

A Critical Look at the Importance of Teaching National Identity in Algerian EFL Classrooms: Perceptions of Public Middle and Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract:

Over the past decades, studies investigating the concept of national identity within educational settings have grown increasingly prevalent and in demand. Ergo, the following study has set out to examine the perceptions of EFL teachers regarding the importance of incorporating national identity within newly developed English textbooks used in public middle and secondary schools in Algeria. The researchers elicited the views of 112 Algerian teachers during the second semester of the academic year 2017-2018 regarding the efficiency of home-grown textbooks in teaching national and local matters as well as their role in helping Algerian students foster their intercultural competence. Overall, the study argued that Algerian EFL teachers believe that textbooks have a disproportionate and unequal balance between national and international identities, and that it does not adequately teach and impart a sufficient understanding of the Algerian national identity. Respondents also believed that defining the Algerian national identity was quite a perplex and confusing matter that often instigates students' disinterest to learn the language. Findings also indicated that although nearly two thirds of the respondents stated that national identity was not an important facet of the EFL education, they further contended that it should begin to be taught as early as middle school and be reinforced and later developed through secondary education, particularly through writing exercises and classes.

Key Words: National identity, English as a foreign language (EFL), public middle and secondary schools' perceptions.

نظرة فاحصة على أهمية تدريس الهوية الوطنية في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر: تصورات معلمي المدارس المتوسطة والثانوية الحكومية

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ملخص:

بدأت الدراسات المتعلقة بمفهوم الهوية الوطنية في الأوساط التعليمية تكتسب شهرة هائلة خلال العقود الماضية. ولذلك، هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى فهم تصورات معلمي اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائريين حول أهمية عرض موضوع الهوية الوطنية والثقافة المحلية ضمن هذه الكتب المطورة حديثاً والمستخدمه في المدارس المتوسطة والثانوية. قام الباحثون من خلال هذا البحث باستطلاع آراء 112 مدرساً جزائرياً خلال الفصل الثاني من العام الدراسي 2017-2018 حول هذه الكتب المحلية فيما يتعلق بأهمية تدريس الجوانب المحلية والوطنية للطلاب الجزائريين ومساعدتهم على تعزيز كفاءة التبادل الثقافي. بشكل عام، بينت الدراسة بأن مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية الجزائريون يعتقدون أن الكتب الدراسية ليست متوازنة ومتكافئة من حيث المضمون المحلي والدولي، كما وأنها لا تقوم بتدريس ونقل فهم كاف للهوية الوطنية الجزائرية. كما أفاد المجيبون أن تعريف الهوية الوطنية الجزائرية هو مسألة معقدة بحد ذاتها وغالباً ما تكون مربكة للطلاب مما يؤدي إلى عدم اهتمامهم بتعلم اللغة. كما أظهرت النتائج أنه على الرغم من أن ما يقرب ثلثي المجيبين ذكروا أن الهوية الوطنية ليست مسألة مهمة في تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، فقد أكدوا أيضاً أنه ينبغي البدء في تدريسها في وقت مبكر من المرحلة المتوسطة وتعزيزها من خلال التعليم الثانوي، وخاصة في حصص وتمارين مهارة الكتابة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية الوطنية، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تصورات مدرسي اللغة الإنجليزية في المدارس المتوسطة والثانوية.

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Introduction

National identity has become a central trend of the language teaching-learning nexus. Numerous English as a Foreign Language (EFL) researchers have corroborated the view that English cannot be taught and learned without direct reference to the local context (e.g., Kramsch, 1993). As defined by Neiburg (2001), national identity is a sense of belonging to a nation, expressed between individuals of the same community; i.e. the Algerian EFL learners in this present study. To varying degrees, people adhering to a given national identity commonly share the same culture, language(s), traditions, celebrations, routines, ethnicity, and many other aspects. Languages, particularly, play a chief role in helping speakers express and expand their literary and cultural horizons as well as their political opinions and religious beliefs (Cook, 2008: 1). In this sense, linguistic knowledge can be regarded as a key contributor to the formation of EFL learners' national identities. Dizdarevic (n.d.) argued that EFL learners are as keen on hearing about foreign cultures just as much as they are willing to explore their own cultural backgrounds; highlighting that these "local and target cultural worlds enables them to compare and contrast" their own life styles with their foreign counterparts (p.3). Likewise, Choudhury (2014) underpinned the necessity of providing nonverbal information for Arabic speakers beyond simple linguistic inputs, mainly by activating the students' background knowledge about humanism amongst a variety of other typical local sensibilities.

