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Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL  
Students

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## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved mentors,

Mustapha Zekri

And

Khadidja Sadouki

Early in my life, they inspired in me a sense of joy for learning, and my successful completion of this work is in a large part due to them.

## ABSTRACT

This research aims to understand how English as a foreign language (EFL) learners develop their learning identities. While there has been interest on second language (L2) Self in immigrant contexts, not much has been investigated in EFL contexts. This research is conducted with a group of ten women who are second year bachelor students in Tlemcen University, Algeria. The students' learning process: their past, and present learning experiences, and their future imagined identity. This research investigates how they have been influenced by their sociocultural backgrounds, and how the social factors contributed to the development of their learning identities, hence how these factors helped them reshape their EFL learning identity. This thesis discusses the key theoretical perspectives on identity through the sociocultural theory. The literature gives a theoretical understanding of narrative, which informs about the key concepts in language learning: identity, agency, investment and imagined identity. A narrative perspective is merged with a broad meaning of experiential learning, scaffolding, and 'process writing' to engage the students in a reflective narrative activity.

A narrative approach has been used in two ways: (1) the narrative was used as a methodology, within which a narrative model was designed to assist the students to reflect on their learning experiences in the mentioned periods. (2) Students' written narratives were collected for data analysis. Focus group discussion is employed as a method to further investigate the themes which emerged from the narratives. My original contribution to the methodology is the applicability of process writing with narrative writing. The results of this research provide insights into the social factors which are presented as 'mentors' and 'marks'. My original contribution to the theory is the representation of 'mentors' and 'marks' as socio-cultural influencing factors which contributed to the emergence of students' learning agency in their early learning. This means that agency pre-existed in the past learning experiences, and it is expanded on in the present through language learning. Students' agency is also discussed as a process of *continuity* and *change*. These social factors enable them to develop new self-images. The future is discussed in relation to both the past and the present experiences, and it reveals the students' ability to imagine their future identities when they will become teachers. Experiences of the past have not constrained the students' agency, but they have created a salient impact which involved multiple social identities: learning identity, religious identity, language identity, and future imagined/teaching identity.

Key words: Agency, social support, self-images, investment, learning identity, and future imagined identity.

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>ALN</b>	<b>National Army of Liberation</b>
<b>CMC</b>	<b>Computer-mediated communication</b>
<b>CBA</b>	<b>Competency-Based Approach</b>
<b>CNRSE</b>	<b>National Commission for the Reform of the Educational System</b>
<b>EACE</b>	<b>Education Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency.</b>
<b>EFL</b>	<b>English as a Foreign Language</b>
<b>ELT</b>	<b>English Language Teaching</b>
<b>ESL</b>	<b>English as a Second Language</b>
<b>FIS</b>	<b>Islamic Fundamentalist Salvation</b>
<b>FL</b>	<b>Foreign Language</b>
<b>FLN</b>	<b>Algerian National Liberation Front</b>
<b>GIA</b>	<b>Group of Islamic Army</b>
<b>L2</b>	<b>Second Language</b>
<b>LMD</b>	<b>Licence Master Doctorat</b>
<b>ONS</b>	<b>Algerian National Office of Statistics</b>
<b>ULAMA</b>	<b>Association of Algerian Muslim</b>
<b>UNFA</b>	<b>National Union of Algerian Women</b>
<b>UoN</b>	<b>The University of Northampton</b>
<b>WLUML</b>	<b>Women Living Under Muslim Law</b>
<b>ZPD</b>	<b>Zone of Proximal Development</b>

**CHAPTER 1**  
**INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1. Personal motivation**

This study is concerned with women students' learning experiences. I remember my father encouraged me to make writing my daily routine. Therefore, when I was eleven, I wrote my first diary. My diaries included how my parents talked to each other, and how they treated my brothers and me. Also, my diaries recorded how teachers treated and behaved with students in different school levels. When I think about my learning development, I regard my family's support and my teachers' guidance as social support which has reinforced my sense of agency to continue my learning. Over time I learned that discussing my goals with people who I consider as my social support, reinforces my reflexivity. I reflect on my past learning challenges as turning points that triggered a reconstruction of my imagined identity to become a teacher of English and a researcher. I have conducted this research with women students, because I consider my gender and my background as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner. Understanding the background of the students enables me to present their learning experiences, and how they are supported or limited to develop their agency and to invest in learning to achieve their imagined identity.

I have observed that teaching academic writing in my former English Department (the English Department in Tlemcen University, Algeria) focussed on teaching essay writing, but not narrative writing. Within teaching and learning contexts, writing skills are perceived as difficult tasks, which has led EFL teachers to focus on argumentative essays (See Section 3.7). In line with EFL teaching more generally, teachers in my department often say that the writing skill is the hardest to develop. I have chosen to conduct this thesis on narrative writing, scaffolded with 'process writing', to assist the students to reflect on their learning experiences (See Figure 4.1).

Learning is blended with technology; in this thesis, I used weblog as a platform to assist students in writing their narratives. In my former university, there are computer rooms that are used for teaching speaking skills, however, in the future, I hope that learners can use these computer rooms to interact and develop their writing skills. Integrating a Weblog activity, in this thesis, is used as an online resource that is developed as a computer-mediated approach (See Section 3.6). Using blogs allows students to experiment with a different means of communication. They can create their content and perform their writing skills. In addition, it is used as a platform to support their learning agency, as 'blogging' is regarded as a sociocultural activity that triggers reflection (Reid, 2011).

## **1.2. The ‘Licence Master Doctorat’ system in Algeria**

After Algerian independence from France in 1962, policy makers attempted to eradicate the French system of education through the implementation of the ‘Arabization Process’ (See Section 2.5.1). Thus, Algeria has gone through a series of educational reforms which are discussed in the next chapter. There are currently three cycles of higher education qualification: License/Bachelor, Masters, Doctorate (LMD). The LMD has replaced the ‘classical system’ which is the ‘old’ educational system (Sarnou, Koc, Houcine, and Bouhadiba, 2012). The Bachelor degree has been reduced from four to three years; Masters degree has been set for two years, and Doctorate has been also reduced from four to three years of completion. This system is a result of participation in the Bologna Process. It uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. In the first cycle which awards the Bachelor degree, students are required to complete a minimum of 60 credits each academic year. In the second cycle which awards the Masters degree, students are required to complete a minimum of 60 credits. The students who do not succeed to complete the annual credit, can take and retake their modules in the following year. The aim of the credit transfer system is to increase students’ success (Sarnou *et al.*, 2012). The third cycle awards the Doctorate, there are no credits and postgraduate students are required to submit their thesis in three years.

This system was introduced by the Ministry of Higher Education in 2004/2005. It aims to bring about changes in education at the university level, and to increase scientific research (Azzi, 2012). This reform is implemented with the hope of participating in the benefits of globalisation, and to cope with the social and political situations in Algeria. It also aims to innovate in the teaching methods to match world standards and methods. Badwan (2017) states that globalisation reinforced educators to adapt with its needs and diversity. In education, both teachers and researchers need to use terminologies and concepts that can be shared and understood by the world of academia.

Within the LMD requirements, EFL teachers are also concerned to adjust their teaching practice, and to develop the content of their programs, as they do not have to comply with the programs set by the Ministry. However, they need to adopt the learner-centred approach and the communicative approach (See Section, 2.5.6). Badwan (2017) states that the aim of the learner-centred approach is to support individuals’ voice to be shared and heard. This approach also makes learners sensitive to the socio pragmatic aspects of language. Teaching through this approach aims to make learners aware of the world around them, to be conscious



and reflective on what they are doing, and what they want to do next (Azzi, 2012). For this thesis research was conducted with second year (2LMD) students.

### **1.3. Overview of the research methodology**

This thesis is conducted through and narrative methodology (See Section 4.5) which included a mini-module. The mini-module consists of pedagogic activities (See Section 4.7) which include reflective activities (See Section 4.7.1), and research activities (See Section 4.10). These activities are aimed to assist the students to become reflective, and to plan each feature of their narratives (See Tables 4.5, 4.6, and 4.6) during the classroom sessions (See Section 5.2). Then, they transferred their texts to ‘WordPress’, an online blog (See Section 4.9). These classroom activities sought to increase their motivation, and their reflective thinking about their ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ from earlier stages of their lives, and to self-evaluate their current learning of English. These terms are defined further on in this chapter (See Section 1.7.3).

