

Finding Identity, Civilisational Dimensions and Cultural Perspectives in an Algerian EFL Post-colonial Situation.

حضور الهوية، الأبعاد الحضارية والرؤى الثقافية في تعليم اللغات الأجنبية. الإنجليزية مثلا في الجزائر في فترة ما بعد الاستعمار

La présence de l'identité, les dimensions civilisationnelles, perspectives culturelles dans la situation ALE (Anglais Langue Etrangère) dans l'Algérie Postcoloniale.

BOUDERSA, Hemza *¹

Date of submission 11 /04 /2020 - Date of acceptance 30 /12 /2021 - Date of edition : 02 /12 /2022

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى مناقشة الجدل حول الأبعاد الحضارية والأدبية والثقافية للغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجزائر و علاقاتها بالمشهد اللغوي الموروث من الاستعمار وبناء الهوية المستمر مع التركيز بشكل أكبر على اشكالية الرؤى متعددة الأبعاد للكيان الهوياتي ذات الصلة بخطاب ما بعد الاستعمار (كالعولمة، مزلقها وتجليتها وكذلك الحداثة و ما بعدها). تؤكد نتائج البحث على الاطروحة القائمة على " أن الهوية الصحية هي هوية لها ديناميكية داخلية و قدرة على دمج التجارب الجديدة و منه فهي دائمة التطور و التجدد" و هنا "تلعب اللغات الأجنبية-الانكليزية مثلا- دورا هاما في تفعيل هذا التطور و تجديد هذه الديناميكية بأبعاد حضارية شاملة فيما لا يضر بالأصول الوطنية و اللغوية للمتعلم".

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية ؛. البعد الحضاري.؛ وجهات النظر الثقافية؛ اللغة الانكليزية

Abstract:

The paper **aims** at discussing the spurred debate between the literary and cultural domains carried in an Algerian EFL situation as related to the lingual scene inherited from the colonial times and identity construction with pertinence to the **question** of diverse perspectives of post-colonial discourse. This research safely shares the eclectic mid-way position between (the Transcultural, Transhistorical , Interdisciplinary, Essentialist, Constructionist) visions to identity that **hypothesizes** and considers any 'healthy' identity should have its own internal fluid dynamics and aptitude to integrate smoothly with new experiences brought by foreign languages –English as Case Study- and their cultures being taught to cope with realities with respect to one's national and lingual roots.

Keywords : Identity; Civilisational;Dimensions;Cultural.;Perspectives;EFL Situation

Résumé

Cet article vise à discuter le débat animé entre les domaines littéraires et culturels en Algérie, hérités de la période coloniale et de la construction identitaire continue en mettant d'avantage l'accent sur **la problématique** des visions multidimensionnelles pertinentes au discours postcoloniale (liées à la mondialisation et à ses égards). Les conclusions de cette recherche montrent comment la mondialisation apporte réponses aux questions d'identité. La recherche partage le point que la vision éclectique à mi-parcours (entre les visions transculturelle, transhistorique, interdisciplinaire, essentialiste, constructioniste) de l'identité qui considère est basé sur **l'hypothèse** « que toute identité

* Corresponding author.

¹ BOUDERSA Hemza, Constantine 1 University, Department of English: Algeria mr_boudersa@yahoo.fr,

« saine » devrait avoir sa propre dynamique interne fluide et une aptitude à s'intégrer en douceur avec les expériences portées par les langues étrangères » et leur cultures inclus l'anglais et ses cultures anglophones (notre études de cas) pour faire face aux réalités mais en respectant ses racines nationales et linguistiques.

Mots Clés : Identité ; dimensions ; civilisationnelle ; perspective ; culturelle, situation ALE

Introduction:

The healthy identity is an identity which has its internal dynamics and the ability to integrate with new experiences and create from this a new identity always in progressing ...”