Today, pedagogues of several countries have gradually and keenly advocated integrating national identity matters into their home-grown EFL textbooks (Skopinskaja, 2003). While the integration of national identity in general educational settings dates back to the 16th century, it only started receiving due attention in the 19th century (Parmenter, 1999). Ever since, EFL learners are no longer taught English in solely linguistic terms, but are rather introduced to the target context in a manner parallel to their own cultures (Hamza, 2018). This strong association, which is often trilateral in nature involving language, national identity and culture, leads to what is known in the EFL world as '*intercultural competence*' (Kramsch, 1993). This concept involves the ability to interact with people from different cultures using English as a bridge language, otherwise known as a '*lingua franca*.' Being inter-culturally competent not only involves knowing about others' cultural attributes, but also requires understanding the learner's own culture and national identity so as to be able to successfully contrast and

exchange information (Byram, 1992). This essentially entails promoting the student's knowledge and understanding of their own surroundings (including customs and traditions, social activities, common thought patterns and behaviours, etc.) as well as helping them develop their soft, communicative, and interpersonal skills to foster an awareness of the national construct (Korshuk, 2008). This is particularly germane in the context of Algeria, which is considered a heterogeneous community and as such provides a relevant example of the aforementioned concept of English bridging different nations.

Having gained enormous popularity in the recent years, intercultural competence has become increasingly and gradually reflected in language textbooks worldwide. With the rise of English as the universal language of communication in most domains of this globalised world, attaining intercultural competence has become a top priority for EFL learners too (Chlopek, 2008, Vieluf & Göbel, 2019). In fact, the process of EFL teaching has undergone critical changes in recent decades resulting in greater emphasis being put on learners' respective societies. Algeria is a case in point; it's a republic that gained independence from France in 1962 and still maintains diversified traditions and a multiplicity of ethnic groups and subsequently derived languages (for example Amazighs, Arabs, Chaouis, Chenouas, Mozabits, Tuaregs, amongst others). This has demanded Algerian EFL learners to be interculturally competent in a unique way that requires them not to disavow the richness of their own local context (Yezza, 2016).

In reference to languages, the Government of Algeria has attempted to homogenise the society through its implementation of the '*Arabisation Policy*,' whereby Arabic was officially declared the sole official language to be used in all administrative and academic institutions (Dekhir, 2015). Nonetheless, this political and ideological stand was unsuccessful in building a cohesive society and failed to fully reform the country's educational sphere, with French continuing as the language of instruction in many scientific fields (Rezig, 2011). Despite holding no official status, French continues to be used by the population and mass media owing to Algeria's colonial history and can be regarded as the de facto co-official language. Meanwhile, the Tamazight language gained co-official status in 2006, and was introduced as a mother-tongue at primary schools in Berber regions, as well as a second language in other regions under the national law No. 02-03 for the year 2002. It has only been during the last three

decades that the Algerian authorities have shown increased interest in the teaching of English as a foreign language (Belmihoub, 2012).

Drawing on the wide range of existing literature, the concept of national identity can be said to be a real concern of the worldwide community which continues to gain awareness within the educational sector, particularly in EFL classrooms. In Algeria, numerous scholars have discussed cultural matters in local EFL textbooks (e.g. Mallem, 2010; Messekher, 2014), yet there has been minimal research addressing the Algerian context with respect to national identity inclusion in EFL textbooks. As such, the study at hand sets out to investigate the controversy surrounding the inclusion of national identity within national English textbooks as perceived by public middle and secondary school teachers.