Approaches to teaching which use ‘scaffolding’ seek to influence and transform the knowledge that learners have (See Section 3.2). Educators following Vygotsky’s approach (1978) use ‘scaffolding’ which refers to assisting learners to engage in an environment of learning. This environment is called the ‘Zone of Proximal Development’ (ZPD). The role of teachers in this zone is to co-construct learners’ knowledge with tasks slightly beyond their current level of achievement. However, the role of learners is to expand this knowledge for their future achievement and to acquire the self-regulated skill of learning (Storch, 2007). Teaching is associated in this theory with the collaboration between a teacher and learners or amongst students collaborating together as peers, in other words learning is essentially social.

I supported the mini-module conducted in this thesis with ‘scaffolding’ activities to encourage students’ reflection on themselves and their learning. I used a YouTube video to assist the students with the narrative features. Scaffolding activities promoted their reflection on the self during three periods of their learning process; the past (See Tables 4.5), reflection on the present (See Table, 4.7), and a projection to the future. In addition, they planned their narrative writing about each of the mentioned periods in pair work discussions (See Section 5.2). These scaffolding and interactive activities aimed to reveal how these students develop their learning identity over time. Dialogue is used to find how the other (mentors/marks) influence students’ consciousness and enable their ideological development. I included dialogues in this narrative research to look at how students reflect and interpret their past

learning experiences in the present. Dialogues also aimed to contribute in understanding students' agency in learning as a process of change and continuity.

In the 1960's and 1970's, the focus shifted from product to process writing in the EFL context. This shift introduced writing as a model of a cognitive process for solving problems, rather than a model of an intended text. This model brings with it several major stages: (1) Brainstorming ideas; (2) Planning thoughts in notes; (3) Translating these thoughts into sentences, and (4) Reviewing writing. Reviewing has two components: evaluation and revision. Evaluation is giving feedback on what was produced, and revision is the changes that occur in the writing after the evaluation. (5) Publication of the essay writing is the final stage of the writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1981). The model of process approach used in this thesis is explained in Chapter Four (See Section 4.8).

In this thesis, the way I use process writing is an original contribution to the methodology of teaching narrative writing, as it explored its applicability in teaching process writing. I argue that process writing was usually associated with teaching argumentative essays. The participants were assisted with activities following the different stages of process writing to help them reflect on their learning experiences. The process writing approach was used in the current research in two contexts: the classroom and blog, they are connected to develop students' cognitive and socio-cognitive skills through brainstorming (reflecting), planning, writing first drafts on the blog, blog peer-feedback and publication of revised drafts.

The use of blogs motivated students to provide feedback to each other on their writing (Wilkinson: 2011), and this relates to sociocultural theory which is used as the main theory within which this thesis is explored (See Section 4.9). Peer-feedback has been described as having two forms: global and local feedback (Liu and Sadler, 2003), again this distinction is explored in the literature review (See Section 3.8.1). Subsequently, I asked the students to consider their peers' feedback in order to improve their drafts (See Appendix 18). The mini-module lasted six sessions (See Section 5.2).

The data, in this thesis, are collected from participant observation (See Section 4.12.1), written narratives (See Section 4.12.2), and focus group discussions (See Section 4.12.5). Field notes are used as a supplementary research method to maintain notes which helped me to reflect and to connect my ideas during the process of data collection, analysis, and discussion of the findings. Field notes are not revealed in one specific section; however, they

are presented in the conclusion chapter (See Section 7.6), and limitation of the study (See Section 7.8).

#### **1.4. Research questions**

This thesis aims to identify second year women students' 'mentors' and 'marks' to establish how they affected them in the past, and the present, and how they enable or limit them to imagine their future identities. Within the three periods, this thesis can find out about the students' social background, their psychological development, and the possible sources that contributed to the development of their agency in learning. It can also reveal their awareness of their learning difficulties and their needs. This thesis explores the relationship between their past learning and their current efforts, and how they are investing to reach their future imagined identities.

I conducted a pilot study, in 2015/2016, and I found that there is a relationship between women's learning in the past and present, and their future becoming. I have formulated the following research questions, and the research methodology, based on the findings of this prior study and the existing literature. Each research question is answered through the application of one or two of the research methods mentioned above.

**RQ1.** What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?

**RQ2.** How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?

**RQ3.** What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?

#### **1.5. Research aim**

The aim of this project is to develop an understanding of EFL women's learning experiences and their identity reconstruction along the different periods of their learning. It also aims to explore their investments for reconstructing their future identities. The narrative model I designed to conduct the mini-module was employed for data analyses to examine the learners' sociocultural factors at three stages of their learning (the past, the present and the future). My emphasis is on the narrative content and context more than the narrative structure (See Section 3.5).

## **1.6. Research objectives**

These research objectives are studied to understand the underpinning knowledge about women students' experiences. This will provide an understanding particularly about the process these students went through, and the progress they are developing for their future becoming.

1. To explore the value of using scaffolding as a method of applying sociocultural learning for teaching process writing in English department, Tlemcen University.
2. To promote process writing in the EFL classroom based on collaborative writing; and to establish the importance of peer-feedback and peer-revisions.
3. To encourage students to reflect on their past and present learning experiences and to encourage them to plan for their future.
4. To reshape a model of narrative writing in education, for the purpose of understanding learners in general, and in this thesis women in particular.

## **1.7. Conceptual frameworks**

The following sections explain the discussion of each research question in relation to the theoretical framework discussed in this thesis.

### **1.7.1. Gender, learning and identity**

This thesis has conducted research with women learners, focussing on their learning identity development for several reasons. First, some feminist literature suggests that narrative approaches are well suited to studying women because the intention is not on the generalizability of findings about gender experiences, but to report on experiences from the tellers' perspective (Higgins, 2015). For this reason, this research focuses on women's telling of their learning experiences to find about how they constructed and reconstructed their multiple identities.

Second, previous research on learners' identity has been mainly conducted with immigrant women in Canada, U.S. (De Fina, 2014), and Australia. The project reported on in this thesis investigates women's identities in their home country. This thesis focuses on the social background of these women, but the findings (See chapter five) did not identify aspects such as race, class, and ethnicity, as social constraints which limited learners' access to the target community of practice. Hence, this research did not look at these aspects, for this reason

findings of this research differ from those earlier researchers (See section 3.6) such as Norton (2000).

Third, in previous research there was a focus on studying learning in relation to social identities, which made studying race and ethnicity more privileged than learning identity, as a result of the process of migration (Coll and Falsafi, 2010). Coll and Falsafi, (2010) argue that the concept of ‘learning identity’ deserves more attention in relation to education, as it has so far been limited. Learners’ becoming and their process of change have been theoretically neglected. I suggest that ‘learning identity’ is constructed alongside other identities, as no matter how identity is defined, it is socially constructed relying on Vygotsky’s theory; however, it is a personal resource and it is subjective resulting from experiences. I also support Norton’s (2000) point that many previous studies in language learning did not explain the complexity of learners’ identity, as they relied on their explanation on the present learning of language and its relationship with the future becoming, neglecting the intersection of the past experiences and how they can shape the learners’ present self-images. For this purpose, I conducted a thorough explanation of how EFL students develop their ‘learning identity’ as an identity which developed from the different social identities. This thesis suggested a definition of the concept of ‘learning identity’ (See section 7.2).

Fourth, Pavlenko (2001) states that language is the site of identity construction. In a similar vein, recent research in second language (L2) teaching views language not only as a means of communication, but also as a social practice or a process of socialization (See Section 3.2). The concept of imagined identity is proposed as a framework taken from Norton’s idea that a student’s identity is transformative (Norton and Toohey, 2001). Norton (2000: 5) relates the term ‘transformative’ to the argument that learners’ identities have the meaning of “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. This thesis aims to discover how the possible self-images which students develop can help them to plan for improving their future learning. The third research question is posed:

*RQ3. What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?*

### **1.7.2. Sociocultural theory**

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory explains that human behaviour is influenced by the social community where interaction is a source of development. This theory in foreign language learning posits that learning is contextual; it needs to be activity based, and in order for this activity to foster learning, it should be applied in a social context (Wilkinson, 2001). Sociocultural theory is based on ideas that learning should be mediated by an interaction and assistance from a knowledgeable other (Lantof, 2000). This assistance can be from a peer, a teacher, or both. This process of interacting knowledge between members of a group is called 'peer-feedback' (See Section 3.7.2). However, the assistance from the teacher to students is called 'scaffolding' (See Section 3.2). In this thesis, I used scaffolding for supporting students' roles in the activities, while students used peer-feedback for process writing by making use of the blog (See Section 3.6).

