of language; whereas, performance is defined as the actual use of language, how a person uses his knowledge in producing and understanding sentences. Additionally, Hymes defined communicative competence as the purpose and goal of language teaching, “since its key focus was on the ability to use the target language within a social context.” (Allehyani, Burnapp, & Wilson, 2017, p.2).

Based on Dell Hymes work, Canale and Swain (1980) developed the concept of communicative competence into a model of three main components:

- ✓ Grammatical competence: “refers to the knowledge of the language code, i.e., grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.” (Kojour, 2016, p.13).
- ✓ Sociolinguistic competence: “is the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use, i.e., appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness and style in a given situation.” (Kojour, 2016, p.13).
- ✓ Strategic competence: “which is the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (e.g., political speech, poetry).” (Kojour, 2016, p.13).

In 1983, the fourth component of CC was added by Canale, which is ‘discourse competence’.

- ✓ Discourse competence: “deals with the ability to use appropriate strategy in the construction and interpretation of texts.”(Kojour, 2016, p.13).

But its glory did not last as and it faced many criticisms. One of the main flaws of this view was it is expectation from foreign language learners to consider native speakers as a role model which was wrong and impossible i.e. Native speakership turned into a dream. Thus, ICC came into being (p.17).

### ❖ **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**

The shift of attention from Chomsky’s linguistic competence (1960s) to Hymes’ communicative competence (1970s) demonstrated the tremendous focus on the sociological dimension of language. But owing to the fact that communicative competence is based on the communication among native speakers, it did not serve communication across cultures which is the main goal of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC).

ICC model was first coined by Byram in 1997, when he defined it as “the ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries” (p. 7).It was acknowledged to be the most influential model that fit in the field of FLL. Besides, it copes with the new age to facilitate the exchange of ideas and information between people in a variety of cultural settings, with the ability to interpret and understand what they are saying in their foreign context. This model comprises three dimensions which are knowledge, skills, and attitudes. These three dimensions are called “the five savoirs”. These five saviors in Byram’s model of ICC are the following:

- ✓ ‘Savior’: it is “the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction” (Byram, 1997, p.51).

- ✓ ‘Savoir être’: it is defined as “curiosity and openness, readiness, to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p.50).
- ✓ ‘Savoir comprendre’: it is defined as “the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p. 52).
- ✓ ‘Savoir apprendre’: it is “the ability to acquire new knowledge of culture and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes, and skills under the constraints of real- time communication and interaction” (Byram, 1997, p.52).
- ✓ ‘Savoir s’engager’: it is known as “the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, practices, and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 1997, p.53).

### **1.1.3. Paradigm Shift in Measuring Language Proficiency**

One traditional influential view is credited to behaviorism, when they stressed the focus on objectively observable behaviors and not subjective mental processes .In the same vein, language proficiency for behaviorists was the ability to respond appropriately to the stimuli which learners are expected to come across. However, their claim faced many criticism mainly that behaviorism did not consider language use. Pinker (1994) explained that they ignored the idea of the creativity of language, and that the process of learning is not merely about memorization and mimicking, but a matter of creative production of new expressions based on the systems of generative grammar that distinguish between meaningful and meaningless.

Pinker (1994, as cited in Holster, 2014, p.3) argued that generative grammar is constructed on “deep grammar” that permit rules to generate meaningful sentences and expressions that other people can comprehend. Under this view, proficiency is defined as the ability of a

learner to recognize a variety of precise meanings he can communicate and understand. However, some criticism has been pointed out toward the generative model. Accordingly, Wardhaugh(2006) maintained that the rules did not account for the different dialects and registers which make them impractical (p.127). Ellis (1994) also added that learning depends on the variation of learners' interlanguage and the generative model does not sufficiently take such mechanisms into consideration in learning a second language (p. 529).

Later on, the communicative approach gained popularity in the field of language teaching and learning. Proficiency then was defined in terms of communicating with others. It was not a matter of defining rules but on judging a speaker's observable performance.

Our judgment of competence is based on the observation of performance, and grammar should be central to any proficiency model. But it is very challenging to isolate the components of proficiency when dealing with the use of language, for instance we cannot see communication as successful if it lacked grammatical accuracy, fluency, or vocabulary. In this regard, proficiency is considered as a chain composed of various components which can work in isolation.

Years later, there have been some efforts at incorporating Hymes's (1972) sociolinguistic concept of communicative competence in models of language proficiency. The efforts resulted in much more elaborated conceptualizations of language behavior; for example, Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman(1990). Yet, these models received considerable criticism.

In 1980, the council of Europe launched the "Common European Framework of Reference" (CEFR) project which proposed a new revolutionary framework for describing language proficiency. As opposed to the traditional division of beginner, intermediate, and advanced,

CEFR brought an innovative scale containing six levels (C2, C1, B2, B1, A2, and A1). After its wide success in Europe, the framework has been adapted in many countries.

Vossoughi and Javaherian(2000) attributed the initial impetus of language proficiency to President Carter's Commission of Foreign Language and the report published by international studies entitled “strength through wisdom”. One of the recommendations of that commission was developing a standard way of rating language proficiency. The result of that recommendation was the publication of the provisional Proficiency guidelines in 1982 by the American Council on Teaching Foreign Language (ACTFL). These proficiency guidelines described four proficiency levels of language learners which are the following: novice, intermediate, advanced, and superior(as cited in Gharbavi& Mousavi, 2012, p.113).

Generally, measuring proficiency is quite challenging .In this regard, Brown (2001) acknowledged that” nowadays nobody defines learners' proficiency level with the terms beginning, intermediate, or advanced. In brief, what is called beginning for some may not be the same for the others.”(as cited in Gharbavi& Mousavi, 2012, p.113).

## **Conclusion**

As a conclusion for what has been stated above, this section reviewed the major issues related to proficiency. It firstly defined proficiency together with its main components. Then, it delved into the history of measuring it.

## **Section Two: Cultural Identity in Foreign Language Learning**

### **Introduction**

This section is devoted exclusively to the development of cultural identity in foreign language learning. Thus, it begins with discussing the relationship between language, culture, and identity. Then, it moves to providing definitions of cultural identity, together with its identifiers. After that, it draws some attention to cultural identity development stages. Next, it casts light on the concept of “culture” within “cultural identity”. Afterwards, the section highlights on English, globalization, and cultural identity. Finally, the section discusses certain dichotomies like: cultural literacy and cultural liberty, cross cultural awareness and cultural assimilation.

#### **1.2.1. Language, Culture, and Identity**

Sapir (1921) defined the concept of language as, “purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols”(p.8). Moreover, Kramsch(1993)added that“ culture is a social construct, the product of self and other perceptions”(p.205). Norton (2000) used the concept identity to “reference how a person understands his relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p.5).

Rosaldo (1984, as cited in Khatib & Talabari, 2018, p.93) examined the interrelation between culture, identity, and language and concluded that they are correlated constructs in the social setting. Language is deemed to be a crucial item in shaping individuals’ identity and since we are teaching a second/foreign language, we are inevitably bestowing a second/foreign culture, too which, as a result, leads to the creation of a second identity.

### **1.2.2. Definition of Cultural Identity**

The notion of cultural identity has been the center of attention for quite a long time in the domain of second/foreign language teaching and learning. It was first coined by Cross in 1978 with the publication of “nigrescence” theory, to indicate those aspects of one's identity that have to do with their family and culture, and how to be perceived by others (Ibrahim & Heuer, 2016 ,as cited in Khoravi &Naeini, 2020, p.46).In the same vein, Boski (2006) defined cultural identity as the distance between one’s acceptance of cultural values and one’s understanding of their worth in cultures(Kmiotek & Boski, 2017,p.193).Additionally, Cobuild(1990) stated that cultural identity refers to those “feelings, beliefs, and ideas” which distinguish a person, people ,or a group of people from others (p. 718).

### **1.2.3. Identifiers of Cultural Identity**

According to Simpson (2017), cultural identity is composed of seven core elements which are as follows:

- 1- Cultural self-categorization: “involves one’s own perceived membership within a cultural group” (p.2).
- 2- Cultural narrative: is “the mental story developed about the culture and the self in culture” (p.2).
- 3- Cultural identity centrality: “is the degree of importance one’s cultural group membership has to oneself concept, overall, as well as its importance to one’s self concept relative to other internalized social group identities” (p.2).
- 4- Cultural identity salience: “is the degree of importance one’s cultural group membership has within the context of a given situation” (p.3).
- 5- Cultural roles: “are the sets of behavioral expectations prescribed by a given cultural group” (p.3).

6- Cultural role enactment: refers to “the degrees to which individuals enact prescriptive cultural role behaviors” (p.3).