Research Objectives and Questions

The incentive for this study stems from the fact that Algeria is rich in ethnicities, traditions, languages, geography, and other social and political variation as a result of its history. The researchers believe that such a study is crucial to empowering Algerian EFL teachers and their students with sufficient, constructive, and well-rounded knowledge about their national identity -as part of the intercultural competence- to smoothly fit in this globalised and cosmopolitan world. Therefore, the study at hand sought to unveil how the concept of national identity and its constituting markers have been integrated and treated within Algerian EFL textbooks, as perceived by Algerian EFL teachers in public middle and secondary schools.

Hence, the following research questions were formulated by the researchers:

1. What are the perceptions of Algerian EFL teachers in public middle and secondary schools on the importance of including national identity in local English textbooks?
2. Are there any significant statistical differences (at $\alpha = 0.05$) between Algerian EFL teachers' perceptions on their belief that national identity should be taught in EFL classrooms due to their gender and/or professional experience?

Review of Related Literature

National identity witnessed a popular growth of theoretical discussion in the academic community. While many studies (e.g. Smith, 2003, Parmenter, 1999) have rationalised the concept and elucidated how it is often constructed across nations and generations, others were more sceptical

as they questioned its existence and/or necessity (e.g. Benedict, 1991). Hence, the study first situated itself within the abundance of previous empirical research investigating national identity in direct relation to EFL settings, with specific reference to the Algerian context. To further establish and underpin the study's theoretical foundation, a review of key literature is presented, evaluating the challenges of EFL learning in Algeria with respect to national-cultural values.

The Controversy Surrounding National Identity

There have been various attempts to define national identity in more complex terminology according to several inclusive factors. From a straightforward viewpoint, national identity can be defined as an embodiment of two constituting parts: 'nation' and 'identity'. Edensor (2002), described a nation as the pre-eminent entity which permits identities to be shaped, in the sense that a nation is a group of people who interact and thus acquire knowledge about the national identity simultaneously. It is said to "represent...the socio-historical context within which culture is embedded and the means by which culture is produced, transmitted, and received." (Guibernau as cited in Edensor 2002: 2). As for identity, the Oxford Dictionary (2017) defined it as the result of some distinguished characteristics, conditions, or characters that identify a person. Simon (2004: 2) added that identity is a multifaceted phenomenon that "is not just a fashionable commodity that people strive to have or think they have to have it; it is also intuitively very appealing as an explanatory concept". In this order, the definition of national identity has seemingly revolved around the constructs that connect a nation socially, historically, culturally, politically and ideologically.

According to Fairbrother (2005: 306), national identity represents "a new form of membership in the wider national political community." In conjunction, Aljak and Mugaddam (2013) identify the most basic characteristics of national identity as: a common culture, history, kinship, language, religion, territory, and destiny. These shared traits reflect the need for the nation to remain self-defined and stable in relation to other communities. For his part, Smith (2003) further defined a nation as a named human population with a common economy, legal rights system, and duties for all its members in addition to the cultural and linguistic aspects. Smith's framework includes the following key concepts: (1) A historic territory or homeland, (2) Common myths and historical memories, (3) A common mass public culture, (4) Common legal rights and duties for all members

and, finally, (5) A common economy with territorial mobility for members. Such distinctive attributes make any group of individuals unique and differentiated from their compatriots or nationals. (p. 14).

Although culture does not constitute the chief focus of this article, it is however fundamental to acknowledge its interconnectedness to national identity. In his iceberg analogy of culture, Hall (1976) affirmed the existence of apparent cultural aspects above the iceberg surface (also known as 'conscious culture' encompassing behaviours and some beliefs) and hidden cultural aspects beneath the water (known as 'unconscious culture' comprising values and thought patterns). In addition, Halverson (1985) classified cultural knowledge in terms of "little c" culture, and "big C" culture, the former including cultural beliefs, behaviors, and values, and the latter containing literature, history, geography, art, and cultural institutions. Both classifications sustained a common-sense understanding that culture is firmly anchored to national identity and is vital for all language learners so that they "avoid becoming a fluent fool" (Bennett, 1997: 16). However, Edensor (2002:101) added that national identity formation takes place in casual and quotidian non-formal settings, based on social relations that can be practiced apart from any highly preserved or reified cultures.