In the area of peer-feedback, particularly, Liu and Sadler (2003) distinguish between global feedback (content, unity and organization, and purpose) and local feedback (language, mechanics and conventions). Revision as a process refers to re-thinking text, and making changes that affect the structure, content and meaning and readability (Said, 2016). Thus, in this thesis, students' comments or feedback provided to each other were not analysed, however, they were used to support the completion of students' narratives (See Appendix 18).

### **1.7.3. Narrative writing and reflective learning**

Narrative in a broader meaning is used to study the concept of time and the sequence of events, and it is also used to look at the change that occurs through time (Andrews, Squire, and Tamboukou, 2013). The relationship between narrative and learning is linked with the meaning constructed through experience (See Section 3.5.1). Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) claim that experience is a stimulus of learning, however, reflection is the motivator that leads students to learn from that experience. Narrative writing is used in learning to encourage learners to describe their stories and give meaning to their life experiences. Shafie, Maesin, Osman, Nayan, and Manson (2010: 58) say that "Students bring with them their cultural and religious beliefs, previous life experiences and knowledge about the world. In short, their actions in the classroom are influenced by their backgrounds".

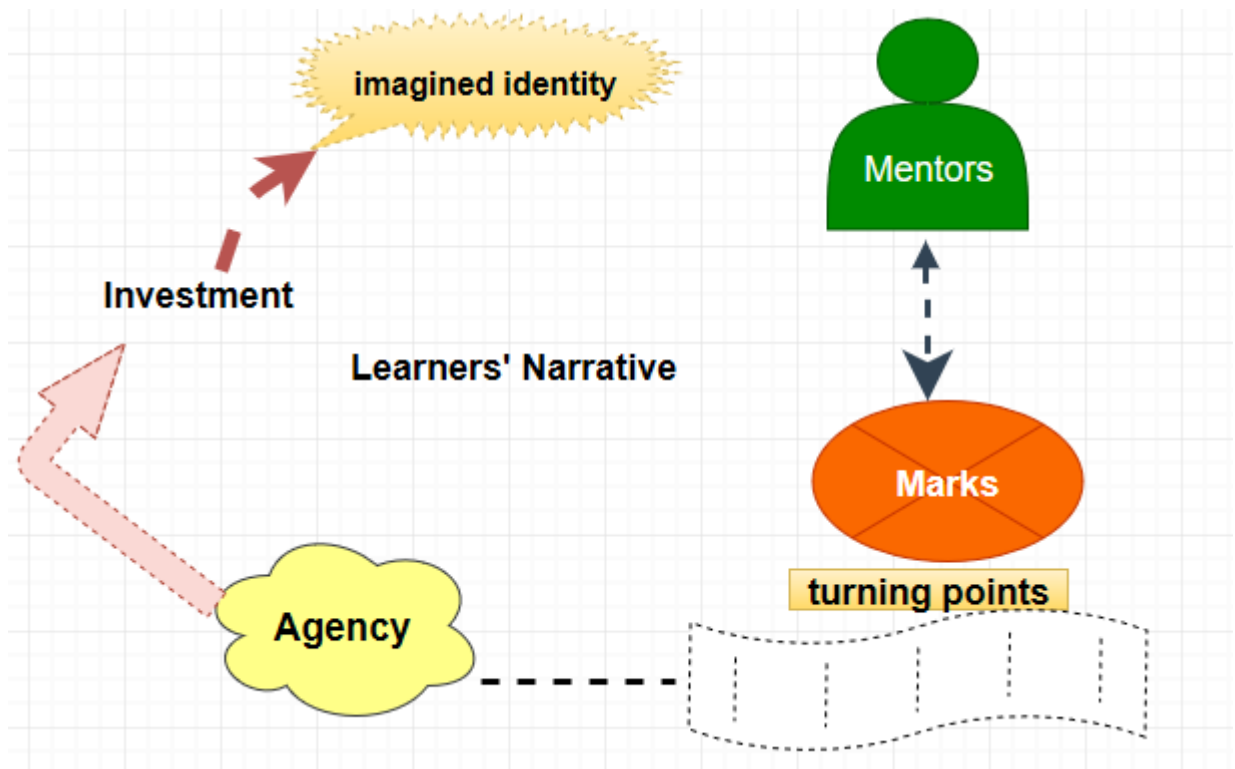
Research in identity is supported with language learning in order not only to understand how people learn the target language skills, but also to understand how they develop an expanding identity along their learning process (Norton, 2000). A narrative approach is used in this

thesis to explore how women develop their learning identity among other multiple identities; to this end, I designed a ‘narrative’ model based on Labov’s (1972) clauses: orientation, complicating action and resolution (See Table 4.2). However, I have created additional features to investigate the research questions. I have used the terms ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’, in this thesis, to explain what Labov (1972) used as ‘event-centred narrative’, but to also focus on the development of these events which transfers to be experience-centred narrative approach. The difference between event-centred narrative and experience-centred narrative is discussed in Chapter Three (See Section 3.5).

‘Mentors’, in this thesis, refer to the people who had impacts in the students’ learning (teachers, mothers, and peers). ‘Marks’ refer to the events that maintained impacts on students and there are certain events that perhaps relate to those ‘mentors’ (See Section 6.2.1). I am using the term ‘marks’ to study remarkable events, and to find about how they influence students in constructing their identities. Furthermore, both ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ had impact on the students’ past learning, and their present choices which might influence their plans of the future.

‘Mentors’ and ‘marks’ are socio-cultural features, which contribute to the emergence of students’ learning agency in the early learning. These two concepts are also presented as an original contribution to the project. These two terms are taken from TEDx Talk (Jenson, 2015). TEDx talk is a global community that allows worldwide speakers to share knowledge, and change attitudes through both online TED and TEDx Talk events run all over the world. The link of the video is attached in the reference list.

This study looked at identity development through women’s narrative writing and focus group discussions to understand the development of students’ learning identities. The main concepts discussed in this thesis are ‘mentors’, ‘marks’, agency, investment, and imagined identity. This research aims to explain the relationship between these concepts from a sociocultural perspective of the studied context. These concepts are presented in the following figure and discussed in the next chapters.



**Figure 1.1** Research main themes

Furthermore, this thesis explores the effects of two periods of time in reconstructing students' future self-image. For this section of research, the first research question is:

RQ1. *What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?*



#### **1.7.4. Reflective learning**

Reflective methodology aims to help people develop their own thinking. Lambert (2010) says that successful students are actively involved in their own learning; they monitor their thinking; they think about their learning; and they assume responsibility for their own learning. Boud and Walker (1990) state that the process of reflection may result in the emergence of new ideas, and changes may occur at the level of experience and behaviour. Therefore, these changes are outcomes of the reflective process, and help learners to know about their learning needs and styles. Further discussion on reflective learning is presented in Chapter Three (See Section 3.7.1).

In the mini-module, reflective activities are used in three sessions (See Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.6) to explore students' thoughts in two periods of their learning process; and the third period encourages students to imagine themselves in ten years: what they want to become. The concept of imagined identity is used to link these women with the future and developing an imagined academic identity (See Section 3.6). For this section, the second research question is:

*RQ2. How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?*

#### **1.8. Summary of the chapters**

*Chapter two* presents a background on the development of education in Algeria within different periods. It also focuses on women and their contributing roles in the community. *Chapter three* presents the key theories and approaches that are used to explore this research. It also reviews the literature which relates the concepts of identity, agency, and investment with narrative experience in the context of EFL learning. *Chapter four* presents the methodology used and methods employed in conducting the research. *Chapter five* reports on the main findings of this research. *Chapter Six* presents the findings in relation to the literature review, and it discusses the main three research questions. *Chapter seven* is the conclusion of the thesis, it summarises the content of chapters, it discusses the contributions of the thesis, and how the findings met with the research objectives. Field notes, blog reflections, key limitations, and recommendations for future research are presented in the conclusion chapter.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN ALGERIA**

## **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter entails the relationship between women, language, identity, and education in Algeria. Women's education in Algeria is influenced by various factors, such as the historical background, colonialism, the socio-economic growth of the population, and women's activism in the society. These factors are discussed to examine the impact of history on women's education and the construction of their identities. An outline of literature is provided to explore two successive eras of women's education. The first era extends from the pre-colonial period up to 1962, when Algeria gained independence. This overview presents a description of women's educational development in three periods (the pre-colonial period, the colonial period and the revolutionary period). The second era addresses women's educational development after independence up to the present day. It includes the post-colonial outcomes, the role of the Family Code, language policy and the civil war.