7- Private and perceived public cultural regard: refers to “the degree of positive or negative affect one feels toward his or her cultural group and the degree of positive-negative affect felt about being a member of a particular culture (private regard).” (p.3). On the other hand, “the positive-negative affect one perceives outgroup members experience toward one’s own cultural group (public regard).” (p.3).

Additionally, Aristova(2015) stated that the identifiers of cultural identity include but not limited to “location, gender, race, history, nationality, language, sexuality, religious, beliefs, ethnicity, aesthetics etc.” (p.154).However, the study at hand deals with only three identifiers which are gender, language, and religious beliefs.

#### **1.2.3.1. Gender**

Interestingly, gender equality has been approached differently by different cultures. Gender is defined as “the socially defined character traits that are prescribed for a particular sex within a given culture. These traits are what we typically think of when we think of masculine or feminine” (Britt, 2011, p. 194). In the same vein, Hofstede et al( 2012)asserted that the” assignment of social roles based on gender is a consequence of cultural-religious interpretations and historical and environmental factors”(as cited in Neculaesei, 2015, p.33).For instance, in countries characterized by masculinity ,we notice a stronger sense of gender discrimination, while in countries characterized by femininity, there will be blurred differences leading to a poor perception of gender inequality(Neculaesei, 2015,p.33).

#### **1.2.3.2. Language**

Language is one of the markers that differentiate between societies. According to Bloch and Trager (1942), “Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (p.5). Hence, to our knowledge, language and culture are interrelated.



Concerning this, Byram (1991) points out that “language is not simply a reflector of an objective cultural reality but an integral part of that reality through which other parts are shaped and interpreted” (p. 18).

### **1.2.3.3. Religious Beliefs**

Ibrahim and Heuer (2016) proposed that cultural identity consists of several components including one's biographical features, ethnical and familial background, social status, as well as languages and religion (as cited in Khoravi & Naeini, 2020, p.47). Among all the components, “religion and spirituality” are of great importance when it comes to emotional relations. Religion refers to a set of subjective and individualistic beliefs, assumptions, and deeds being practiced in a community for the purpose of promoting spirituality level (Hodge & Derezotes, 2008, as cited in Khoravi & Naeini, 2020, p.47).

Correspondingly, a direct relationship is assumed between language learners' biased religious identity and the tendency to detach from L2 culture with reason that they do not separate themselves of ethnocentrism and do not want to develop other's system of beliefs (Ghonsooly, Hejazi, Pishghadam, & Ahmadi, 2015, as cited in Khoravi & Naeini, 2020, p.47). In contrary, the more open they are to the foreign culture, the more they tend to copy it. This goes in line with Pishghadam et al. (2013) who concluded “that the more religious a person is, the more unwilling s/he is to detach from the second language culture, mainly the western culture, including the English language” (as cited in Khoravi & Naeini, 2020, p.51). Therefore, religious issues is considered as one of cultural identity aspects that might work as a hindrance in the process of foreign language learning.

### **1.2.4. Cultural Identity Development Stages**

A cultural identity acquisition framework was developed in 1986 by Erikson, when he proposed that the identity achieved is the outcome of a period of experimentation and exploration happening in adolescent and arriving to a commitment in some areas like

occupation, religion, and political orientation. In this regard, Marcia (1992), as cited in Germain, 2005, p.23) suggested four ego identity statuses based on the degree of exploration and commitment to a given frame of reference:

(1)-A diffused status, when the individual has not engaged neither in exploration nor made a commitment.

(2)-A foreclosure/fused status, in this case individuals make a commitment but with no exploration which is generally based on parental values.

(3)-A moratorium status, here people are in the process of exploration without having made a commitment.

(4)- An achieved identity status, whereby a solid commitment was established after the period of exploration.

Phinney (1990, as cited in Germain, 2005, p.23) proposed three different stages of cultural identity development:

- 1- Culturality is not explored because it is not an issue. This stage includes both of Marcia' diffused and foreclosed statuses.
- 2- Increasing culturality awareness, through a significant experience that forces such awareness. This involves an often intense process of immersion in group activities such as the active participation in cultural events, visiting museums, and so on. For some individuals this may involve rejecting the values of the larger culture.
- 3- Meeting cultural issues or acceptance of the membership of a group. The latter is considered to be the solution of two dilemmas faced by all cultural minorities; the reconciliation of cultural differences between their own group and the dominant one, and the perceived unequal status of their group compared with others.

### 1.2.5. The Concept of “Culture” within “Cultural Identity”

The concept of culture is a vague and ambivalent one with reason of the many forms it takes and the paradoxes encountered when assessing it. Culture is usually referred to as an orientation or standardization of values or modes of behavior, but there is also the place for individual diversity, subcultures, and the very smaller communities which make cultures appear divergent (Demorgon & Moltz, 1996, p.43).

Hansen (1995, as cited in Hauser, 2010, p.10) developed the “differential” concept of culture which is built on the belief that the unity of culture lies in its differentiated nature. For instance, people from the same culture may display different everyday activities but they share some common characteristics. These common characteristics are initially language and history; these two constitute what people consider “normal”. The first background of cultural influence is achieved by birth and socialization (cultural rules are written or acquired subconsciously).

Billikopf (2009) concluded from his trips that individuals learn the cultural values that affect their performance and actions from socialization; as a result, these values will influence how people learn, behave, and live (as cited in Khatib & Talabari, 2018, p.93). But, they have the freedom to choose from the available interpretation of meanings and actions, and when deciding on whether to accept or refuse membership in a given group specifically and agreeing on its conditions. People, who identify themselves to a particular group and their values, at the same time, are mentally affected by these standardizations. By following these standards, they shape their cultural identity. Hansen (1995) said that “on one hand, culture [in the form of collectivized norms] is created by individuals but, on the other hand, it creates their identity” (p.213).

Groups and individuals are mutually influenced by each other, and with the internet –based media the information received by individuals is compared to the cultural standardizations of

their groups where it is evaluated and classified. Cultural identity has two possibilities to examine culture (Hauser, 2010, pp13-14):

- 1- Culture here is considered both at the group level and individuals levels, and both micro and macro-analytical perspectives are thus integrated into one concept (homogenization).
- 2- Differentiation into various groups allows specific groups of different cultures to be compared, hereby avoiding the generalization or excessive stereotyping of culture (fragmentation).

#### **1.2.6. English, Globalization, and Cultural Identity**

Recently, it is estimated that there exist over 600 million users of English across the globe, and most of them are non-native speakers of English (Kachru, 1984, as cited in Kumagai, 1994, p.7). Crystal (1997) added that “there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English” (p.127). Consequently, English has become a common language of native and non native speakers. Crystal (1997) said that “the fact that these innovations were pouring out of an English-speaking country meant that those from abroad who wished to learn about them would need to learn English and learn it well if they wished to benefit” (p.72). This can explain why “From 80 to 85% of the scientific and technical information is available either written or abstracted in English” (Kaplan, 1987, p.139).

Giddens (1990) defined globalization “as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away, and vice versa” (as cited in Hauser, 2010, p.2). Furthermore, Block, (2011) wrote that communication in the globalized world, requires from people to learn the international language to facilitate communication with different people from different countries (Mohammadi & Izadpanah, 2019, p.54). However, regarding the effect of

communication technologies and media, Giddens (1991) defined globalization as “the intersection of presence and absence, the interlacing of social events and social relations ‘at a distance’ with local contextualities” (p. 21). In the so called “media age”, the media interlinked worldwide resulting in sociocultural changes. Accordingly, sociocultural globalization processes resulted from the appearance of Information and Communication Technologies leading to stretching space-time social interactions (mutual communication). ICT builds a bridge between local contexts such as cultural identities and the global contexts.

Recently, the mass media language or the language of advertising and internet construct speech communities more than that of fiction, and beyond any doubt, the younger generations are much more affected by the internet language, despite the fact that there are multiple identities but some of them are said to be more relevant (Edwards, 1985; Kidd, 2002). In this regard, Gergen's (1991) introduced the notion of “saturated self” to refer to communication technologies that help people to “colonize each other's brains” by continuously constructing, reconstructing, and negotiating their identities and providing opportunities to make global relationships and knowing other cultures (as cited in Koç, 2006, p.5).

There is an ambivalent relationship between cultural identity and the globalised world. Cultural identities have local roots attached to local contexts, but the concept of the globe means generalization and decontextualization of symbols and the detachment of social actions. Therefore, the globalised media offers problematic social and cultural consequences, regarding the process of identity formation. In contrast, globalization enhances cultural identity since it brings more awareness of cultural identity than before, making people much more concerned about their cultural uniqueness and particularity (Wang, 2007, p. 85).

The Complicated issues of cultural identity and language come to the fore when we use a language. Today's world changed the way and content of communication, resulting in the

emergence of multicultural identities via the globalized contexts of intercultural communications, which seemingly add to the complexity of these issues.