In the early 90's, Benedict, who incredulously described nations as imagined and socially constructed communities, drew a line between the characteristics that represent specific values common to the members of a national group –'us' – and distinguished them from members of other nations – 'others'. In reflection, Benedict's classification promoted the idea that national identity categorizes a person into one clan as it distinguishes him/her from the surrounding ones and potentially imposes social restrictions upon the person. Therefore, national identity could be regarded as a 'relational concept' (Devereux, 1978), meaning that 'otherness' is a necessary point from which to interpret (Tajfel& Turner, 1979). Additionally, national identity is widely regarded as an evolving concept. For instance, in 2003, Smith argued that it could no longer be considered a fixed concept attached to one's native land. Meanwhile, three years later Block helped further develop our conceptions and argued that national identity is a continuous process, being continually re-created through influential events.

In this sense, it could be deduced that the contingent concept of national identity is dynamic and malleable, constantly evolving its nature across eras and geographies. According to Inglehart (1970), national identity

is anything but a static mental construct as its features are constantly changing from one generation into another, from one territory into another, and assuredly amidst the people of one nation itself. This is true not only in terms of economy, technology, and politics, but also in terms of religious beliefs, work motivation, socio-political conflict, and attitudes towards sensitive notions such as family, divorce, abortion, and sexuality, etc.

Indeed, all the definitions highlighted above do not seem to apply universally as not all countries have one single and secular national identity. In theory, and often practically, the majority of a country's population identifies as a single nation and thus displays unified national front. Nonetheless, societies are becoming increasingly hybrid, meaning that multiple national identities are present and tolerated within the population of the same country. A few scholars have investigated whether this hybridity is advantageous or whether it negatively affects social cohesion (e.g. Faas, 2009, Dolby & Rizvi, 2008). Such a thought pattern should be particularly applied to Algeria given that its heterogeneity and multi-ethnic nature. The outputs of this analysis should be incorporated and reflected within the Algerian educational systems including EFL teaching.

The Algerian National Identity

The history of ancient and modern Algeria has been undoubtedly intricate. By extension, the concept of Algerian national identity largely owes itself to its multi-ethnic nature and cultural diversity. Yezza (2013) argues that such rich complexities are of added value to the nation and should hence be celebrated rather than feared, while such variances are said to provide a uniqueness to a country more so than a divisive and harmful disturbance. Bekkai (2016) explained that Algerians continue to question their identity and struggle with accepting its multiple dimensions. For Kessab and Boukrouh (2011), the foundations of Algeria's identity and culture dwell in one or more of the four core levels: (1) Islam, (2) Arabism, (3) Affiliation to Africa, and (4) Tamazight (a key component that has been ignored until the then-dialect gained co-official status in 2002). Again, Kessab and Boukrouh (2011:2) add that despite the Algerian government's significant efforts to unify the nation along these levels, "these attempts to acculturate a whole nation have created a cultural resistance that defined and consolidated the foundations of the Algerian identity." Summarily, the government of Algeria has continued to attempt unification of the nation despite cultural resistance and language complication.

To illustrate language complexities, colonisation has rendered Algeria a truly multilingual country with Arabic, -which meets the population's common wish to be linked to Islam and the Arab identity –being the country's first language. However, Belmihoub (2012) summed it as follows: Five languages have been involved in one way or another since 1962: Algerian Arabic, Berber, Modern Standard Arabic, French and later (1980s-1990s) English. In addition to English, other foreign languages such as German, Spanish, and Russian existed during this period, but their involvement has not been as significant as English (p.5). As such, it is important to foster Algerian students' national feelings and to enable them to develop a more profound understanding of their Algerian identity in order to foster fully communicative competence. This becomes a survival mechanism in the global society by distinguishing the Algerian citizen from their contemporaries.

National Identity within the Algerian EFL Context

Education has always acted as a critical link in the transmission of a sense of nationhood. Thus, language textbooks of numerous countries have reflected how crucial it is to include national-cultural components for the sake of balancing locally focused and target culture-focused education. A brief outline of the most relevant empirical studies on national identity within the Algerian EFL context follows.

Firstly, Hamada (2008) reviewed the evolution of English language textbooks in postcolonial Algeria, and demanded the withdrawal of cultural conflicts embedded within EFL textbooks in order to prevent the destruction of positive aspects of multiculturalism. He also asked for positive reinforcement throughout the textbooks to embrace and celebrate Algeria's heterogeneous identity.