(Mohamed, 1999)

The issue of identity of the Algerian learner in an E.F.L Situation has been a subject of focus and interest of many Algerian researchers. The emphasis on identity due to the various multicultural and multilingual challenges, biases and expectations in an era post-modernism carried by a heavy heritage loathed by germs and remnants colonialism and the multiple shifting values imposed intentionally or unintentionally by globalization and its pitfalls. Digest or not of identities shift should be at stake to be explored, mainly by E.F.L researchers as exposed to delicate situations connected to the changes the E.F.L setting produces and may cause. A particular light, in this paper, is shed on the Algerian cultural identity with its Civilizational Perspectives and its nexus to the E.F.L.post-colonial context¹.

1- Target Population

The population concerned by this paper is represented by post-colonial E.F.L learners and teachers in all categories (Middle, Secondary and University) who are or would become future Algerian adult citizens. Target Learners and Teachers need to know, on the one hand, what competences should develop to keep their lingual and cultural identities immune and safe from any volatile and jeopardizing hardships that may cause civilization bankruptcy or unrest. On the other hand, syllabi designers, educators, political and culture actors should know about what direction should be followed to diagnose what 'teachable' languages and cultures should be enhanced and in what ways 'learnable' subjects should serve the final aspirations of the educational process.

2. The Algerian Lingual Identity

“I speak all languages, but in Arabic!”

Abdelfattah Kilito(2013، كليليطو،)

Most countries in the Western world, mainly in Europe, are going to confirm free celebration of multilingualism according to their multi-lingual existing regions. In this respect, we should clarify some notions pertinent to the paper at hand. The Official Language is the most common language between people(s) and governments at the official language. The latter may come into practice with the governmental services within the law and the constitution. The National Language stands for the language with a principal importance within the nation. National languages can be Official as well. Concerning the mother language called also the mother tongue, the most common overwhelming language, the first language (these notions are not always considered synonyms as the French colonizer considered the French language as mother tongue for all Algerians though it was never

considered so by Algerians). As an example in this context, there is technically no official language in the United States though English is the most common and considered in some federal states with Spanish in other states. In Switzerland, there are four official languages German, French, Italian and Romansh (العربية، 2019).

In the case of Algeria, there are two official languages (Arabic declared official in 1963 and Tamazight with a constitutional decision since 2016; Tamazight declared a national language with a constitutional amendment in 2002).

In this paper, we consider language as a carrier of social and cultural values of the nation, not a simple mere tool of social communication. Language, in this respect, is a cornerstone of the individual, social and societal identity (ethnic, national and regional) and icon of creativity and human heritage of the nation carrying thoughts and knowledge². Accordingly, Abd El Rahmane BOUDRAA, says: “The relation of the identity with the language is a debatable and interactional as the language is not a mere way of saying things and a scientific, cultural and educational matter, but an identity matter with pertinence to the national sovereignty, social and psychological stability as language is a vital component of the identity...it is the official spokesman of identity and a way to recognize the world and classify societies³” Therefore, it is worth noting that meeting the national lingual citizenship in Algeria is an integral part of the lingual identity and both revolve inevitably around respect to the national, official and mother languages with another respect to history of the nation as a platform of co-existence, harmony and convergence, not of clash, division and divergence between transcultural languages and civilizations crossing Algeria. A reject should be there to face and fight not fear and flight any cultural pitfalls resulted from some political, knowledge and historical hardships with some toxic intruding transcultural/transhistorical/transpolitical germs inherited from the ex-colonizer or acculturated via globalization.

2.1. Lingual, Intellectual and Cultural Alienation in Algeria

The disease is alienation
The cause is colonialism
The cure is revolution
The destiny is freedom
---Frantz Fanon (Hanson, 1976)

At first, we should refer to the meaning of Alienation as ambiguous and varying from the Western to the Arab-Islamic vision. The former focuses more on “the variety of its genuine meaning” and the latter emphasizes on it “as a result of psychological and ‘civilisational weakness’ resulted in ‘miserability’, blind mimicry and imitation of the vanquished to the vanquisher” (Ibn Kheldoun); hence, it is worth to be fought.