This chapter discusses women's experiences relating to their beliefs, the extreme brutality they experienced before and after independence, and their persistence to build their roles in the society. It also presents women's contribution to the revolution, their political activism, their education and the cultural and social roles that have reinforced their agency and identity. These concepts are discussed in detail in this chapter. They are also examined through a narrative of a woman fighter during the revolution, Zohra Drif, (See Section 2.4.3) which is best explained using a narrative analysis. I establish this background information concerning women's education in Algeria in order to contextualise the experiences of the women learners who participated in this research.

## **2.2. Pre-colonial period**

Education in North Africa dated back to Arab expansions. According to Wansbrough (1968). It started with the Umayyad expedition in the 7<sup>th</sup> century (647-709). Then, it witnessed the arrival of successive dynasties such as the Rustumid who remained three centuries in Algeria (late 8<sup>th</sup> century to early 10<sup>th</sup> century). The Fatimid dynasty came in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, followed by Almoracid in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Almohad came in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, and they followed by the Zyanid who remained from the 13<sup>th</sup> century till the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Later on, Algeria became part of the Ottoman Empire. These dynasties brought Islam as the religion of the Maghreb, and Arabic as the language of the region. Hence, the Arabic language and Islam were two aspects that contributed to the construction of Algerians' identity.

Schooling in this period took place in 'Masjid' which means a mosque. According to Abd Rahman Ibn Khaldun, the first mosque was constructed after the Arab expansion in North Africa under Idris I in (1227-1232) (Campbell, 2016). In these mosques, teaching was scholastic and based on Quranic lessons such as prayer manners, in addition to grammar, poetry and the history of Islam. Instruction focused on two language skills which were reading and writing, to which were added arithmetic (Brooks, 2016). More importantly, both boys and girls were provided with an opportunity for learning. They were taught together until the age of nine. Concerning higher studies, students had to travel to Al Azhar University in Egypt and El Zeytouna in Tunisia (Lazreg, 1994). According to historians, information about this period was fragmented. There is no sufficient information about education at this time except what was recorded by foreign travellers and found in Europeans' accounts (Lazreg, 1994).

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire occupied Algeria and provided limited education opportunities. They rarely built schools and they were against the religious instruction taking place in the 'Madrassah' which means a school. Therefore, lack of enough schools has also influenced women's education. Campbell (2016) reports from Chabou (1969), a translation of the Arabist Louis Adrien Burbrugger (1808-1869) that there were separate schools for girls. Chabou (1969 quoted in Campbell, 2016: 86) states "In addition to schools of boys, there were also places where 'Mouallemat' (female teachers) taught girls". This quotation provides information about both boys' and girls' literacy. It also shows that boys and girls were taught together until the age of nine. However, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, there were separate schools for boys and girls. It must also be pointed out that there were literate women teachers at that time, with an emphasis that girls were taught by them.

Ismail Urbain, a French journalist ran an assessment in 1830 about education in Algeria; the results revealed that the number of boys who could read and write in Algeria was equal to the number of boys who could read and write in France. He also added that the school subjects comprised of sciences, law, and theology. He states that:

[...] in 1830, the average number of male individuals who know how to read and write was at least equal to that of rural France [...] Between 2,000 and 3,000 young men were studying in the madrassahs, a sort of high school in each province, and 600 to 800 were studying sciences, law and

theology in some establishments of higher education (Bennoune: 1988, quoted in Campbell, 2016:87)

Concerning the variety of settings in which learning took place, a French historian called Marcel Emeret reported that “A school was built next every mosque, every tower, and every gravestone of a sacred ancestor” (translated from German by Chabou, 1969, quoted in Campbell, 2016: 86). There were 55 Zawiyas providing education to a total of 167,019 girls and boys. A ‘Zawiya’ refers to a small mosque that belongs to the mystical brotherhood. Traditional schooling was often in a room, or a tent, and education was connected to religious settings (Campbell, 2016). This reference adds information not only about whether girls and boys were taught together or separately, it also highlights the different environments where learning took place.

These data provided by European historians challenge the idea that schools were not found in Algeria before the colonial period. They draw an image of the learning conditions including ‘Zawayas’ and mosques. The data also discuss the learning opportunities for both boys and girls. This asserts that people in that time had an awareness about girls’ education. Therefore, the question that should be asked here is why the French did not view this manner of education to be a sign of a civilised country.

In addition, women prior to the colonial period performed their daily life activities alongside their husbands. They practised needlework as a daily task, including weaving veils, blankets, and coats for their husbands and children. They used processed wool for making mattresses and pillows (Lazreg, 1994). The French in 1832 did not notice that these women were educated and skilled in their ways. Instead, they created ‘stereotypical’ images to convince themselves that these women must change to fit in a modern way of living (Lazreg, 1994).

### **2.3. Women’s education in the colonial period**

Research in education often discusses the enduring colonial impacts on post-independence educational policies (See Section 2.5.4). Some researchers like Benrabe (2007) and Le Roux (2017) have analysed the current language issue in Algeria as a result of the colonial period (See Section 2.5.4). This section supplies an overview of the colonial policies implied in education.

France, like other European powers, looked to find a ‘new world’ (Habermas and Ben- Habib, 1981) or ‘a new living space’. Its expansion was justified by an assumption of superiority – by introducing modernity to others who they viewed as uncivilised – a concept known as the ‘Mission Civilisatrice’ (the Civilising Mission).

The Mission Civilisatrice is a colonial ideology which justified the domination of the other parts of the world by imposing the colonial culture. The French assumed that the Ottomans had poorly managed Algeria, so they justified that their occupation was for developing the economy and the political powers of this former imperial society. However, this also implied assimilating the culture of the colonised society. Education was a powerful leading way that permitted their manipulation and control over the people (Ashcroft, 2001). Cultural missions were primarily performed under the assimilation policy which was based on the fusion of the ‘indigenous’ people, as they were called, with the French settlers.

This process of assimilation was implemented mainly in schools in which the education system comprised of French curricula made for the French-Algeria situation. Primary schools taught French literature so that native students would construct a French identity. Teaching Gallic heritage to this colonised generation was intended to create a sense of integration to the French culture (Gosnell, 2000). Assimilation was also a prompt for changing the status of Arabic language, which then was replaced by French as the official language. Both colonial objectives of integration and assimilation were carried out through implicit education to eradicate the local languages, cultures and traditions.

The following description tackles how the process of girls’ assimilation was fused into education. Rogers (2013) recounted a story of the first woman who contributed in the Mission Civilisatrice, called Madame Luce Allix. She established her school in 1833 to facilitate the integration of three races: the ‘Arabs’, the ‘Jews’, and the ‘Moors’ (i.e. the ‘Amazigh’ living in Algeria). Allix’s mission provided education for girls only. She was granted 4,000 Francs from the Queen of France to launch it. In 1833, there were two hundred students, and all of them were Jews, not Arabs. In 1846, her school focused on teaching girls the domestic handiworks, such as grooming, sewing and embroidery. According to her, these tasks kept girls away from boredom (Lazreg, 1994) and prostitution (Rogers, 2013). This school also aimed to prepare them to impress men with their refinements. Also, they aimed to help these girls to acquire the French way of thinking and behaving.

Auguste-Alexis Lepescheux, who was a director of Public Instruction, visited Madame Luce's school; he was impressed by the activities she provided which had a significant effect on the Mission Civilisatrice. There were 59 Muslim girls at the time of his visit. He stated that knowledge along with military conquest are means to control the indigenous people (Rogers, 2011). Girls in this school were possibly not aware that they did embroidery to become a version of a French woman, and that these skills were a practice of their femininity. As was discussed above, the French did not regard the actual handiworks as signs of modernity. However, the major aim of institutionalising these skills was to integrate Arab girls into the French culture.

In 1850, schooling became varied; there were two types of schools: Quranic schools run by Muslims, and the Arab-French schools led by the French. These latter were under the Ministry of War, instead of the Ministry of Education. They instructed Muslim boys in French, in addition to other subjects like history, geography and arithmetic to enable their participation in the economic, social and cultural domains of the occupier (Rogers, 2013). At this stage also, girls' schools were based on history, geography and French grammar. In the same year, there were five schools for boys and four schools for girls; only a few schools of girls lasted for a long time such as the school that was described above, and another one in Constantine city (Lazreg, 1994). To return briefly to the previous issue that girls and boys were taught together in the Ottoman Empire, it is stated in Rogers (2013) that there were separate schools for boys and girls in the colonial period.