Likewise, Talbi's study (2011) demonstrated that both teachers and learners were aware of the interconnectedness of language and culture (through questionnaire research). However, it also pinpointed that Algerian teachers lacked sufficient historical knowledge of both local and target cultures that were necessary to satisfy learners' interests and needs.

Additionally, Yahiaoui (2012) analysed the Algerian textbook '*New Prospects*,' tackling cultural awareness and otherness in EFL teaching in Algeria. He argued that teaching EFL does not only imply learning how to speak English aptly, but also entails abiding by its native speakers' norms, which requires the inevitable teaching of their cultural dimensions. He further explained that avoiding awkward and 'un-English' utterances

depends greatly on the learner's knowledge and awareness of certain cultural habits, values, and rituals of the society in which the language is spoken. However, Yahiaoui underlined that this process is time-consuming and might end up depriving learners from acquiring the real objectives of the lesson, such as grammatical or phonetic understandings.

Messerehi's study (2014) emphasized that the teaching of culture is limited within Algerian EFL textbooks, based on his questionnaire results, where several respondents (teachers) reported that most of the topics included are too vague and general and offer few opportunities to discuss culture. As a result, the study argued that students have very limited opportunities to learn about both cultural similarities and differences, including social habits, values, use of idioms and slang, non-verbal communication, and the importance of appropriate choices for conversations in English.

In common with the above studies, Mimoun and Malouk (2015) examined the ways in which cultural components are introduced in Algerian EFL textbooks. They depicted that the textbooks do not even facilitate general cultural skills, particularly when regarding communication and understanding of local and universal norms. According to the researchers, teachers do not demonstrate ample knowledge to teach culture as part of an English language lesson, a thematic element that recurs throughout this literature outline.

Penultimately, Melliani (2015) attempted to find effective solutions to the challenges of teaching EFL culture in Algeria. He considered that language mastery should encompass the four recognised language skills equally (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing), in addition to *the fifth* skill, identified as 'culture.' Insisting that no skill can function independently, he recommended that culture is to be taught efficiently as a cognitive process rather than a quantifiable skill. This entails less reliance on textbooks and more focus on communicative, creative, and interactive competence.

Conclusively, at the international level, national identity has been prominently discussed in the academic field and led to the facilitation of several research initiatives as indicated in the above literature. However, in the Algerian context, culture is the focal point of most studies, at the expense of other important national identity aspects, such as civil rights and duties, traditions, history, etc. While the former has managed to attract the care of a wide spectrum of educators and pedagogues, national interests

were addressed quite reservedly, which indicates the necessity for future research in related areas. Currently, to the best knowledge of the researchers, there are no studies devoted to the presentation of national identity in Algerian English textbooks, making this topic a fertile ground for further investigation. As such, this study seeks to highlight the so-called “missing piece” of national identity as perceived by Algerian middle and secondary school EFL teachers.

Methods and Procedures

This section presents the methodology designed and implemented by the researchers for the purposes of the study at hand, including the sampling method, instrument design, data collection and data analysis procedures.

Population and Sample

The study’s population was drawn from the pool of EFL teachers at public middle and secondary schools in Algeria. Unfortunately, due to the lack of primary data concerning the total number of Algerian EFL teachers in the country at both educational stages, researchers could not calculate an exact sample count that would be representative for the sake of findings generalisation.

Accordingly, a purposeful sampling method was used by the researchers who selected a total of 5 public middle schools and 6 public secondary schools located in Algeria’s capital city, Algiers. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to targeted schools and collected within two working days during the first semester of the 2018-2019 academic year. However, only 174 teachers completed the questionnaire, out of which only 112 fitted the specific purpose of the study (excluding substitute teachers, administrative staff, EFL teachers teaching other grades than those involved in the study).