### **1.2.7. Cultural Literacy and Cultural Liberty**

Cultural literacy (learning about other cultures) is the ability to understand the history, regular activities ,and traditions of a group of people from a given culture, as well as, being able to participate in them. The essential purpose of English becoming a global language is to stress the diversity of cultures in the multilingual context, as a result, intercultural literacy is of fundamental when communicating and establishing cross cultural relations (Honna, 2008, as cited in Khatib & Talabari, 2018, p.121).

Cultural liberty (learning from other cultures) is the freedom given to the individual to choose his thoughts, conscious, religions, etc. As Kumaravadivelu (2011,as cited in Khatib & Talabari, 2018, p.121) explained that in FLL student should focus more on learning 'from other cultures' and not 'about other cultures'. Here, cultural liberty will have a much deeper influence. Due to the fact that getting deep into a culture will have a big impact on cultural identities as opposed to cultural literacy which is all about keeping it superficial.

### **1.2.8. Cultural Awareness and Cultural Assimilation**

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) defined cultural awareness as “being aware of members of another cultural group: their expectation, their perspectives, and values. It also means attempting to understand their reasons for their actions and beliefs” (p. 217).In this regard, Kramsch (1993) advised that “culture awareness must be viewed both as enabling language proficiency and as being the outcome of reflection on language proficiency” (p. 8).Cultural assimilation ,on the other hand, refers to ”the process of becoming more like a specific reference group along some quantifiable margin”(Marrone,2017, p.3).Therefore, it can be perfectly clear that this process gradually leads to the loss of the cultural identity of an ethnic group.

## **Conclusion**

This section discussed the development of cultural identity in foreign language learning. It started with explaining the relationship between language, culture, and identity. Then, it moved to providing definitions of cultural identity, together with its identifiers. After that, it tackled cultural identity development stages. Next, it clarified the concept of “culture” within” cultural identity.” Afterwards, the section highlighted English, globalization, and cultural identity. Finally, the section discussed certain dichotomies like: cultural literacy and cultural liberty, cross cultural awareness and cultural assimilation.

## **Chapter Two: Fieldwork**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to the practical framework of our study. It is composed of two sections: the first section deals with unfolding the research methodology. It starts with spotting light on the research hypothesis. After that, it states the data gathering instruments employed in the research at hand. Later on, it shifts to the description of the design and administration of the tools employed for data gathering. In the second section, the results obtained from the data instruments are presented and analyzed. Later on, the discussion of the results gained from the analyzed data is to follow.

### **Section One: Research Methodology**

#### **2.1. Research Hypothesis**

It is needless to say that the hypothesis is considered as the basis of any piece of research; therefore, it is deemed essential to start this section by restating it at the very beginning. In our study we hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between Algerian EFL learner's proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs.

#### **2.2. Data Gathering Instruments**

For successfully attaining our pre-determined research aim, the data collection step is of great importance. At this point, the suitable instruments are the finest line between a good and a bad work, owing to the fact that the right data gathering tools can only provide us with reliable and valid results.

The study at hand adopts a quantitative data analysis approach. As we sought to investigate the relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development



of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs, a language proficiency test together with a cultural identity questionnaire are deemed to be the most suitable instruments to attain the research aim.

### **2.3. Description of the Research Tools**

This research employed two data gathering instruments, a language proficiency test to measure the students' proficiency in English to ensure homogeneity, along with a designed cultural identity questionnaire.

#### **2.3.1. Description of the Language Proficiency Test**

A language proficiency test is considered as the optimal tool for measuring learners' proficiency level in English and identifying deficiencies. This test was a sum of activities in the four skills; it was designed on the example of the Cambridge Certificate Tests for English learners. While designing the test, we took into consideration the time factor since Cambridge University Tests' activities are relatively long (take about three hours for each skill). Thus, we had to adjust the four activities to a maximum of two hours.

##### **2.3.1.1. The Reading Comprehension Test**

Students were given a text and asked to answer the reading comprehension questions. At this point, students were expected only to focus on understanding the text and making choices and guesses by opting for the right answer among the four given options.

##### **2.3.1.2. The Writing Test**

It is made up of three exercises:

- **Use of English Activity:** the participants were given a text and asked to fill in the gaps by choosing the right answer among the four options, in each of the twelve

gaps. This activity could provide an idea about the richness of the student's vocabulary.

- **Grammar:** we designed several activities focusing on the English grammar areas where learners faced some difficulties such as :present continuous use-simple tense: imperative and present-the use of “as good as”-the use of comparatives-the use of perfect tenses-the use of possessive forms-the use of conjunctions-the use of auxiliaries-detection of ungrammatical expressions.
- **Written Expression:** at this point, students were asked to compose twelve lines about their future career by stating the reasons that pushed them to choose that domain. This activity demonstrated for us how good they are at organizing their ideas and the usage of correct structures, spelling, punctuation, etc.

#### 2.3.1.3. The Listening Test

The listening test was mainly designed for the sake of measuring learners' ability in understanding native speakers' pronunciation. This latter was tested via listening to an audio tape in the British accent. Next, the respondents listened to the tap three times and were asked to fill in the gaps when listening.

#### 2.3.1.4. The Speaking Test

The speaking test was designed for two different objectives namely:

- To measure students speaking proficiency by following certain criteria such as pronunciation correctness, conformity to syntactic rules, and richness of vocabulary.
- This test can provide data on students' use of analytical and critical strategies in arguing and judging cultural differences between their native culture and

that of English speaking communities. The topics chosen are either of general interest or carry a conflictual concept, these topics are the following:

1. Attributes of a good friend.
2. The role of aesthetic surgery in improving people's life.
3. Third world characteristics.
4. Comparing western non Muslim women and Muslim women.

### **2.3.2. Description of the Cultural Identity Questionnaire**

The cultural identity questionnaire was made of 18 close-ended questions. The questions are arranged under three sections with each section containing 6 items: the first section tackles gender, the second sections is concerned with language, while the third section is devoted to religious beliefs. In this questionnaire, students were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of the given points, using a 5 point scale, where 1 means "totally disagree" and 5 means "totally agree". For the sake of unfolding their opinions and attitudes towards the subject under study, it is worthy to mention that the respondents were given assurance regarding the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses.

## **2.4. Administration of the Research Tools**

It is necessary to mention that the test was handed over alongside the questionnaire to a sample of randomly selected Master one students. The reasonable ground standing behind opting for this category particularly emanates from the considerable experience they have with the foreign language.

### **2.4.1. Administration of the Language Proficiency Test**

The language proficiency test was administered by hand to fifty two (52) Master one students in the department of English at Mohamed Seddiq Ben Yahia University, Jijel. The administration was hard to achieve because some learners showed hesitation to take such tests.

To relieve this hesitation, we explained to them the benefits of the research for the teaching and learning process improvement.

#### **2.4.2. Administration of the Cultural Identity Questionnaire**

The cultural identity questionnaire was designed for the sake of measuring the level of students' cultural identity. This questionnaire was above all elaborated to provide data concerning three cultural identity identifiers which are: gender, language, and religious beliefs. The questionnaire was delivered to fifty two (52) Master one student of English at Mohamed Seddiq Ben Yahia University, Jijel.

The administration of the questionnaire was done in university classrooms. By doing so, we sought to be sure that the entire respondents would answer the questionnaire in a comfortable environment. Also, the researchers have explained for the informants the nature and the aim of the study as well as the importance of each student to answer the questions frankly and individually.

## Section Two: Data Analysis and Discussion

### 2.2.1. Data Analysis of the Language Proficiency Test

The language proficiency test total score is of 30 marks divided in the following way: reading comprehension test (06 marks), the speaking test (04 marks), the listening test (04 marks), and the writing test: 16 marks (use of English: 06 marks, syntax: 06 marks, and essay writing: 04 marks).

#### 2.2.1.1. The Reading Comprehension Test

The text we chose for the reading comprehension test was about the emergence of English language grammar. At the lexicon level, the vocabulary was not difficult with the exception of names like “Cherokee”. The questions asked follows the paragraphs order.

**Question One:** in the first question, students are required to specify the reason why the author mentioned “The Cherokee Language”. Four optional answers were granted.

- A. To show how simple, traditional cultures can have complicated grammar structures.
- B. To show how English grammar differs from Cherokee grammar.
- C. To prove that complex grammar structures were invented by the Cherokees.
- D. To demonstrate how difficult it is to learn the Cherokee language.

The majority of students 39 (75%) answered this question correctly.

**Question Two:** in the second question students are asked to find out in paragraph2 the meaning of the phrasal verb (make-shift) among the following:

- |                                |                          |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A- Complicated and expressive. | B- Simple and temporary. |
| C- Extensive and diverse.      | D- Private and personal. |

In this question, we tended not to test the student’s English vocabulary knowledge, but rather to test their understanding of the whole paragraph. We noticed that only 11(21.15%) could answer this question correctly.