In 1850, these schools started to lose attraction from Arab boys' and girls' attendances. The subsequent high level of illiteracy at the time of independence is a consequence of the drop-out from education in the colonial period. Five reasons can be listed as follows:

The first reason was that girls' education did not witness any change regarding the subjects studied since the French arrival. There was neither Arabic language instruction nor the teaching of Quran. Due to domestic-based teaching, they could not carry on their studies in high school level because they lacked arithmetic and academic learning skills. Thus, girls did not have the required certificate to join French schools, unlike boys who were eligible to continue their high school studies. As a result, this created an unequal educational opportunity between Muslim boys and girls and this caused girls to stay at home (Lazreg, 1994).

The second reason concerned the number of schools that decreased immensely. For example, in 1852, in Constantine city one of the girls' schools closed for repairs as it was not in good

condition. In 1855, Mme Luce had only thirteen girls enrolled in her school. She paid the girls' families two francs monthly to maintain their attendances (Rogers, 2013).

The third reason was that Quranic schools were either demolished or used for other purposes and this affected girls' attendances. Develoux in his documenting of the religious facilities in Algeria, published in 'Revue Africaine' (1858-1870) translated from German by Chabou (1969, cited in Campbell, 2016) states that in Algiers, in 1830, there were 166 buildings of Islamic teaching including Mosques, Zawiyas and Marabut. In 1862, of all these schools only 21 buildings remained. Besides, in 1882 the law banned the Quranic schools opening during the Arab-French class hours.

The fourth reason was that the decrease of students' attendance during the period of (1850-1882) was due to the hesitation of the French authorities concerning girls' education which included learning to speak French and geography. They reflected that geography could widen Arab girls' thoughts about a happier life away from the coloniser's bounds.

The last reason was that many Arab families stopped their daughters after they knew that this was a mission of indoctrination, not merely instruction (Lazreg, 1994).

In 1870, General Patrice de MacMahon reflected on the empowerment of the military service decisions of schooling, and suggested that all the existing schools should be fused. Consequently, in 1910 school instruction took another shape, children were given intensive French classes, through associating words and images of an object used in their daily life. The teaching of history was enhanced with a textbook that described the victory of France, before their revolutionary missions, such as their heritage of ancient palaces, the rise of great cities, and this focused particularly on France under the monarchy of Louis XIV which represented power (Gosnell, 2000).

In 1931, a scholar called Abd El Hamid Ibn Baddis and his fellow reformers established a national movement called the Association of Algerian Muslims (ULAMA). They made a clear distinction between the colonial imposed culture and their own culture. ULAMA aimed to revive the religion, language and the Algerian identity (Connelly, 2000). They initiated a desire for an Islamic education that raised awareness about the local identity and religion. In 1949, ULAMA was able to create 90 schools essentially for teaching Muslim students, and these schools supported girls' education (Campbell, 2016). Their instruction was based on



disseminating local history, literature and Arabic language for men, women and children. This movement was a driving force behind the modern Algerian nationalism (See Section 2.5.2).

After Ibn Baddis' death in 1945, the schools were allowed to continue under the French government, however, only boys were allowed to go to school, as this would maintain men in a subordinate status led by the French authority. Therefore, according to an international survey in 1948, the number of illiterate Algerians was 93.8%, while the comparable figure for Europeans living in Algeria was 8.2%. These figures illustrate that there were not equal education opportunities although the schools varied in different ways in time (Campbell, 2016). Consequently, in 1949, European settlers and Muslims have been fused again under the same educational assimilating system.

#### **2.4. Women in the revolutionary period**

Algeria endured a war of independence (1954-1962). This section discusses the continued policies undertaken by the French officials to maintain domination of the society and the land using cultural propaganda and brutal means against its people. The coloniser uses an imperial power to be in a superior position, and the colonised in an inferior position (Said, 1978).

The Mission Civilisatrice continued under the concept of 'modernisation' of the people. Women during this period did not face assimilation only through education, but they also faced imposed cultural policies, concerning their identities as Muslim women. The Algerian war of independence had its outbreak on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1954. In 1957, the French leaders ran a policy called the 'Emancipation Campaign' which consisted of several cultural propaganda activities. This campaign aimed to quell the revolution. As a good example of this campaign, in the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 1958, an international Press event took place in Constantine city. The purpose of the French officials was to show to the international world that girls would like to be 'emancipated', by taking off the veil in front of the international cameras (Perego, 2015).

This show was successfully stage-managed. The French officials initially had failed to find a Muslim girl willing to uncover her hair; then they selected a girl called Monique Ameziane from Constantine school. Her brother was in prison, accused of giving shelter to one of the nationalist guerrillas. They took advantage of this and warned her that he would be killed if she did not agree to uncover her hair. This event was later shown to be fabricated, because this girl had not been veiled before in her life (Perego, 2015).

In the midst of this propaganda, the French military knew about women who were participating in the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) that launched the war on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 1954. However, they announced that there were no Muslim women fighters prior to 1956 to persist the image that Muslim and French women were treated equally. This image helped them to misinform the world that there was no opportunity for Muslims to fight. However, there actually were women fighters before 1956, such as Djamila Bouhired who the French army ‘interrogated’ and tortured using an electric instrument on her naked body in 1957. After that, she became a prominent name, defended by international unions and media. She was the reason for dissolving the French propaganda attempts in that period (Perego, 2015).

The national movement (FLN) engaged women such as Zohra Drif, Samia Lakhdari, Djamila Bouhired for sneaking boxes through police checkpoints, and for placing bombs in French bars and restaurants. Zohra Drif wrote her memoir in her book entitled *Inside the Battle of Algiers* published in 2013. In this chapter, this memoir has been framed into a narrative account, and it is explored through a narrative method. This method is used to tackle Zohra’s colonial experience. Sharing her experience in this chapter adds to my research an image of Algerian women’s resistance and agency in history, and how they have viewed themselves and constructed their national identities. It also highlights a significant relationship between the concept of agency and learning to discuss how one woman’s cultural and educational competencies have contributed to the revolution.

Zohra came from a small village situated in the north-east of Algeria, in the city of Tiaret. She wanted to study Law at University, and her parents encouraged her to move to Algiers where the course was offered. In her first year, she said that the course was accessed mainly by European students, only eight of them were Algerians, four were men, and four women, including herself and Samia Lakhdari who became her fellow activist in the revolution. Zohra came to Algiers with the idea that her studies in Law would enable her to participate in the revolution. She had a deep desire to join the secret organisation of the FLN.

#### **2.4.1. Zohra’s narrative**

After a period of time trying to find a link to the FLN group, she met with Boualem Oussedik at university as he was a student too. She opened her heart explaining that “*As students, it is our duty to invest ourselves in the national activities such as army*”. Boualem carefully listened to her; then replied “*which movement would you like to fight with; the National*

*Algerian Movement, the FLN, or the Parti Communiste Algérien*". She replied, "If I say FLN, could you put me in touch with them?" He responded while leaving, "I will try, I will try". After that meeting, Zohra and Samia together found their first link to the FLN and they began their acts guided by the FLN brothers as they called them.

Both of them dressed in the usual style of young students wearing medium-length skirts, and not covering their hair. However, in the first revolutionary act which occurred in the town of Belcourt, they wore a 'Haik' which Zohra defined as "classic veil of Algiers". This veil covered women from their heads to calves. They wore the Haik in this act to look similar to the women of Belcourt, as in this town most of the inhabitants were Arab Muslims. Zohra and Samia transmitted solidarity allowances to the FLN families whose their husbands or children were killed and lost or executed.

During this, they met with other women who carried out revolutionary acts from their houses, by hiding FLN members from the French army, feeding them and relaying their reports. These women shared their love with them, taught them the meaning of revolution and the maintenance of a high faith for the continuity of these activities. She said that these women protected them from the French soldiers coming for a usual day checking. Zohra said, "Without these women, we were nothing".

Samia and Zohra moved from one place to another, they met with other women who survived bombs and rape in villages and mountains of Djurdjura, Blida and Medea. These women recounted how the French army treated civilians using napalm bombs and collective rape. Fatima, one of these women, told them a story that she witnessed in the village of 'Tigzirt' in the region of Kabylie. She said, the French soldiers killed the men of the village, they put all the young girls in an empty house and raped them in turns for a week. The woman who recounted this story mentioned what happened to 'Adjlia' a girl of sixteen years old, whose mother went to retrieve and found her limbs shackled. Zohra did not write it the end of this tragedy she said, "Fatima whispered it to us in grief".

Listening to these stories of young girls' rape, Zohra said, "I was talking to the lawyer in me that these girls' bodies and souls were used as a theatre in the total war waged by the French army on behalf of its 'civilised' state using gang rape - a weapon that destroyed during, after, and forever". She confirms that these women have strengthened their determination to confront the Europeans and their colonial system. She added, "Although these women were oppressed, they taught us about our country, what the French university never taught us".