Research Instrument

For the researchers to gain a thorough understanding of the concerned phenomenon, a questionnaire was used to gather primary and prospective-based data directly from Algerian EFL teachers. This study was hence, quantitative in nature, in which data was collected using a multiple-choice paper questionnaire. The survey questions and sections were formulated in line with a thorough literature review of related topics, in order to meet the established objectives of this paper. It was comprised of four sections, with a total of 12 closed-ended questions.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures

Once the schools were specified, along with the consensus of conducting the research from the Algerian Ministry of Education, the paper-based questionnaire was delivered in-person by one of the researchers. Having explained the objectives of the study, a pilot experiment was initially conducted with a total of 25 teachers that were excluded from the final study (12 of them were middle school EFL teachers, and the remaining 13 were secondary school teachers). Necessary amendments were thereafter brought to the final version of the questionnaire and then afterwards presented to a jury of TEFL experts, wherein reliability has been established at 0.83 level. Final versions of the questionnaire were thereafter distributed to all 11 middle and secondary schools, and the data was retrieved subsequently upon completion within two working days. Collected responses were tabulated and analysed via IBM SPSS software. Using descriptive statistics, data analysis included frequency tables, cross-tabulations, and chi-square tests.

Findings and Discussion

Following the methodology demonstrated above, the primary data collected by the researchers was analysed then presented and interpreted in line with the research questions of the study.

Section 1: Respondents' Profile

Analyzing the respondents from a demographic perspective, it was found that out of the 112 respondents (100%), 41.1% are male and 58.9% are female. All respondents are from the capital city of Algiers, 61 were middle school EFL teachers whereas the remaining 51 worked at secondary schools. Respondents were also roughly split in terms of experience teaching; 31.3% had taught for less than 5 years, 26.8% had taught between 5-10 years, 25.9% had taught between 11-15 years, and 16.1% had taught for more than 15 years. It is clear from the profile analysis that no one group dominated the sample; this was critical in order to ensure that all voices and demographics were able to be heard in this study.

Section 2: Teachers' General Impressions

In this section, respondents were asked basic foundational questions on the investigated matter using either binary responses (yes/no) or multiple-choice options.

Question 2.1: Do you think that national identity should be taught in Algerian EFL classrooms?

Contrary to the researchers' expectations, the good majority of Algerian EFL teachers (62.5%) stated that they do not believe national identity should be taught throughout Algerian EFL textbooks. This unambiguous answer reflects the most important perception of EFL teachers as regards national identity. Most teachers rejected the importance of national identity within the context of an EFL classroom. Despite these quite sceptical views, it is worth noting that the discussions on identity and the negotiation between native and target cultures have proved to be critical to helping boost student engagement; Abbasian and Biria (2017) demonstrated that students learn best when they can feel they can personally connect to the material. The indifference showed by teachers can only hurt the achievement of students' educational objectives, and harms them both culturally and linguistically (as they will learn neither as effectively). Conversations on national identity, if accomplished precisely, are vital for peak absorption of educational material in all forms.

To test the impact of potential extraneous factors on the importance of teaching national identity in EFL textbooks, the researchers hypothesized that each of the two independent variables of gender and professional experience may affect teachers' belief that national identity is a crucial concept in Algerian EFL classrooms.

Gender Analysis

The gender of respondents was tested against their belief that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom following the hypothesis below:

- **H0:** There is no difference between males and females on whether they believe that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom.
- **H1:** There is a difference between males and females on whether they believe that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom.

(Test at .50 level of significance)

Indeed, both cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests revealed that there is a significant difference between males and females on their belief that national identity should be taught in Algerian EFL classrooms. Out of the respondents who did not believe that national identity is important to be taught in EFL classrooms, 71.4% were females as opposed to only 28.6% of males. Divided between genders, three fourths of female respondents did not believe that national identity is important compared to only 43.5% of males. These results are significant at the .05 level. Clearly a gap exists at a