**Question Three:** this question tests the students' scanning ability in the final paragraph; the four options given are different ideas which are mentioned in the last paragraph.

- A. English was once a Creole.
- B. The English past tense system is inaccurate.
- C. Linguist had proven that English was created by children.
- D. Children say English past tenses differently from adults.

We noticed that only 16(30.76%) students answered this question correctly.

**Question Four:** this question proposed four optional words for "consistent grammar":

- A. Natural.
- B. Predictable.
- C. Imaginable.
- D. Uniform.

The objective of this question is to test students' ability to exclude meanings that can in no way fit the term grammar which is well known to them. In this question 33(63.64%) learners chose the correct answer (number 04). The following table presents students' achievements in every question comprising the reading comprehension skill:

**Table 1.1:** *Students' Correct Answer Distribution in the Reading Comprehension Test*

Questions	Number of high achievers	Percentage of high achievers
1	39	75%
2	11	21.15%
3	16	30.76%
4	33	63.46%

#### **2.2.1.2. The Writing Test**

The writing test consisted of three activities, the first activity tests students' mastery of the English vocabulary, the second measures their syntactic knowledge, and the third tests their ability to express an idea in words.

As far as the first activity is concerned, we used both the “exact answer” and the “accepted answer”. For the second activity, a varied set of questions is used where only the correct answer is accepted. In the third one, evaluating the candidates production by assessing their ability to express coherently the idea in question “ what career to follow in the future”, the correctness of words spelling, tense correctness, and the sentence structure.

### ➤ Use of English

Students are given a text from which we omitted 12 content and functional words. For each gap we provided the candidates with 4 options to choose from the appropriate term. The options were mainly synonyms as far as content words are concerned. The results of this activity are presented in the following table:

**Table1.2.1:** *Students’ Correct Answers Distribution: the use of English Test*

Number of correct answers	Students percentage	Students’ number
12	1.92%	1
11	5.76%	3
10	11.53%	6
9	19.23%	10
8	21.15%	11
7	9.61%	5
6	11.53%	6
5	15.38%	8
4	3.84%	2
3	0%	0
2	0%	0
1	0%	0
0	0%	0

Total	100%	52
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As can be seen in the table, only 1(1.92%) student reached (12) correct answers, which shows that students' achievement in this activity is low. The results suggest that students need to work more on their vocabulary.

### ➤ Grammar

Students are expected to answer 09 questions to test their knowledge about:

- Present continuous use.
- Simple tense: imperative and present.
- The use of “as good as”.
- The use of comparatives.
- The use of perfect tenses.
- The use of possessive forms.
- The use of conjunctions.
- The use of auxiliaries.
- The detection of the ungrammatical expressions.

Students' achievement in the nine questions is presented in the following table:

**Table 1.2.2: Students' Correct Answers Distribution: Grammar Test**

Question	Students achievement
Present continuous use.	84.61%
Simple tense: imperative and present.	78.84%
The use of “as good as”.	90.38%
The use of comparatives.	75%
The use of perfect tenses.	61.53%
The use of possessive forms.	92.30%



The use of conjunctions.	53.84%
The use of auxiliaries.	84.61%
The detection of the ungrammatical expressions.	53.84%

Students demonstrated through this test a high level of grammar mastery in most of the areas tested such as the use of the present continuous, the use “as good as”, and the use of possessive forms.

### ➤ **Written Expression**

In this part of the writing skill test, the learners are asked to formulate in a paragraph their future career providing arguments for their choice. It can be noted that 74% of the candidates chose to be English teachers. Out of the learners writing performance, we would pick up 29 sentences containing errors, we chose the most frequent ones and classified them into two tables according to two categories: syntax and lexicon.

**Table 1.2.3.1: Learners’ Syntactic Errors**

Syntactic Errors	Errors Source
I’m gonna try to get a scholarship	Foreign language rules
As a matter in the fact	Foreign language rules
I have a dream and I want to realize it	Mother tongue interference
I have a butterfly in my stomach about the future	Foreign language rules
I have been in London once and I learnt English	Foreign language rules
I image myself as if a teacher	Mother tongue interference

These syntactic errors result from the learners’ low mastery of the foreign language rules besides mother tongue interference (Arabic thinking).

**Table 1.2.3.2: Learners’ Spelling Rules**

Spelling Errors	Error Source
-----------------	--------------

Sofisticated (sophisticated)- sircomstances (circumstances)- coansidence (coincidence)- exetra (etcetera)- an English student (a student of English).	Target Language  Knowledge
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Students produced a piece of writing in the test which leaves little space to reflect all the spelling errors they may make in longer paragraphs.

### 2.2.1.3. The Listening Test

After the candidates listened 3 times to an audio in the English pronunciation, they had to fill in the gaps with the suitable words.

1. I began to work ..... with children: abnormal kids, gifted kids, kids with leaning problem, and with..... adults. People who once fine but who had a ..... or a ....., or a ..... accident, and the more i spent working with these two population.
2. It was much more simple to say smart, average, .....
3. I set up a series or criteria to ..... define what the human faculties were .
4. It was the notion of saying to eight or nine faculties what we usually call smart is .....with the ..... and.....
5. I think what..... in 1980s, was we can find some neurological evidence the ..... language abilities came from one part of the brain.
6. This exert is brought to you by .....school low.

In the listening task, we had to play the audio tape, and after they finished the task we asked the students about the way they proceeded to fill in the gaps to obtain data on their listening learning strategy if they have a habit of listening to English audio materials:

- 1- It is by focusing on speakers' pronunciation of the missing words.
- 2- It is by guessing the word through the general context.

The vast majority of the respondents chose the second strategy; their answers show that they faced some difficulties in understanding the overall meaning of the sentences. Our analysis of their responses revealed the following results: 09 (17.30%) students of the sample filled 06 gaps with both correct terms and spellings, 27(51.92%) students detected the correct terms but they misspelled them, and 16(30.76%) students provided no answer. In this test, it can be perfectly observed that students have a low performance when it comes to listening tasks.

#### **2.2.1.4. The Speaking Test**

Following our aim to detect students' ability to discuss topics embedding foreign culture concepts and check their abilities in issues discussion, and detecting their speaking errors, we designed a speaking test to obtain data about both aspects. Nonetheless, their proficiency in oral expression as part of the proficiency test was measured by considering their pronunciation, syntactic, and lexicon errors only. The test was composed of four issues, among which the 52 students had to opt for a topic to discuss. The offered topics are as follows:

- **Topic one:** attributes of a good friend.
- **Topic two:** the role of aesthetic surgery in improving people's life.
- **Topic three:** third world characteristics.
- **Topic four:** comparing women in the western countries and in Muslim countries.

Enhancing the discussion was performed through one question on the topic.

- **Topic one:** If you have the opportunity to choose a close friend on what characteristic do you base your choice?
- **Topic two:** If your friend decides to undergo an aesthetic surgery, what would you advice him?

- **Topic three:** In what way can you describe a third world country?
- **Topic four:** If your sister decides to move to an English speaking country and is suspicious about interacting with non Muslim western women there, what would you tell her?

The speaking test results are as follows:

- 1- Oral proficiency performance to measure their speaking proficiency where we consider their pronunciation flaws, syntactic errors, and lexicon.
- 2- Topic choice and discussion strategy; using analysis, arguing, critical comparison providing value judgment use in topics carrying cultural differences, and their ability to point at negative and positive aspects of the issue and defending their opinion.

#### **Students' Oral Performance**

The discussion was poor if we considered students low motivation. As far as pronunciation is concerned, we noticed that learners do not have the same pronunciation (some were very good, but most of them do not know how to pronounce well). It is worthy to note that majority of them tend to favor the American accent. All in all, they displayed little experience in conversation strategies like turn taking or facing an audience to convey an idea. The following table presents the areas where learners' common difficulties lie:

*Table 3. Learners' Speaking Errors.*

Pronunciation Flaws	Syntactic Errors	Lexicon Misuse
-Do not know how to pronounce "aesthetic" correctly.	- The overuse of perfect tenses instead of simple tenses.	-The use of some terms that reflect mother tongue interference such as:
-They pronounce	- Repetition.	-“without control” to mean

“multilingual” with the sound /u/.		free. - “The Arabian university” to mean the League of Arabian countries.
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### Topic Choice and Discussion

As previously explained, the speaking test was administered to detect learners’ discussion abilities in terms of opinions, using argumentation, and analysis in debatable issues in general and in topics carrying cultural issue in particulars. The results of the speaking performance showed that:

- 20 students (38.46%) of the sample chose topic one.
- 9 students (17.030%) of the sample chose topic two
- 5 students (9.61%) of the sample opted for topic three.
- 18 students (34.61%) of the sample preferred topic four.