Many thinkers and psychologists, including Frantz Fanon refer to this matter of alienation to as a “legacy of the postcolonial period” that resulted from the “inferiority complex” instilled by the colonizer. Leopold King of Belgium, colonizer of Congo, said, in this respect, “You cannot colonize people until you instill in them a sense of inferiority”. This sense is instilled via educational systems and programmes filling minds of colonized pupils with, considering the white colonizing culture(s) and language(s) as centers of any civilization advance; all what is apart and aside is savagery! Rudyard Kipling’s idea referred to in his poem the White Man’s Burden is to civilize the uncivilized

and educate the uneducated and that's called by the European: "the Civilizing Mission" and defended by Darwin in his theory "Social Darwinism" as the "Survival is for the [White] Fittest"!

The colonial idea, which revolves around white Eurocentrism and alienation, is awkwardly perceived and inappropriately-received by the colonized. Therefore, the culture brought by the colonizer influenced clearly the colonized. Being fond of the colonizer brings an underestimation to the one's self, one's language, and then being and belonging. Hence, you find the colonized speaking an awkward national language with less individual use of his mother tongue and less interest and concern in promoting and empowering wide use of the national language(s) in vital matters by officials.

At least but not last, it is worth noting and inevitably referring to what Ibn Kheldoun said: "the [supposed] vanquished is fond of the [supposed] vanquisher"; pertinently, we should work to find solutions to this destructive legacy which influenced and still influencing the post-colonial man. The latter is negatively influenced in a way weakening rather than empowering its lingual, intellectual and cultural abilities. Being weak linguistically, intellectually and culturally leads unavoidably to be a passive consumer, swallower and absorber to all what come from the other. It is, then, a high time to empower mind immunity from a 'Francophilability' (borrowed from coloniability; a term used by Malek Bennabi), Americanization, modernism and post-modernism, globalization and their pitfalls. Empowering the role of the school and the university as sovereign institutions is urgent. These institutions are the stepping stone of any intensive work to instill in future citizens pride of their lingual, intellectual and cultural 'national' identity, being and belonging. Being proud of one's being and belonging should not prevent the Algerian citizen from being extrovert on other's languages, cultures and civilizations.

2.2. Lingual, Intellectual and Cultural Identity in Algeria

Reform of the Algerian school and university is an integral part of reforming syllabi curriculums in both sectors. This reform had to be inspired from a political will that should work to empower evolution of national languages. These languages should be developed in a way to be effective and reliable source of production of thoughts, knowledge, techniques and technology. All the academic, political and intellectual attempts should work to let the languages in question immune; the best way to meet safety of these languages revolves around renewing syllabi and curriculums. Renewing methods, approaches and techniques for change and reform is the best ways to boost revival of national languages and prevent them from perish as 'not to renew and publish lead to perish'!

Statistics say that nations producing knowledge, techniques and technology are automatically developed linguistically as new technical terms are enriching these languages compared to other languages of not-productive nations. For instance, all the Arab countries with about 400 million inhabitants contribute with only three (3) or four (4) percent of the WEB content. Sweden with 20 million, in turn, participates with 20 percent of the Internet content. The difference is so clear. Despite flexibility and richness of Arabic with 12.3 million word, English with 1 million word and French with 13000⁴ words, its production in technology is not really considerable compared to Spanish, English and Chinese. Publishing literature and thoughts in Arabic is not as well widespread compared to publishing in English. Therefore, the will to serve Arabic through publishing with it is so average.

In a nutshell, we should refer and confirm that immunity of thoughts has to do integrally with that of languages. Both can be met via developing consciously immunity of the identity which

requires as well knowledge acquisitions and technical modernization. Technology with its continuous modernization works at enriching the language with its use of new and modern technical words in vital domains and sectors. The political will to value the true role of school and university to enhance progressively awareness among people to use their national languages in building up their civilizations.

2.3. The Role of the School and University in Meeting the Algerian Lingual Identity (Citizenship)

“The School is the temple where consciousness receives the living values that establish the common human cultural heritage”

Malek Bennabi

The school is principally the appropriate place to get knowledge and acquire science. In turn; the cultivating role of education should never ever be prevented from both the School and University. El Bashir El Ibrahimy says in this respect: “the nation that does not build schools will be overwhelmed by prisons”. Victor Hugo, the French writer, he who opens a school, closes a prison”. I confirm that opening school is a way to open a gate to culture and close another of non-culture, backwardness, ignorance and darkness. The education role of the school is clear, but in this paper I hypothesize that the other cultivating role is absent and on purpose sometimes. The role of this school, therefore, should not be limited to lessons, pedagogy, didactics, chairs and tables. This role should move beyond the academic and pedagogic frame to confirm the cultural and cultivating dimension of education via re-framing the Algerian individual and collective mind in relation to its civilisational essence.