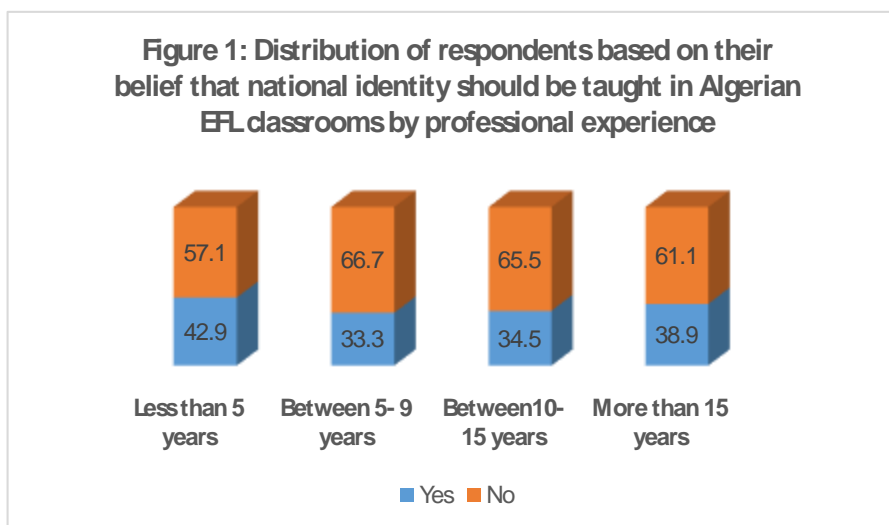
gender level, although what causes this must be admittedly unclear. To counteract this, the researchers suggest that there should be special workshops and training sessions that place an emphasis particularly upon female EFL teachers.

Professional Experience Analysis

The professional experience of the respondents was tested against their belief that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom as hypothesized below:

- **H0**: There is no difference between teachers' levels of professional experience on whether they believe that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom.
- **H1**: There is a difference between teachers' levels of professional experience on whether they believe that national identity should be taught in EFL classroom.

(Test at .50 level of significance)



As for professional experience, there were no meaningful differences in the responses of teachers between the different experience levels. This shows that one's working experience does not significantly influence their views and that workshops and training need to include teachers of all backgrounds. In general, however, new and inexperienced teachers were slightly more likely to discount the value of national identity within the classroom. Opportunities should be available for newly employed teachers that develop an understanding of the importance of identity in educational

curricula; such methods can take place through pre-service or on-the-job trainings. These same professional developments should be made available generally to teachers writ large.

Question 2.2: Does the textbook(s) you are currently teaching focalize on the concept of Algerian national identity as much as target and/or international identities?

The second question asked respondents if there is an emphasis on Algerian national identity to the same extent there is an emphasis on international identities. For this question, an even greater 69.6% stated they do not believe their textbook focuses on ideas of Algerian national identity equally with international identities. The remaining 30.4% of respondents believed it was equal. Al-Bzour and Smadi, doing research inside of Jordan in 2017, criticized the disproportionate focus between national and international identity within Jordanian EFL textbooks and suggested that they equally incorporate identities in all sections. This same obstacle can equally transfer into Algeria. If there is too much attention on international topics, students miss the chance to personally connect the material to their own lives; if there is conversely too much emphasis on national identity, students lose the remarkable opportunity to learn and engage with different cultures and develop cultural awareness.

Section 3: Teachers' Perceptions of the Inclusion of National Identity in Algerian EFL Textbooks

Based on a four-point Likert scale, respondents were split as to the question whether English is a language increasingly in demand but the majority (60.8%) nevertheless believed that speaking it did not grant you a higher social status. Again, it must be noted that English does not hold the same "prestige" as it does throughout countless other countries given the history of Algeria. Therefore, this study must be distinguished from research in other countries where English is increasingly indispensable and necessary.

Algerian teachers; however, recognize the richness of the cultural and historic landscape of the country as nearly 95% of them have directly rejected the statements that '*Algeria has one definite national identity*' and that '*most Algerians share the same ethnicity, languages, tradition, and culture*'. There was nothing even close to a consensus regarding which ethnicity should be focused on throughout EFL textbooks, and the great plurality of teachers believed that all the main dialects of Algeria were

equally emphasized. Despite their views on the usefulness of national identity as discussed in questions 1.1 and 1.2, teachers strongly agreed that the Algerian national identity should be seen as heterogeneous and diverse. This underlines the importance of ensuring Algeria does not fall under the same EFL educational problems as other countries, whereby richness and diversity in them are essentialized to a few basic unifiers. This was documented by Aljak and Magaddam (2013) who found that in Sudan's EFL textbooks only one basic national identity was espoused. Incorporating national identity is useless if that identity is too generalized to adequately represent the country; EFL textbooks need to explicitly and implicitly demonstrate and reflect Algeria's heterogeneity.