We gathered our observations about learners’ discussions; we simply reported their comments on the topics they chose to discuss as follows:

#### **Topic One:**

- 1- Learners started directly citing qualifications of a good friend
- 2- Students tend to mention only visible qualification such as, kind, helpful, honest.

#### **Topic Two:**

- 1- Our respondents emphasized the idea that they do not know someone who had such surgery.
- 2- They gave examples of actresses who had some good results from doing them.
- 3- None of the students referred to Islam standpoint concerning such topic.

#### **Topic Three:**

- 1- Students qualified the third world countries as underdeveloped, overcrowded ,and possessing natural resources.

#### **Topic Four:**

- 1- Algerian women are said to be religious women.
- 2- Western non Muslim women do not have the same priorities as Muslim women.
- 3- Most students described western women physically only.

#### **2.2.2. Data Discussion of the Language Proficiency Test**

In light of what has been analyzed in the test, a number of significant conclusions can be drawn. As a quick reminder, the study at hand aims at investigating the relationship between EFL learners' proficiency and the development of their cultural identity. The following points will expectantly display the deductions drawn from the analysis in a clear manner.

##### **➤ The Reading Comprehension Test**

In the reading comprehension test, students did not perform well. In the first question 75% found the correct answer because the term "Cherokee" is mentioned only in the first paragraph which assisted students to focus on the meaning to find out the answer. However, only 21.15% and 30.76%, respectively, answered correctly the second and third question, this can be explained by the lack of students 'concentration in the text. Evidently, Q4 was relatively easy for our respondents because they had to only scan the last paragraph.

##### **❖ The Writing Test**

##### ***Use of English***

As far this activity is concerned, students did not do great when filling the gaps. Only 1.92% scored 12 correct answers. The reason behind this can be the high number of optional words for each gap that are very close in meaning (sometimes they were synonyms, plus the low vocabulary level of students.

### ***Grammar***

Interestingly, students performed very well in the grammar test which can only signifies their mastery of the grammatical items of the language.

### ***Written Expression***

After analyzing the written paragraphs of our respondents, a considerable number of errors have been detected, ranging between mother tongue interference resulting from their Arabic thinking and foreign language errors. The latter are mostly errors in idioms and slang language that they use on social media like "gonna". Additionally, students made a lot of syntactic errors in long words, mostly because they are complicated. In simpler words; they write the word in the same way it is pronounced.

#### **➤ The Listening Test**

In this test, students demonstrated a low performance. Even when they found the correct word in the gap, they misspelled it. This can be because of the fast speaking of the audio, or the respondents lack of experience with the native accents.

#### **➤ The Speaking Test**

The results of the speaking test were not as expected also. Students suffered from a lot of problems when speaking like anxiety, hesitating in speaking, misspelling, etc. This is due to the fact that they cannot cope in situation under pressure when facing an audience.

### **❖ The Overall Performance of Students in the Language Proficiency Test**

In the overall comparison of the test participants' performances, it can be clearly noticed that those who set for the test achieved better in reading comprehension and writing tests than they did in speaking and listening. Additionally, the influence of slang and social media language is greatly shown.

For the sake of evaluating the overall performance we followed a number of steps. To begin with, using the results of this proficiency test, the respondents were divided into groups

to ensure homogeneity following the aforementioned scale of scoring. Furthermore, we resorted to CEFR proficiency levels when ranking their scores in each of the four skills from the highest to the lowest which are C2, C1, B2, B1, A2, and A1, respectively.

**Table 1.4:** *Students' Levels and Scale.*

Level and Scale	Number	Percentage
C2 (25-30 correct answers)	10	19.23%
C1 (20-25 correct answers)	17	32.69%
B2 (15-20 correct answers)	16	30.76%
B1 (10-15 correct answers)	7	13.46%
A2 (5-10 correct answers)	2	3.84%
A1 (0-5 correct answers)	0	0%
Total (30 correct answers)	52	100%

### 2.2.3. Data Analysis of the Cultural Identity Questionnaire

The questionnaire of the study is addressed to a sample of 52 Master one students in the department of foreign languages at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University to gather data about their cultural identity identifiers namely gender, language, and religious beliefs. The questionnaire at hand is divided into three sections and each section, in turn, includes 6 questions in the form of a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire responses are presented by means of quantitative measures. Students' responses are presented and analyzed in terms of the three sub-sections of the questionnaire (i.e., gender, language, and religious beliefs).

#### **Section One: Gender**

The first sub-section analyzes students' responses concerning the six questions of Gender.

- **Question n°1:** Men should treat women as their equal.



*Table 2.1.1: Gender Equality*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Agree	0	0
Strongly agree	52	100

The present question probes into students' attitude towards gender equality. As displayed in *Table 2.1.1*, All the questionnaire participants (52) believed that men and women should be treated equally. Therefore, the majority of the foreign language students' sampled population calls for more social equality of gender.

➤ **Question n°2:** Women were born only to give kids.

*Table 2.1.2: Women Role in Life.*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	52	100
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Agree	0	0
Strongly agree	0	0

Through the table above, it can be concluded that, once again, there is a general agreement among students (100%) with regard to women role in life.

**Question n°3:** Men grant jobs to women based on their appearance and not their qualifications.

*Table 2.1.3: Granting Jobs to Women*

Options	N	%
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<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36.5</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13.46</b>

In response to question3, a considerable number of respondents 26(50%) had a neutral opinion towards this question, while 19(36.5%) “agreed” to some extent with it. Besides, 7(13.46%) students “totally agreed with the statement above. The results indicate that men favor women in granting jobs.

➤ **Question n°4:** When opting for a future wife, men fear successful women.

*Table 2.1.4: Opting for a Future Wife*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9.61</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13.46</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>34.61</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42.30</b>

This table illustrates that 22(42.30%) students stated that men fear successful women when opting for a future wife, while 18(34.61%) students were neutral. And 7(13.46%) disagreed plus 5(9.61%) students who totally disagreed.

➤ **Question n°5:** Women should share financial responsibilities with men.

*Table2.1.5: Sharing Financial Responsibilities*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
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<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13.46</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>42.30</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>44.23</b>

In this question, only 7(13.46%) respondents strongly disagreed with the idea of women sharing financial responsibilities with men. In contrast, 23(44.23%) students showed their total support for this idea. While 22(42.30%) students where indecisive about this claim.

In brief, despite the limited freedom that women are granted in the Islamic countries like Algeria, the experience of foreign language learning influenced the English language students' views concerning gender. Making them call for gender equality and freedom.

➤ **Question n°6:** Friendship between men and women is possible.

*Table 2.1.6: Gender Friendship.*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.84</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19.23</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>76.92</b>

When it comes to gender friendship, more than half of the respondents 40(76.92%) answered positively this question by demonstrating their total agreement with the idea of having a friend from the opposite gender, but this idea was opposed and strongly opposed by 10(19.23%) and 2(3.84%) students, respectively. The results indicate how much students are affected by the western culture which supports the idea of befriending someone from the opposite gender, as oppose to our conservative society.

## Section Two: Language

The second sub-section presents students' responses to the questions of language.

➤ **Question n° 7:** My English colleagues understand me better than those of other majors.

*Table 2.2.1: Belonging Feelings*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	4	7.69
Agree	29	55.76
Strongly agree	19	36.53

The vast majority of students 29(55.76%) displayed their agreements concerning their sense of belonging to the same students in their department, together with 19(36.53%) respondents who revealed their total support of this statement. However, 4(7.69%) students did not take any side. The results indicate how much the English language created a sense of unity in its learners.

**Question n°8:** The English language should be the second language of Algeria.

*Table 2.2.2: English Status*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Agree	0	0
Strongly agree	52	100

It is crystal clear from the table that all the 52 respondents strongly held up to the idea of English becoming the second language of Algeria. The results highlight the importance of English and how much it is likable among the learners.

**Question n°9:** You started to acquire English from listening to songs and watching movies.

*Table 2.2.3: Acquiring English*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	0	0
Neutral	5	9.61
Agree	11	21.15
Strongly agree	36	69.23

Table 2.2.3 reveals the way students first acquired English. We suggested movies and songs to be their starting point, which was strongly supported by 36(69.23%) students. At the same time 11(21.15%) students agreed with this opinion. But 5(9.61%) students preferred to stay neutral. This can only indicate how much movies and songs affected and shaped learners' current language.

- **Question n°10:** People judge me as a civilized and educated individual when i speak English.

*Table2.2.4: People Judgments towards English Students*

Options	N	%
Strongly disagree	0	0
Disagree	13	25
Neutral	28	53.84
Agree	11	21.15

**Strongly agree****0****0**

This question aims mainly at finding out other people judgment on students of English. 28(53.84%) students were neutral, while 13(25%) students took the opposing side. On contrast, 11(21.15%) students took the supported side.

- **Question n°11:** Students of English in our university tend to show off with their language with others who do not.