These women increased their sense of nationalism which enhanced them to imagine a future of a free nation.

In 1956, Zohra's father found out about her activism, he confronted her, in a temper, he told, "*A girl of your age could not imagine what war means, if someone is caught up, they will never be back to life because they are meant to be inferior to the coloniser*". He questioned her, "*Do you believe, in your soul and in your conscience, that you are able and ready to confront every imaginable situation?*" He added, "*listen well, this is not novels and poetry, it is a war of liberation where the rule is 'win or die'. There are situations that you cannot even imagine, you can know them by living them*". He asked her to think of his words and to come back with him to the village, but she was determined to carry on her way.

Both Zohra and Samia continued their journeys, and eventually met with Djamila Bouhired, an educated woman and a revolutionary who introduced them to the FLN armed group known as National Army of Liberation (ALN). They encountered the FLN leader of the Autonomous Zone of Algiers, called Yucuf Saadi (Harison, 2007). In 1956, Saadi assigned the three of them for placing bombs in European cafes. It was a new way of resistance for which they had to prepare their psychological status and their physical appearances to look similar to French women. For this, they changed their haircuts, and they bought the most fashionable summer dresses with matching shoes and makeup.

The three young women got ready; in a whisper, Samia and Zohra said, "*this day could be either the last day in our lives or a new day that accomplish our objectives*". It was the 30<sup>th</sup> September 1956, they took their lunch and dressed up. Leaving the house with that French look was difficult for them, they thought of their neighbours' suspicion about their chic style. They wore long casual blouses that they used to wear over the chic clothes. This changed image of clothing helped them to disguise not only from the police checkpoints, but it also helped them to be unnoticed by their own people. Zohra entered the Milk bar on the Rue D'Isly with the bomb; she followed the steps they had repeated together like how to make an order of an ice-cream, the time for having it and paying for it. She secretly pushed the beach bag under the counter, paid for her ice-cream and left. All of Zohra's, and Samia's acts went successfully.

#### **2.4.2. Agency and learning in Zohra's narrative**

Zohra's revolutionary memoir is an example of the post-colonial discourse, which is presented for discussing national identities (Said, 1978). This writing style is featured by using the colonial language to represent writers' colonial stories and social images (Ashcroft, 2001). Within the same context, Zohra's memoir is written in the French language to recount how she and her fellows broke down the images invented by the French officials about Algerian women's lack of agency (See Section 2.4.4). This colonial experience is reported in a narrative form to which is presented as a way to discuss the concepts of agency, language and identity and their contributions in constructing a national identity.

Zohra's narrative provides a connection between the concept of agency and learning which are justified through understanding the reasons that have supported Zohra to pursue her studies at University. Two main reasons are stated as motivating factors. The first reason is her father's reaction to perceptions of people of the village on women's education. A woman has been viewed as a wife and a mother. To clarify, a woman cannot travel to a big city on her own, only to study. However, Zohra's parents supported her to travel to Algiers and to study Law. She aimed to invest her parents' trust through representing a good reputation of herself in order to be an example for other girls of her village. She describes, "*I was carrying the immense hopes that came along with this combat in service of all our girls*".

The second reason is that Zohra has drawn a difference between the coloniser's identity and her identity. She has seen herself responsible in transforming the coloniser's view by representing the real image of women who have agency to fight against them. This illustration is related to postcolonial discourse which shows writers' agency through the social stories they recount (Ashcroft, 2001). In this context, Zohra took learning as a way to maintain, and to defend her culture and identity.

Agency in this narrative is not only explained through the cultural challenges which are perceptions of the people and the coloniser of women, but it is also explained through language competency. Describing her beliefs and her desire to join the ALN is linked to her ability as a student to use the French language to play her role of resistance. Then, her agency is supported with language proficiency and her linguistic confidence to mimic the French accent in the police checkpoints. She said, "*As students, it is our duty to invest ourselves in the national activities such as army*". She added, "*We were both women with a European air*".

*and allure and perfect mastery of the French language*". They have both agreed that speaking French had enabled them to smuggle letters in the police checkpoints, and to order an ice-cream in the Milk bar.

### **2.4.3. National identity**

Anderson (2006:6) defines a nation as "An imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign". This means that communities exist, but their members have never seen each other, and they imagine their sovereign state due to other means. For example, nations under political submission dream of freedom and a sovereign state.

Anderson (2006) points out that the term nationalism is sociocultural, as everyone has, or will have a nationality. He also suggested that nationalism should be regarded from a cultural perspective. According to Anderson (2006), a nation is well understood when it stretches to religion and culture. He regards that religious communities have different experiences from imagined communities, because these communities have confidence in their languages. The language they share is written in texts, which they regard as unique and sacred. In this context, nationalism is inherent, as people before the colonising period, spoke their language 'Arabic', and they practised their membership to the community through Islam.

In addition, women's nationalism is linked to Anderson's definition, which presents nationalism as inherit and sovereign. This means that women's agency is reinforced by their resistance against oppression and imposed assimilation policies which aimed to deconstruct their linguistic repertoire, and their religion. Resistance assisted these women to imagine the independence of Algeria.

Another point that can be a factor which reinforces women's nationalism is torture and women's rape. Zohra expressed, "*The women's accounts, far from discouraging us, strengthened our determination to confront the Europeans and their colonial system*". According to Lazreg (1994:255), "Torture was meant to rebuild the native 'suspect' or combatant from the ground up in a psychological action based on sex, masculinity and femininity". In some historical studies, the use of torture is explained as a terror to others (DuBois, 1991). However, in the Algerian case, torture did not cease women's acts, but it gained value of resistance.

To sum up, Zohra Drif's memoir represents a reconstruction of women's experience. Her agency was depicted from the goals she desired before, and increasingly during, her studies at

University. Pursuing her learning at university was an important context which helped her to become a revolutionary. She presented herself and other fellows as women of determination. Women's roles in the war differed, they hid the guerrillas; they treated their injuries, they cooked their food and ironed their clothes. They also accompanied men to move between places. They transmitted envelopes and arms in market baskets and under the veil, and they eventually placed bombs. These roles enabled them to reach equal status with men as they performed similar duties (Rohloff, 2012).

## **2.5. Post-independence**

This section presents discussions on language policy, education and women's activism during the rule of four presidents; Ahmed Ben Bella 1963-1965, Houari Boumedienne 1965-1978, Chadli Bendjdid 1979-1992, and Abd El Aziz Bouteflika 1999, till the present time. This review also covers the civil war in the 1990s, and its influence on women. It also shows how women in Algeria go about developing agency through learning.

### **2.5.1. Ahmed Ben Bella (1963-1965)**

Soon after independence, Ben Bella was elected as president of the country. His period of presidency was the shortest among these four presidents. He initiated educational reforms which were based on institutionalising language policies in the area of education. This reform was based on improving literacy, and promoting Arabic to replace French, and to place Arabic over Berber. This policy had a cultural intention, which was to combine Berber and Arabic to create a 'national identity' (Maamri, 2009). He attempted to make Arabic the language of instruction of school subjects. Arabic became mandatory in schools. Education was free, and men and women had similar learning opportunities. However, there was not sufficient employment for illiterate women, and some of them had lost their husbands in the war and needed income to bring up their children. Therefore, these women worked long hours in low-paid jobs (Vince, 2015). Women who had fought for independence believed that the FLN movement after independence did not act as in the revolution. For this reason, women remained active in both the social and the political spheres (Lazreg, 1994). In 1963, the first feminist movement called The National Union of Algerian Women (UNFA) was formed with three objectives (Cheriet, 2004):

- The emancipation of women,
- The participation of women in political life for the construction of the country,
- Social protection of the mother, the infant and the disabled.

This union was conceived as an autonomous space for defending women's rights. Interestingly, Salima Bouaziz, a former activist in the FLN, in 1962 expressed her disappointment with the UNFA, which according to her was subservient to the FLN (Vince, 2015).

### **2.5.2. Houari Boumedienne (1965-1978)**

Houari Boumedienne served as a president of the country from 1965 to 1978. Similar reforms were still carried out by him. However, he re-established the language policy in a more radical way than Ben Bella. He imposed the use of Arabic in all sectors: administration and in schools (Maamri, 2009). He adapted the principles of the Arabisation policy following Ibn Baddis' earlier 'ULAMA' movement (See Section 2.3) which was perceived as a construct of modern Algerian social nationalism. Kramsch and Widdowson (1998) claim that language is bound up with culture, and that language is a way of expressing the self to be differed from the other. In this context, the other was the coloniser. This could be related to Boumedienne's attempt at imposing the Arabisation policy to make Algeria an Arab country that should speak Arabic to gain linguistic power (Benrabeh, 2007). Hence, education was a way for reconstructing both cultural and linguistic identities by establishing Arabic as the sole official language, although not representing Algeria's linguistic diversity, as it ignored Berber speakers (Briggs, 2010).