The school should work to instill consciousness about their lingual and cultural identity among pupils and future citizens. Concerning the University, its role is to enhance and empower the role of the school with ‘wise’ openness on other cultures and civilizations. Both roles should be considered important and stepping stone of any civilisational upheaval.

Malek Bennabi clarifies the role of the university as a genuine and true booster of four constitutions: the moral constitution, the ethical constitution, the practical logic and productive work (Bennabi, *Conditions de la Renaissance*, 2016). The University works as well to meet human values, science, work, and ethics with no imitation of other culture (Bennabi, *La Lutte Idéologique* (translated to Arabic by Nour-Eddine Khendoudi), 2005). Imitation is seen as civilisational misery and bankruptcy; a sign of weakness and laziness. Hence, an intensive work should be promoted to meet effective objectives pertinent to a genuine renaissance.

3. Highlights Inspired from Malek Bennabi’s Civilisational Project

3.1. Interculturalism

In his book, *Problem of Ideas in the Islamic World*⁵, Malek Bennabi views existed contacts of the Islamic culture with other cultures and civilizations unhealthy as mechanisms of cultural contact is unbalanced, mainly and clearly apparent in the weakness of the Muslims psyche which led to a blemish linguistic scene in the post-colonial period. The lingual identities within the cultural and intellectual one are not clear in the Algerian mind and here the problem!

Malek Bennabi views that bilingualism in Algeria resulted from colonialism caused division not only of the elites (elite closure), but resulting in two divergent societies. One contradicts the other. The Arabophone society view itself as the representative of the historical and traditional society. The

Francophone one views itself as the promoter of the new civilized and modern society. The Printed or impressed ideas of the former contradict the acquired ideas of the latter and here divergences of these visions emerge.

Working to meet effectivity of thoughts and renewal of ideas through original and reliable translation, faithful to genuine values and meaning of the mother tongues, national and official languages with respect to the borrowed ideas in foreign languages (English in this case). Bilingualism and multilingualism resulted from a solid educational system should not be viewed only from one angle, but to be considered a blessing and curse. Blessing as it might bring richness to one's culture and curse as it might cause divergences among peoples and societies!

3.2. Alienation

Malek Bennabi preserved the intellectual task as a 'voice for the people' who urged and dreamed of a civilization based on a renewed-vision to Islam far from mere rituals practiced by a 'soulless' men. Malek Bennabi works served as a model for this study which depicts the total change of the Algerian intellect during the period extending from 1954 to 1970's using the following symbolic keywords: coloniability, renaissance, Identity, inter-culture, shock, reaction, belonging, civilization, heaping up, deadly/dead/effective/misconceptions. Malek Bennabi's singularly provides a realistic perspective based on a genuine socio-intellectual foundation with a valid comprehensive methodology, referring consciously to righteous/effective/ dead/deadly ideas ,misconceptions,heaping up, imitation, coloniability and misrepresentations . These misconceptions wit misrepresentations might cause civilisational failure and bankruptcy, according to Bennabi.

Alienation resulted from what called by Bennabi 'coloniability' will be analyzed in this respect. Bennabi's vision revolves around the issue of 'civilization bankruptcy' resulted from the inner self of Muslim. The inner self should be filled with virtue(s), meaning(s) and value(s). The problem is that hat inner self is alienated as those virtue(s), meaning(s) and value(s) are replaced with dead ideas of one's community and by 'borrowed' fake, misrepresented and intruding ideas out of their civilization cycle or frame, called by Malek Bennabi deadly or toxic ideas. The issue then is that dead and deadly ideas can neither build a civilization nor enhance growing seeds of renaissance. Misconceptions will revenge, but effective ideas originated from genuine and righteous virtue(s) about one's lingual identity, meaning(s) of one's cultural identity and value(s) of one's intellectual identity will do the task and promote civilization upheaval.