**Table2.2.5: English Ego**

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.84</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>19.23</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>76.92</b>

*Table 2.2.5* demonstrates English students' ego, it revealed that the vast majority 40(76.92%) of students totally agreed with the statement; on the other hand, 10(19.23%) students disagreed together with 2(3.84%) students who totally disagreed. The results displays that English affect its students making them feel prestigious and making a sense of stereotype.

- **Question n°12:** You use English taboos instead of Arabic ones.

**Table 2.2.6: English Taboos**

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5.76</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5.76</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>88.46</b>

When it comes to unfolding their opinions about using taboos, 46(88.46%) respondents affirmed the statement saying that they use them more often, while 3(5.76%) learners strongly opposed the statement. However, 3(5.76%) students were indecisive.

In short, this sub-section uncovers the influence of foreign language learning on students' language use. In light of the results, the participants supported the target language in most cases. Hence, it can be speculated that EFL students are clearly affected by their long experience with the language in question in terms of language use.

### **Section Three: Religious Beliefs**

The final sub-section presents the responses of EFL learners with respect to the questions of religious beliefs.

➤ **Question n°13:** Learning English makes you doubt Islam values.

**Table 2.3.1: Doubting Islam Values**

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>82.69</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9.61</b>

<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7.69</b>
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Through this item, we wanted to have an idea about what English learners think of Islam in general. Nearly all of them 43 (82.69%) stated that they have never questioned Islam for once, while 5 (9.61%) students opted for “agree”. The rest 4 (7.69%) students show their total agreement with this statement. The results point to the fact that Islam is something untouchable in Algeria.

➤ **Question n°14:** Girls should put the veil when they reach puberty.

**Table 2.3.2:** *Islam Obligations*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>28.84</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>71.15</b>

Question 14 is meant to unveil the influence of foreign language learning on the commitment of EFL learners to Islam basic obligations. Table 2.3.2 demonstrates that 37 (71.15%) students defended the importance of putting the veil as Islam said; on the other hand, 15 (28.84%) students choose the neutral stand. Once more, Islam is maintaining its holy status in the foreign language student's life.

**Question n°15:** Couples should get married before having kids.

**Table 2.3.3:** *Islam Rules*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
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<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>100</b>

The table above describes the fact that the entire sampled population of EFL students 52(100%) are committed to Islam values such as having kids after marriage.

➤ **Question n°16:** You celebrate western occasions like Charismas and Cupid day.

*Table2.3.4: Celebrating Western Festivals*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>90.38</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9.61</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

*Table 2.3 .4* Demonstrates students' attitudes toward celebrating western festivals. On the one hand, the majority 47(90.38%) refused the idea of celebrating Christmas and cupid day. On the other hand, only few 5(9.61%) students showed their approval. The result showed the learners attachment to their home culture when it comes to celebrating occasions.

➤ **Question n°17:** Having a boyfriend or a girlfriend is Haram.

*Table 2.3.5: Before Marriage Relationships*

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15.38</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>59.61</b>

The results above show that the vast majority of students 31(59.61%) strongly agreed that Islam prohibits relationships before marriage. On contrast, 13(25%) students strongly disagreed saying that it's ok, while 8(15.38%) students disagreed with the statement.

➤ **Question n°18:** Islam rules should be changed to keep up with the modern world.

**Table 2.3.6: Updating Islamic Rules**

<b>Options</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>30.76</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>51.92</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17.30</b>

When it comes to updating Islam rules, we had contradicting views in the sense that 16(30.76%) students strongly disagreed with the idea of changing Islam rules, while 9(17.30%) students strongly agreed to change them. However, we have noticed that the majority 27(51.92%) of students preferred to remain neutral. The results indicate that Islam is something holy and unchangeable; however, there is a place for gradual detachment from it when faced with the modern globalised world that is governed by English.

In light of the results above, when answering the questions, students surprisingly showed no hesitation as they answered in a preservative way as Islam stresses .Showing their commitment to it and its values.

#### **2.2.4. Data Discussion of the Cultural Identity Questionnaire**

#### **2.2.4.1. Foreign Language Students' Views Concerning Gender**

Interestingly, most of foreign language students' views concerning gender were very open. In a sense that they supported gender equality in different aspects of life like family, marriage, profession, and even friendship. Seemingly, their opinions contradict with the Algerian conservative society rules or traditions. For instance Metcalf(2006) stated that "Arab nations strongly supported gender equality in education but not equality in employment" (p. 97). Additionally, all the respondents opted for the same answer concerning Q1, Q2, respectively. These two questions undoubtedly challenge the traditional Algerian claim that women 'job is to stay home and raise kids solely. Subsequently, it can be noted that students are deeply affected by the western culture way of life more specifically in their individual freedom since they tend to mimic native speakers in their mentality (in this case gender equality).

#### **2.2.4.2. Foreign Language Students' Views Concerning Language**

One intriguing conclusion yielded from the analysis of the questionnaire is that students favored English over their mother tongue. They have acknowledged that they started learning English in the most typical way through movies and songs (Q9) and that talking in English and being around people from the same language makes them feel prestigious and belonging to the western culture (Q7, Q10, and Q11). This supports Hauser(2010, p.11) claims when he said that "individuals do not have a single, unchanging identity, but construct identities to fit the norms of the social context they find themselves in", in this case we mean the foreign language classroom. In addition, students tend even to share the bad side with the foreign culture as in cursing and using English taboos (Q12).

As concerns the status of languages in Algeria, students showed their eager for English to become the second language of the country in Q8. However, they still acknowledge the status of French in Algerian despite the fact that it is a dead language in Q10.

### **2.2.4.3. Foreign Language Students' Views Concerning Religious Beliefs**

Unexpectedly, foreign language students tend to be religious and maintaining their Algerian Islamic culture. For instance, most of them strongly support Islam rules in terms of faith, putting the veil, having kids, marriage, occasions, and even defending Islam status (Q13, Q14, Q15, Q16-17, and Q18). However, despite this strong connection to their religion, the western values did have some influence on a considerable number of learners which is clearly shown since they celebrate birthdays and cupid day even those who denied it on paper. Seemingly, the globalised world which uses English as a motor for expanding is contributing in exporting the foreign language intensively, which makes students get affected since they try to identify themselves with native speakers.

## **2.3. Put It All Together**

### **1. Proficiency and Gender**

It has been noticed that students who ranked in C level were very open in their responses concerning their views toward gender and supported gender equality, while those in B level were mostly neutral in their opinions. Furthermore, students who ranked in A level were very strict in their answers and preferred muscularity dominance (preservative). Generally, the majority of English language learners expressed their desire for gender equality in different societal aspects. This point highlights that EFL Algerian students' developed a sense of justice when it comes to gender rights. For that, English language students tend to favor and support gender equality which contradicts with Islam values. This transformation in foreign language learners' mentality can be explained by the norms and ideas inserted in their standardization from the foreign culture, especially their way of life.

### **2. Proficiency and Language**

From the data collected, we have noticed that English students have a strong attachment to their language of specialty, in the sense that they started learning it from movies and they end

up majoring English, plus they aspire that English would become the second language of the country ranked between C2, C1, and B2 levels. On the other hand, students who ranked in B1, A2, and A1 were either neutral or disfavored English. This conclusion can be explained by Hall (2005), who stated that language and cultural identity becomes associated with particular sets of linguistic actions, beliefs, attitudes, and norms (p.33). In this case, students become attached to the target culture especially since they use it daily in classroom and even outside it which is clearly shown in students who use the slang language they learned from movies and songs, plus their overuse of non-academic contractions like “gonna”.

### **3. Proficiency and Religious Beliefs**

The final section tries to unfold students' opinions concerning some sensitive topics in a Muslim country. After analyzing their responses, we were surprised that students were very conservative in their responses. Even those who ranked in C2 still have the same standpoints concerning religion but in a slight open way. This can only indicate how much of a delicate subject religion is in the Algerian society and how much they are committed to their religion.

Before jumping into our final conclusion it is deemed indispensable to reiterate the research question that triggered our interest to conduct this study in the first place, which is the following:

- ✓ Is there any significant relationship between Algerian EFL learner's proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity concerning gender, language, and religious beliefs?