In Boumedienne's period, the implementation of the process of Arabisation took several forms. In the 1970s, he recruited monolingual teachers from the Arab countries, such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq (Salhi, 2002; Benrabeh, 2007). From 1976 there was a succession of Ministers of Education who alternated between proposing literary Arabic and French as languages of instruction in Primary and Secondary schools. In 1976, Arabic was implemented under a Fundamental School system, which fused primary and middle school grades. This system consisted of nine consecutive years. All school subjects were taught in Arabic, except foreign languages (French and English). In 1977, another Minister of Education was appointed; he suspended the Fundamental School system, and he encouraged bilingual education, in which primary school scientific subjects such as math and biology were taught in French (Le Roux, 2017).



### **2.5.3. Chadli Bendjdid (1979-1992)**

Chadli Bendjdid governed the country from 1979 to 1992. In 1979, the Ministry of Education re-instated Arabic as the language of instruction, and teaching French was therefore delayed until the fourth grade in primary school. Hence, French became the first foreign language and English the second foreign language. In 1979, syllabus designers were permitted to flexibly include a variety of contents and this brought Islamic education lessons into the curricula (Benrabeh, 2007). The Arabisation policy was carried out without amendments. Although at university, social sciences (history, literature and law) were taught in literary Arabic, 95% of undergraduate and postgraduate scientific courses such as medicine and technology were taught in French. Therefore, there was a shortage of resources in Arabic, and these students had limited job and vocational opportunities. Lack of job opportunities precipitated a civil war in 1990s (See Section, 2.5.5).

Women also had concerns in this period. The ‘Moujahidat’ movement appeared in 1980s. They used this name which means ‘women fighters’ to define their political activism. Women of this movement were both revolutionary veterans and young women campaigners, such as Khalida Tumi (ex-Minister of Communication). Revolutionary veterans aimed to invest their social and historical experiences, alongside younger campaigners, to raise the issue of gender equality. In the 1980s this movement gained nine seats in the National Assembly (Ruedy, 2005). They suggested to the FLN that they needed to participate in drawing up changes to the Family Code. In 1981, these women organised a public demonstration, asking the government to consider their consultation on this code. In 1982, they presented their six demands as follows:

- Ending polygamy,
- Unconditional right to work,
- Equal division of the common family property,
- Equal age of work for women and men,
- Identical conditions of divorce for men and women,
- Protection of unwed mothers and their children.

### **2.5.4. A Review of the first three presidential periods**

Ben Bella, Boumedienne and Chadli aimed at re-establishing a national identity through language-in-education. They implemented an Arabisation policy in education to enable

students to learn Literary Arabic. They also intended that language would solve the issue of national identity (Salhi, 2013). From a socio-political point of view, Stone (1997) argues that the status of language in Algeria is the essential, ideological, social, psychological issue that relates people to find out about their identity. Benrabeh (2010:75) defines this policy as “Identity planning through language planning”. As a result, the disregard of Berber and Arabic that people speak created complex educational conditions and an identity crisis. On the one hand, Berberophones (speakers of Tamazight language) wanted their language to be an official language. Francophones, who speak French, wanted it to dominate Arabic. Arabophones supported Arabic as a language of Islam that can contribute to raising linguistic-nationalism.

In the sections above, there was an explanation of how the Arabisation policy was conducted through education; it is worth presenting in this section the consequences of implementing this policy. By the late 1970s, the Arabisation policy began to show its failure in several forms. It had inadvertently maintained the languages that it had intended to eliminate (French and Berber) (Benrabeh, 2007). It created a linguistic conflict which would precipitate a civil war in the 1990’s (See Section 2.5.5). Arabic was implemented immediately after independence in schools. Arguably, the French culture had deep effects on the Algerian society, and bilingualism had become a fact (Le Roux, 2017). In Arabic, the accents of those teachers recruited abroad were incompatible with the literary form that Algeria needed to improve literacy. Moreover, it was different from people’s daily languages, since there were at least three languages in use: the dialect forms of Arabic, Berber and French. The teachers recruited from the Arab countries mentioned earlier were not always qualified with teaching expertise or training. Benrabeh (2004) argues that the civil war in the 1990s had its ideological roots from the Egyptian ‘Muslim Brotherhood’ movement, as some of these teachers focused on teaching extensive Islamic principles. This had supported the foundation of the anti-government Islamic movement in Algeria. At the educational level, Maamri (2009) claims that teachers believed that students were not competent in either language Arabic or French, and that those students who spoke French regarded the students who studied in Arabic as being more conservative.

Learning conditions between 1965 and 1978 were equally distributed for men and women, as both had access to universities. During the 1980s to 1990s, there was an unstable socio-

economic situation, whose impact was twofold: on the economy and on education. There was a heavy reliance on oil as the sole source of income for Algeria. Consequently, the dependency on this economic resource led to a crisis in the 1980s due to a dramatic fall in oil prices. In the 1980's, the government hosted British and American teachers to support teacher training in English in Algeria, and then they provided scholarships to the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Nevertheless, due to massive violence between 1990 and 1999 (See Section 2.5.5) these British and American teachers had to leave the country, which in turn negatively affected the status of English in Algeria (Belmihoub, 2018).

In the mid 1990s, the Ministry of National Education wanted to revive the status of English in the Algerian education. Hence, the Minister of Education proposed an experimental program which intended to start teaching English in the fourth grade of primary school on the same par as French. However, some pupils' parents believed that French is the language related to modernity and knowledge. This program failed, and French remained the sole language taught after Arabic in primary schools (Benrabeh, 2007; Belmihoub, 2018). Then, English remained the second foreign language after French (Le Roux, 2017).

### **2.5.5. Civil war**

During the presidency of Chadli, there was a myriad of socio-economic issues, such as the lack of employability chances and economic crisis. For instance, youth unemployment was suggested to be a result of accelerating Arabisation at schools, which led to fewer opportunities for the educated young workforce. French speakers in Algeria had access to international employment, unlike young Arabic speakers who found themselves unemployed (Lazarus, 2010). The accumulation of these issues had driven young people to protest on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1988. They urged the government to move from the mono-party system of the FLN which had held power since independence to a multi-party system.

At this period, there was also a rise of fundamental ideas on Islam which led to the formation of Islamic Fundamentalist Salvation (FIS) group. In 1991, the FLN and FIS had competed for two rounds of legislative elections (Martinez, 2000). FIS gained more seats than the FLN in the first round of voting, and the second round could take place, the army cancelled the election process considering FIS as a threat to the ruling power. In 1992 Chadli was removed from office, replaced by Mohamed Boudiaf, but he was assassinated after six months of his presidency. The cancellation of the elections had led to the beginning of the civil war. The

country lost its political security, and violence confronted the people and the government (Vince, 2015). The Family code had also an indirect support to this group (FIS). Both the government and FIS had supplied non-equal rights for men and women which made many unemployed youths joined FIS.

The FIS carried out violence acts against the regime, and particularly on women (Willis, 1996). Women's situation was worsened in the 1990s. They suffered extremely fierce violence, in addition to the rape of young women, kidnapping, hijacking public buses in roadblocks and killing veiled and unveiled women heading towards their workplaces. Many of these women were targeted because they worked outside the home. Women working was against their Islamic agenda which wanted women to be the guardians of the tradition (Geesey, 2000).

According to Vriens (2009), the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), a more militant group, emerged after the cancellation of the national elections in 1992. The GIA was composed of unemployed youth, criminals and trained fighters who had fought against the Soviets in the 1979-1989 war in Afghanistan. It dominated the country and attempted to eradicate the government's system and put in place a Sharia law (a system based on Islamic principles). GIA was more radical than FIS. In 1995, lists of the names of women activists selected to be killed were stuck on the doors of Mosques. This demonstrates that women were the first victim of the fundamentalists (Flood, 2017). Violence culminated in the civil war and took the lives of 150,000 people (Martinez: 2000).

To sum up, according to Hannoune (2010), FIS emerged as a political force that aimed at defending the Islamic principles. Therefore, their competition for power had led to the implementation of their interpretations of Islam. Both parts the government and the FIS shared similar perceptions about world modernity and women's domestication. They both scrutinised women's agency with regards to their fear of losing the social attitudes representing the Algerian women; they believed that bringing religious principles into power would conserve the traditional roles of Algerian women. The politicisation of Islam shows that religion is considered to be the cause of gender inequality, and that Islam is against modernity. In most of the modernist perspectives, women are conceived either as oppressed or as victims, and governed by men (Lazreg, 1994). Women's agency in this context is

presented as an outcome of submission and resistance against the FIS agenda, and the government's laws.