3. Teaching Identity-Related Subjects (History and Literature) in an Algerian E.F.L Situation.

3.1. Teaching English in an E.F.L Context at an Algerian University (Higher College for Teacher Training, Department of English). Personal Experience

According to Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, the Kenyan writer and thinker, "language is not a mere means of communication, but a carrier of culture" as well. In this context, teaching and learning foreign languages (English as a case study) carries some issues and matters. **The first issue** is the negative transfer of Arabic as mother tongue (through an inappropriate borrow some structures from Arabic; thinking in Arabic and writing in English) and its negative impact on writing English. The latter, being pronounced, is influenced as well by French code of pronouncing. **The second issue** is the destructive impact of learning foreign languages on some students. Some EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners are absorbed fully by the EFL culture either American or British. The role of any

EFL teacher is raise consciousness among students to learn English without being detached or absorbed by its cultures and to keep faithful and attached to one's roots and identity with all its dimensions.

In brief, findings of my experience in teaching and research show that the weak belief and pride in national languages in Algeria resulted from the "effects of bilingualism, multilingualism with the limited use of Arabic as a result of colonialism". The latter resulted in mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence and inappropriate borrow from languages of technology, including English. As a result from all fact mentioned above, immunity of the Algerian national languages is at stake despite the progressive (official and non-official) attempts to defend Arabic as a language of history, civilization, high demography and strategic geography regionally or universally.

3.2. The Social Function(s) of English in an Algerian Context (English as a Life Skill)

In this changing time of globalization based on social media and technology, education should be inevitably empowered in a way to meet real life requirements. Education in English, for instance, should update its organisms, methodologies, learning-teaching situations, and employability of its tools. English, the language of success as many call it, should redefine its role from a school skill to a life competence and its teachers should out-pass their role as mere deliverers of knowledge and direct instructors into skillful facilitators, mediators, guides, mentors, and trainers who provide their learners with new-fangled skills and roles in life.

In this context, English should be taught in a way to develop in its learner multidimensional life skills added to the school skills embodied essentially in as (speaking, listening, reading, and writing). Education in English (case study in this paper) should purposefully empower: 1) thinking skills (creativity, imagination, problem solving, decision making, self-knowledge, critical thinking, assessing and analyzing information), 2) learning skills (agility, adaptability, receiving/ giving feedback, handling criticism, innovation, exploration, learner autonomy), 3) working skills (organization, negotiation, leading by influence, communication, collaboration, cooperation, people management, time management), and 4) socialization (citizenship, social responsibility, cultural awareness, social development, respecting diversity, and networking)⁶. Education in English, in this respect, should prepare students for future studies and future life challenges to join the world of work as to be an engaged well-to-do citizen. For this reason, employability skills , teamwork skills, communication skills, and civic skills are so important in transforming half-baked ideas poured in students minds into effective thoughts and critical that help young University graduates developing their life potential. This potential empowerment seeks by the end promoting life change and society positive dynamism. Highly-valued citizenship is therefore met by this broad range of soft skills.

1. Results and Discussion of the Research

The research **findings show** that some misconceptions to the quality and type of learning 'alienate' learners from a clear vision towards empowering all their abilities to meet their final aspirations and objectives.

This paper **clearly states** that there are four main hardships that face E.F.L learner in a post-colonial context to develop self-cultural awareness and intercultural competence, referring mainly to 1) knowledge hardships resulted from multilingualism/multicultural phobia caused by cultural programming⁷ of some ex-colonized countries, 2) historical hardships resulted from accumulated disputes, binaries and dichotomies West/ East, North/South, Colonizer/colonized, Europe/Africa and

White/Black, 3) political hardships resulted from some inherited ideological trends that cloud learners and future citizens' vision about themselves and their cultural awareness, and 4) other post-colonial inherited issues caused blemish insights, dysfunctional theories and practice gap keep apparent in these schools, with notable exceptions. The dysfunctional theories are inappropriately taught and learned as mere rote knowledge to be preached, spoon-fed, talked and chalked and finally scored. English, for instance, is taught as a second foreign language in Algeria with some misconceptions and pre-established/prior ideas for both the teacher and the learner. True and genuine teaching/learning process is to enhance an effective way to elicit these pre-ideas of misconceptions of the learner and misrepresentations of the teacher by the teacher(s)/learner(s) as researcher(s).