When linking between the results obtained from the language proficiency test and the cultural identity questionnaire, it has been noticed that high proficiency level achievers were very open in their standpoints towards the identifiers of gender and language, while those in other levels were strict in their opinions, except for the items of religious beliefs where the

majority of the respondents were strict and answered in a conservative way despite which proficiency level they ranked in. Therefore, we end up confirming our pre-supposed hypothesis and question by supporting the fact that there is a positive relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms gender and language, but rejecting it for the aspect of religious belief. Our conclusion is in line with that of several researchers; for instance, Behtash, Hashemi, and Farokhipour (2017) conducted a study to investigate any possible effect of religious identity on language learning in Iran, they tried to shed light on the relationship between religious identities and learning cultural aspects of English as a foreign language among Iranian advanced language learners. The results showed that there was a significant negative correlation between these two variables. Additionally, Seppälä(2011)investigated the effect of leaning English on the cultural identity of Chinese students. The findings detected the impact of English language learning on Chinese students' cultural identities. In a way that they perfectly know both cultures, which expanded their worldview with openness to the western way of life. In a parallel view, Lambert (1974) stated that 'for the serious student who in time really masters the foreign language, we saw the possibility of a conflict of identity or alienation arising as he became skilled enough to become an accepted member of a new cultural group' (p.98). Furthermore, Altogan(2014) conducted a study to examine the relationship between cultural identity and learning for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The findings revealed that cultural identity is an important factor in learning and that it should be taken into consideration when teaching a foreign language. This goes in line with, Scoon (1971) who hypothesized that the desire to integrate with the foreign culture correlates positively with one's success in language learning(Tamimi Sa'd,2017 p.30).

## **2.4. Limitations of the Study**

When conducting this research, a number of obstacles have been faced. These obstacles can be summarized in the following points:

- Due to unconventional situation caused by Covid-19, the sample number has been small (52 students). The reason standing behind such procedure was due to the new imposed studying system, which made it quite challenging to find an adequate number of respondents to help out to gather our data.
- The inaccessibility of some sources concerning the data gathering tools. For instance, Mathews' Cultural Identity Questionnaire, Oxford Placement Test, etc. This problem made accomplishing the practical part very difficult.
- Minimizing the number of the pages allowed in the master dissertation this year in our department created a lot of confusion for us when opting for the essential elements to be discussed.

## **2.5. Suggestions for Further Research and Pedagogical Recommendations**

To our knowledge, the topic of cultural identity and its relation with language proficiency received little attention in the literature. Our research, consequently, attempted to fill such gap. The results obtained clearly support the positive relationship that exists between language proficiency and cultural identity development, which led us to offer the following recommendations:

- ✓ Much more attention to students' cultural identity is recommended when teaching foreign languages.
- ✓ Teachers should know more about students' cultural identities for the sake of directing, guiding, and understanding them to enhance the process of leaning.

- ✓ Raising awareness concerning the cultural aspects of the target culture can be an effective solution for home culture attachment, by stressing the native culture aspects to produce learners' with additive identities.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter casts light on the practical framework .The first section tackled the research methodology, it began by stating the research hypothesis upon which the study is based, afterwards, it discussed the research tools employed for gathering the data. The second section was seized to the analysis of the data yielded from the research instruments, which was illustrated in the form of percentages and tables. Later on, the major findings were extracted from the analyzed data. This analysis was concerned with both the language proficiency test and the cultural identity questionnaire; a link was tied between the two. Therefore, the research hypothesis has been confirmed for both gender and language but it was rejected for religious beliefs. Afterwards, the obstacles encountered when conducting our study were clearly stated. Lastly, this chapter ended by pointing out some pedagogical recommendations based on the findings.



## **General Conclusion**

This study aimed principally at investigating the relationship between Algerian EFL learner's proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender, language, and religious beliefs. It has been assumed that there is a positive relationship between these two variables in terms of the aforementioned aspects. This study consisted of two main chapters to handle the matter at hand.

The first chapter was an overview of the research topic related literature. It throws light upon the basic concepts that the research at hand is concerned with. It is worthy to note that this chapter comprised two sections. The first section, on the other hand, tackled EFL learners' language proficiency. The second section, however, was devoted to cultural identity development.

Additionally, the second chapter tackled the practical part of this piece of research. The first section discussed the methodology of the research as it highlighted the methodology of research, together with the description and administration of the research tools. The second section was sized to the data analysis and discussion of the results.

Concerning the findings of this quantitative study, it has been noticed from the results obtained that there is a positive relationship between Algerian EFL learners' proficiency in English and the development of their cultural identity in terms of gender and language, but not in their religious beliefs. Consequently, since the research hypothesis was confirmed on the part of gender and language, but rejected for the aspect of religious beliefs, it is advised that much more attention to student's cultural identity is required when teaching foreign languages. Moreover, Teachers should get to know more about students' cultural identities for the sake of directing, guiding, and understanding them to enhance the process of leaning.

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## **Appendix A**

### **The Language Proficiency Test**

#### **The Reading Comprehension Test**

No student of a foreign language needs to be told that grammar is complex. By changing word sequences and by adding a range of auxiliary verbs and suffixes, we are able to communicate tiny variations in meaning. We can turn a statement into a question, state whether an action has taken place or is soon to take place, and perform many other word tricks to convey subtle differences in meaning. Nor is this complexity inherent to the English language. All languages, even those of so-called "primitive" tribes have clever grammatical components. The Cherokee pronoun system, for example, can distinguish between "you and I", "several other people and I", and "you, another person, and I". At first, it would appear that this question is impossible to answer. To find out how grammar is created, someone needs to be present at the time of a language's creation, documenting its emergence.

Some of the most recent languages evolved due to the Atlantic slave trade. At that time, slaves from a number of different ethnicities were forced to work together under colonizer's rule. Since they had no opportunity to learn each other's languages, they developed a **make – shift** language called *pidgin*. Pidgins are strings of words copied from the language of the landowner. They have little in the way of grammar, and in many cases it is difficult for a listener to deduce when an event happened, and who did what to whom. [A] Speakers need to use circumlocution in order to make their meaning understood. [B] Interestingly, however, all it takes for a pidgin to become a complex language is for a group of children to be exposed to it at the time when they learn their mother tongue. [C] Slave children did not simply copy the strings of words uttered by their elders, they adapted their words to create a new expressive



language.[D] Complex grammar systems which emerge from pidgins are termed creoles, and they are invented by children.

Further evidence of this can be seen in studying sign languages for the deaf. Sign languages are not simply a series of gestures; they utilize the same grammatical machinery that is found in spoken languages. Moreover, there are many different languages used worldwide. The creation of one such language was documented quite recently in Nicaragua. Previously, all deaf people were isolated from each other, but in 1979 a new government introduced schools for the deaf. Although children were taught speech and lip reading in the classroom, in the playgrounds they began to invent their own sign system, using the gestures that they used at home. It was basically a pidgin. Each child used the signs differently, and there was no **consistent** grammar. However, children who joined the school later, when this inventive sign system was already around, developed a quite different sign language. Although it was based on the signs of the older children, the younger children's language was more fluid and compact, and it utilised a large range of grammatical devices to clarify meaning. What is more, all the children used the signs in the same way. A new Creole was born.

1. In paragraph 1, why does the writer include information about the Cherokee language?

- A. To show how simple, traditional cultures can have complicated grammar structures.
- B. To show how English grammar differs from Cherokee grammar.
- C. To prove that complex grammar structures were invented by the Cherokees.
- D. To demonstrate how difficult it is to learn the Cherokee language.

3. 'make-shift' in paragraph2 is closest to meaning to:

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| A-Complicated and expensive | B-Simple and temporary |
| C-Extensive and diverse     | D-Private and personal |

9. Which idea is presented in paragraph 3?

- A- English was probably once a Creole.
- B- The English past tense system is inaccurate.
- C- Linguists have proven that English was created by children.
- D- Children say English past tenses differently from adults.

10. Look at the word **consistent** in paragraph 3. This word could best be replaced by which of the following?

- A. Natural                      B. Predictable                      C. Imaginable                      D. Uniform

### **The writing test**

#### **Part One: Use of English**

Read the text below and decide which answer (A, B, C; or D) fits each gap. For each gap to have four options: A, B, C, or D.

#### **Girls and technology**

If you want your daughter to succeed, buy her a toy construction set. That is the advice from Britain's' .....female engineers and scientist. Marie Noelle Barton, who leads an engineering council campaign to encourage girls into science and engineering, maintains that some of Britain's most successful women have had their careers.....by the toys they played with as children. Even girls who end....nowhere near a microchip or microscope could benefit from a better.....of science and technology.

It's a ..... Of giving them experience and confidence with technology so that when they are.....with a situation requiring some technical know-how, they feel they can handle it and don't just..... defeat immediately, says Mrs. Barton.

"I believe that lots of girls feel unsure of themselves when it comes .....technology and therefore they might be losing out jobs because they are reluctant even to apply for them.

Researchers recently carried .....Suggest that scientific and constructional toys should be ..... to girls from an early age, otherwise the result is socialization into stereotypically female.....,which explain why relatively few girls study science and engineering at university in Britain. Only 14% of those who have gone for engineering.....at university this year are women, although this figure does represent an improvement on the 7 percent recorded some years ago.