Furthermore, teachers do not believe current Algerian EFL textbooks successfully work towards the development of national identity. Around 86.6% of subjects remarked that students are not put into situations that require them to use English to describe themselves and a moderate majority (61.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that Algerian EFL textbooks focus on subjects that personally relate to students. Culture goes hand-in-hand with the absorption of languages; if a student is not required or motivated to use English, it would be impossible for them to gain an awareness of that target culture Kim (2012) stressed the nature of language in its relationship to cultural absorption, and he furthermore emphasized that one of the strongest ways to understand a culture is to be able to understand their words and terminology. Only through contrasting with other countries' cultures can a student gain deep understanding of his or her own, so it is vital students continue to be put in situations that encourage and demand English speaking in the classroom.

Section 4: Pedagogic Implications

Teachers also answered several questions concerning curricula, broader educational system, and how national identity is and should be taught in Algerian EFL classrooms. A plurality of teachers (40%) believed that national identity should begin to be discussed in middle school and continue into secondary education; and the majority (53.6%) believed that writing was the most effective skill for introducing and discussing national identity.

In regards to how teachers relate to teaching national identity, 66.1% of teachers stated that it is the responsibility of teachers to adapt curricula to matters of national identity. Nevertheless, 63.4% admitted they never created extracurricular materials or texts to help further these discussions. Similarly, the majority (61.6%) remarked that they never sought help from

other teachers for information relevant to national identity. Perhaps most importantly, nearly all teachers (88.4%) remarked that their teacher training did not emphasize national identity at all.

Strong, unrealized potential and opportunities exist for teachers to become greater exposed to the importance of national identity discussions and how to interweave them effectively into the classroom. Altogether, these results must deeply relate to the recommendations of Yuang and Feng (2016), who recommended both stronger professional teacher training as well as a progressive EFL curriculum which gradually stresses more complex inclusions of national identity as students progress in grade. These would ensure that the strength of curricula and competency of teachers maintain stellar standards of professionalism and relevance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Reaching an understanding of who a person is with respect to his/her local and wider community has proved to be fostered through the acquisition of English (Block and Cameron, 2002). Based on the considerations discussed in relation to the concept of national identity in Algeria, the researchers attempted to align the recommendations of the current study with existing international educational practices, and proposed the following realistic and implementable solutions for English language teachers as well as policy-makers in Algeria.

- Align the general aims of Algerian EFL curricula to incorporate more national aspects that personally relate to Algerian students;
- Diversify the teaching *approaches* and methods to ensure a more reflective, interactive and higher-order thinking experience when discussing intercultural matters in EFL classrooms;
- Provide proper *teacher specialization* and *training* to help Algerian EFL teachers gain a thorough and detailed understanding of their own national identity and other possible affiliations;
- Remedy *textbooks* if possible in a way to integrate national identity components *evenly* and *comprehensively* in the four language skills sections, activities, and projects at all levels (middle and secondary school);
- Utilize available resources that can make national identity classes more effective such as the knowledge of fellow teachers and free online resources.
- Design *additional resources* when necessary (cross-curricular and extra-curricular resources), preferably *in collaboration* with EFL

teachers and history or civil education teachers;

- Engage *students' interest* in national identity conversations through detailed and relevant *compare-and-contrast discussions* with Algeria and other cultures;
- *Juxtapose local matters* with those of *target* and *international cultures* in a way that does not instigate *cultural shock* for Algerian EFL students;
- Assess and evaluate the progress of Algerian EFL learners on their knowledge about their national identity and culture (fifth skill);
- Embellish the *school climate* with contents that remind students of existing communities, and *celebrate* diversity, ethnicity and history, etc.
- Organize *awareness initiatives, campaigns, and programs* to deepen the understanding of national identity among students across primary, middle, and secondary private and public schools in Algeria.

Hopefully and optimistically, the suggestions and conclusions made by the researchers shall help both Algerian students acknowledge the importance of national identity when it comes to communicating in English, as well as raise the awareness and commitment of their teachers regarding teaching culture and identity matters to Algerian EFL students.

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