Teacher (s)/learner(s) researchers, in this respect, should move beyond dogmatic syllabi curriculums and fossilized methods of teaching/learning trapped by their subversive individual and institutional bubbles and puzzles imposed spontaneously, on-purpose, directly or indirectly upon them.

As **pertinent recommendations**, this study suggests a therapeutic and a constructive alternative to elicit enhancing appropriate effective competences that would keep cultural needs of future generation(s) safe and cultural identities sovereign and immune from increasing volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous challenges imposed by this globalized society. Developing competencies via a harmonious cooperation and effective collaboration of the original-family-acquired identity with the constructed-social-school-acquired-nurtured identity would immune one's own cultural awareness.

Communication, intercultural awareness, learner independence and active acquisition should be as well fostered. These life competencies (thinking, learning, working, and socialization) acquired via language skills (listening, reading, speaking, and writing) prove that intercultural competence is the most significant life skill with others (creativity, imagination, problem solving, decision making, self-knowledge, critical thinking, assessing, analyzing information, agility, adaptability, innovation, criticism, exploration, autonomy in learning, people management, time management, collaboration, cooperation, citizenship, social development, networking, cultural awareness; negotiating, and respecting diversity...), that should be elicited, fostered, produced and reproduced.

The post-structuralist constructionist view to identity, regarded an inevitable construction of identity due to external factors, is considered valid to some extent and Pierre Bourdieu's 'symbolic power' referring to the relation learner-foreign language help understanding well the contribution of 'education'-'research' nexus in shaping the dynamic fluidity of the Algerian identity with its multiple-diverse-intercultural dimensions which are kept continually produced, reproduced, constructed and reconstructed.

Conclusion:

As a conclusion, the paper **confirms** that education should work to form a future Algerian citizen in harmony with himself first and with 'other' next and later; an Algerian citizen fruit of a continuous well-represented training with multidimensional paths and life skills as well as 'profound', 'academic', 'cultural' and 'intellectual' features. Effective education, with new and corrected conceptions and representations, should provide with academic, pedagogic, cultural, cultivating, and intellectual training effective life skills to form a well-to-do citizen with a conscious vision in

harmony with self, empowering it; to form a citizen in co-existence with the ‘other’ without being absorbed to destruction. As a University teacher of English as a Foreign Language at the Higher College for Teacher Training at Constantine, I frequently insist on reaching foreign/target languages and cultures departing from a solid platform based on critical thinking and alert mind with high awareness. ‘Teachability’ and ‘learnability’ of the foreign language(s) and culture(s) with the way ‘how?’ to teach/learn them should frequently questioned and recycled yearly to empower effective approaches, considering the Algerian lingual identity (citizenship) and the Algerian entity with high objective to be opened on the other without being absorbed by it or isolation on the self with narrowness. By the end of the paper, it is **to a far extent safe to conclude** that the higher the level is of linguistic and literary misrepresentation of cultural identity, the unhealthier identity is and the more schools and universities should work to correct these misrepresented bi/multilingualism and misconceptions.

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NOTES

¹ The post-colonial setting resulted from challenges caused by colonialism. The latter brought particular post-colonial and hybrid cultural identities surrounded by a continuous process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction.

² We join Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, Kenyan writer and thinker, definition to language as a means of communication and a carrier of culture

³ Ralph Fasold. *The Sociolinguistics of Society*. Blackwell Publisher ltd. Oxford, 1996 p317,318

⁴ http://www.arabiclanguageic.org/view_page.php?id=10716

⁵ (نبي، 2011)

مالك بن نبي. مشكلة الأفكار في العالم الإسلامي. دار الفكر المعاصر. بيروت. 2011.

⁶ As adapted from McMillan Life Skills Manuel 2019.

⁷ Cultural programming in ex-colonized countries made mainly up of some inherited biases, expectations and misconceptions that influence greatly people's languages, behaviors, attitudes, values and expectations ;people are generally unaware of..