- |                  |                |               |               |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1- A foremost    | B uppermost    | C predominant | D surpassing  |
| 2- A styled      | B shaped       | C built       | D modeled     |
| 3- A in          | B by           | C on          | D up          |
| 4- A hold        | B grasp        | C insight     | D realization |
| 5- A matter      | B situation    | C state       | D cause       |
| 6- A approached  | B encountered  | C presented   | D offered     |
| 7- A admit       | B allow        | C receive     | D permit      |
| 8- A for         | B to           | C from        | D with        |
| 9- A off         | B through      | C forward     | D out         |
| 10- A accessible | B feasible     | C reachable   | D obtainable  |
| 11- A characters | B parts        | C states      | D roles       |
| 12- A options    | B alternatives | C selections  | D preferences |

## Part Two: Grammar.

Select the best answer

1- Jane.....in the library this morning.

- A-Is study      B-Studying      C-Is studying      D-Are studying

2. Alicia.....the windows please. It's too hot in here

- A- open      B-open      C- opened      D- will open

3. The movie was .....the book.

- A-as      B- as good      C-good as      D- as good as

4. Mr. Hawkins request that someone..... the data by fax now.

- A-sent      B- sends      C- send      D- to send

5. James or Henry?

- A- tallest      B- tall      C- taller      D- the tallest

6. Each of the Olympic athletes....for months.

- A-have been training      B- were training      C- has been training      D- been training

7. The company will upgrade.....computer information systems next month.

- A- there      B- their      C- it's      D- its

8. James like apples.....she does not like orange.

- A-so      B-for      C-but      D- or

9. You were.....your friend before 09 O' clock.

- A- suppose call      B- supposed to call      C- supposed calling      D- supposed call

10. Mr. Jack.....rather not agree on such a price.

A- has to

B- could

C- would

D- must

11. Select the one underlined word or phrase that is incorrect.

When their dog got old and could not move, it will sit in the sunshine all day.

A-Got

B-Move

C-Will

We were very surprised at the generosity of the offer as it acceded our expectations.

A-At

B-Acceded

C-Expectations

### **Part Three: Written Expression**

Describe in twelve lines the career you want to achieve and the reasons for which you chose that career.

### **The Listening Test**

Listen to the given audio, and fill in the gaps with the appropriate words or expressions.

-I began to work ..... with children: abnormal kids, gifted kids, kids with leaning problem, and with..... adults. People who once fine but who had a ..... or a ..... ,or a ..... accident ,and the more i spent working with these two population.

- It was much more simple to say smart, average,.....

-I set up a series or criteria to ..... define what the human faculties were .

-it was the notion of saying to eight or nine faculties what we usually call smart is  
.....with the ..... and.....

-I think what..... in 1980s, was we can find some neurological evidence the  
language abilities came from one part of the brain.

-This exert is brought to you by .....school low.

### **The Speaking Test**

Students had to choose two topics among the following:

**Topic one:** attributes of a good friend.

**Topic two:** the role of aesthetic surgery in improving people's life.

**Topic three:** third world characteristics.

**Topic four:** comparing women in the western countries and in Muslim countries.

Enhancing discussion was performed through one /two questions on the topic.

- Topic one: if you have the opportunity to choose a close friend on what characteristic do you base your choice?
- Topic two: if your friend decides to undergo an aesthetic surgery, what would you advice him?
- Topic three: in what way can you describe a third world country?
- Topic four: if your sister decides to move to an English speaking country and is suspicious about interacting with non Muslim western women there, what would you tell her?

## **Appendix B**

### **Cultural Identity Questionnaire**

Dear students,

The main objective behind this research is to explore the relationship between English students proficiency and their cultural identity development. We hereby affirm that your amenability to answer the questionnaire at hand would be very handing in providing the necessary data to get this work done.

Rest assure that your identity will abide nameless, and your responses will be utilized for solely scientific purposes. This questionnaire tackles three sections which are the following: gender, language, and religious beliefs. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements, using a 5 point scale, where 1 mean “totally disagree” and 5 means “totally agree”. You are free to use all numbers between 1 and 5 to indicate varying degrees of disagreement or agreement.

#### **Gender:**

Men should treat women as their equal.                      1    2    3    4    5

Women were born only to give kids.                      1    2    3    4    5

Men grant jobs to women based on their appearance and not their qualifications. 1 2 3 4 5

When opting for a future wife, men fear successful women.    1    2    3    4    5

Women should share financial responsibilities with men                      1    2    3    4    5

Friendship between men and women is possible.    1    2    3    4    5

#### **Language:**

My English colleagues understand me better than those of other majors. 1 2 3 4 5

The English language should be the second language of Algeria. 1 2 3 4 5

You started to acquire English from listening to songs and watching movies. 1 2 3 4 5

People judge me as a civilized and educated individual when I speak using English. 1 2  
3 4 5

Students of English in our university tend to show off with their language with others who  
do not. 1 2 3 4 5

You use English taboos instead of Arabic ones 1 2 3 4 5

**Religious Beliefs:**

Learning English makes you doubt Islam values. 1 2 3 4 5

Girls should put the veil when they reach puberty. 1 2 3 4 5

Couples should get married before having kids. 1 2 3 4 5

You celebrate western occasions like Charismas and Cupid day. 1 2 3 4 5

Having a boyfriend or a girlfriend is Haram. 1 2 3 4 5

Islam rules should be changed to keep up with the modern world. 1 2 3 4 5

**THANK YOU**



## Résumé

Notre travail d'étude vise à découvrir la relation entre les compétences des étudiants anglophones et le développement de leur identité culturelle en termes de genre, de langue, et de croyances religieuses. Pour atteindre notre objectif, nous avons émis l'hypothèse qu'il existe une relation positive entre les deux variables. Pour vérifier sa validité, nous avons mené une étude par questionnaire sur un échantillon d'étudiants. Le test de compétence linguistique développé sur la base des examens du Certificat de Cambridge pour les étudiants en langue Anglaise a été utilisé afin de vérifier le niveau des participants à l'étude, en plus du questionnaire d'identité culturelle pour voir l'entendue de son développement chez les étudiants. Ils ont été distribués à un échantillon aléatoire de 52 étudiants en première année de master, qui étudient au département d'Anglais de Mohammed Saddiq Ben Yahia- Université de Jijel. Après avoir analysé et comparé les résultats obtenus grâce aux méthodes de recherche utilisées, nous avons découvert qu'il existe une corrélation directe entre la maîtrise de la langue Anglais et le développement de l'identité culturelle, car elle augmente avec l'ouverture croissante à la culture occidentale et vice versa, sauf pour ses croyances religieuses, ce qui maintient l'hypothèse vraie en ce qui concerne à la fois le genre et langue ; Alors qu'il est rejeté en termes de croyances religieuses. Enfin et surtout, les résultats que nous avons obtenus de cette étude aideront les futures recherches scientifiques qui s'intéressent aux relations entre la compétence linguistique et l'identité culturelle en général, et en Algérie en particulier.

**Mots-clés :** Identité culturelle, compétence linguistique, genre, langue, croyances religieuses.

## الملخص

تطمح الدراسة إلى تحري العلاقة بين إتقان الطلاب الناطقين باللغة الانجليزية و مدى تطور هويتهم الثقافية سواء من حيث الجنس، اللغة، و المعتقدات الدينية. للوصول إلى مبتغانا، افترضنا وجود علاقة ايجابية بين المتغيرين.وللتحقق من صحتها قمنا بدراسة استبائية على عينة من الطلبة، وتم الاعتماد على اختبار الكفاءة اللغوية الذي تم تطويره بناء على امتحانات شهادة كامبريدج لطلاب اللغة الانجليزية بغية التحقق من مستوى المشاركين بالدراسة، إضافة إلى استبيان الهوية الثقافية لمعرفة مدى تطورها لدى الطلبة. وتم توزيعهما على عينة مختارة عشوائيا تتكون من 52 طالب في السنة الأولى ماستر يزاولون دراستهم في قسم الانجليزية بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحي في جيجل. بعد تحليل و مقارنة النتائج المتحصل عليها من خلال وسائل البحث المستعملة، تبين لنا وجود ارتباط طردي بين إتقان اللغة الانجليزية و مدى تطور الهوية الثقافية، حيث يرتفع كلما زاد انفتاحه على الثقافة الغربية و العكس صحيحا عدا معتقداته الدينية.مما يبقي الفرضية صحيحة فيما يخص كل من الجنس و اللغة،بينما تكون مرفوضة من ناحية المعتقدات الدينية. وأخيرا و ليس أخرا،النتائج التي خرجنا بها من خلال هذه الدراسة من شأنها مساعدة البحوث العلمية المستقبلية التي تهتم بالعلاقة الموجودة بين كفاءة اللغة و الهوية الثقافية عامة، و في الجزائر خاصة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:الهوية الثقافية،كفاءة اللغة الأجنبية،الجنس،اللغة،المعتقدات الدينية.