In response to the fundamentalists' ideology, a growing body of feminist movements seeking to defend women's rights as full citizens of the society emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (Flood, 2017). In April 1990, the women's associations in the cities of Algiers and Boumerdes cities sent a delegation to ask the government to ensure security for women citizens (Bouatta, 1997). There were other women's organisations supported by international unions, such as the 'Collectif 95 Maghreb Egalite' in 1992. This union comprised of women from Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, in addition to women from the United Nation Commission of Human Rights which supported them to talk about their struggles. Another organisation that defended women in Algeria was 'Women Living under Muslim Law' (WLUML). This organisation sent letters to the regime to urge the protection of women from FIS. Although FIS undermined women's voices in the 1990s, they carried out their activism till the Family Code was revisited in 2005, and women's rights were changed.

#### **2.5.6. Abd El Aziz Bouteflika (1999-till the present)**

Towards the end of the civil war, Abd El Aziz Bouteflika became president of the country. The language issue became considered more flexibly. He reintroduced French as the first foreign language for teaching science and maths in schools (Benrabah, 2007) and English was introduced in 2005 as a second foreign language taught from the first year in middle school. After 1999, reforms in education recognised the varieties of language in Algeria which opened the door to a linguistic plurality in which individuals' differences ought to be accepted. The National Commission for the Reform of the Educational System (CNRSE) introduced educational reforms in 2002 and recommended that French should be taught in primary schools to students from the age of six. This shows that the implementation of language-in-education had differed between Bouteflika and Ben Bella. Unlike Bouteflika, in 1962 Ben Bella had favoured the teaching of Arabic to students beginning from age 5 to 6 (Bennoune, 2002). This difference of policy reflects differences between 1962 and 1999. For instance, Ben Bella's government believed that Arabic represented liberation because it freed the people from the domination of French. In this context, Djite (1992:16) says that "Arabic is the language of liberation". However, in Bouteflika's government, French was regarded as a language of globalisation and modernisation (Benrabeh, 2005).

The status of English has also changed since 2000s, as Bouteflika launched the LMD as an educational reform (See Section 1.2) that can cope with the advent of globalisation and the new free market economy. Hence, English is now taught from the first year in middle school rather than from the second year. Mami (2013) states that the Ministry of National Education (2006) announced that learning English in high schools should enable students to cross-culturally engage with English speakers and to have exchanges in different scientific areas. For this, two teaching approaches were successively adopted at schools: the Communicative Approach and the Competency-Based Approach (CBA). The former is based on communicative skills that enable pupils to acquire a native-like accent language and to grasp the target culture. This approach was set to improve English Language Teaching (ELT) in Algeria in terms of syntax and pronunciation so that students would have access to higher education in English. The Communicative approach was replaced with CBA which focused on treating learners as leaders of their learning process. This process of learning requires teachers to be facilitators of the content of their courses and to manage time for communicative activities (Mami, 2013).

English has also attracted successful academics in different fields to improve their English skills in order to publish their research works. In 2003, 48% of research papers, in Algeria were published in English in comparison to 37% that were published in French (Slougui, 2009). Slougui (2009) argues that Algerian scientists need English language proficiency to meet with the requirements of international publications. English has become associated with modernity and is gradually replacing French due to media, internet and technology.

## **2.6. Definitions of women's agency**

This section defines the concept of agency in the context of Algerian women after independence. This concept has been much debated. For Meyers and Elliot (1995) women's agency is associated with their autonomy. They supported their definition of autonomy or self-autonomy by criticising domesticity of women. They argued that domestic tasks can limit the social competences that women can perform outside their homes. Hence, women will acquire a sense of powerlessness which then prevents them from developing their self-esteem, and make them underestimate their abilities of production outside their homes spheres. Meyers and Elliot explained that autonomy is disqualified and limited with social activities, but they emphasised on showing that it can be developed as competency.

However, the concept of autonomy was viewed in a negative way to discuss the meaning of individual's agency. For example, women at work should follow rules which are put by their job leaders which are set by their superiors. For this, Abrams (1999) regarded agency as 'collective' and not individual as opposed to autonomy. She elucidated that women resist when they are in oppressive contexts. Abrams suggested that autonomy adds a new theoretical framework of agency as self-definition and self-direction. Self-definition is about women's awareness of how they are constituted by the social norms or practices. Women become aware of these embedded norms which are formed particularly as a performance of gender. Therefore, their awareness can also enable them to reinterpret the attitudes of how they see themselves, and how they are perceived by others. The following stage of this process is that they decide to affirm or to resist these norms, to modify the attitudes that are found in their social environment.

Self-direction is about individuals' abilities to define their personal goals. For example, if women become aware that their rights are expropriated by the institution, they reflect on their constraints and they set their own goals. In the same vein, feminist constructivists argue that women seeking self-direction are not always involved in changing the institution (social norms), but they aim to transform their own reflections about it to retain their goals (Abrams, 1999). Self-definition and self-direction are explained in this context to show how women can challenge their internal perceptions to achieve their goals. These definitions of women's agency provide a significant context to the socio-political activism of both UNFA and The Mujahidat members who were academics, students, workers and union representatives. Their demands were based on ensuring equality between men's and women's rights in family, education, and employment (Vince, 2015). This demonstrates that they were aware of the embedded social norms and the attitudes of both the FLN and FIS which aimed to constrain their roles in different time periods. For Bouatta (1997) education and employment are measures of women's socialization. As for Abrams (1999) socialization of individuals is regarded in relation to other social activities. To conclude, although women after independence – including the civil war period – had encountered many challenges, these activists were also contributors in nation-building, and defending women's issues in Algeria (Vince, 2015).

### **2.6.1. Women's agency in education**

Identity is an umbrella term that covers social statuses and positions (Deters, 2011). The poststructuralist view regards individuals' identities as fragmented and discontinuous (Davies, 1991). Nevertheless, individuals' desires to change their statuses in the social institution can lead them to position themselves differently, as their investment in the social practices can create a process of continuity of their experiences (Davies, 1991). A good example of this explanation is taken from a learning context in Algeria in the research conducted by Boumarafi (2015) about adult women who could not join the higher education institution due to their weak learning backgrounds. These women were given opportunities to enrol in a college community to pursue their studies. The three main reasons that led these women to carry on their studies were: to increase their self-confidence through learning, to gain new skills and knowledge, and to increase their employment opportunities for any unforeseen future (Boumarafi, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, agency could refer to self-direction, it also can be termed as empowerment, and education is used as a ground to explain women's empowerment. Agency is about 'making choices' (Davies, 1991), and developing a sense of empowerment which moves the conceptual framework of agency from awareness to action (Stromquist, 2015). Education is concerned with women's empowerment in the modern society. In Algeria, women are gradually developing agency through education in general, and in learning English in particular (See Section 6.3). For instance, in 2000, 70.43% of the students in Humanities were women, and 21.68% of the students in mechanical engineering were women (Campbell, 2016). This indicates that women favoured social sciences, as engineering was considered as a male field. The case in foreign languages is slightly different from scientific majors. Benrabah (2014) said that the number of students enrolled in English departments in Algeria has dramatically increased. For example, in 2006, around 100 students enrolled in English at Bougara University in Boumerdes. However, at the same university in 2016, the rate of enrolled students increased to 2000 (Belmihoub, 2018). According to Education Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (2012) in higher education including public and academic institutions in Algeria, 40% of graduate students are males, and 60% are females. Another example is from Tlemcen University in Algeria, whose students were participants of primary research conducted for this thesis. For example, 167 students met the requirement for accessing the Masters course in 2017/2018 academic year in the English department, among



them 72% were women and 28% were men (Tlemcen University website, 2018). This shows that women are more interested than men in studying English.

Women's empowerment through education can also be associated with their access to the labour market. For instance, in 2013 the Algerian National Office of Statistics (NOS) showed that the percentage of men employed without a diploma is 59.5%, and 6.6% are women. However, the rate of women employed with Higher Education grades is 58.1%, and 77.5% are men. Women found in the labour market rely heavily on their educational grades. In the Public Justice Sector, in 2017 the number of men is 2,884, and 1,118 are women. These percentages refer to the inequality between gender chances of employability (NOS, 2017).

It is projected that by 2025 there will be a worldwide need of 17.8 million primary school teachers and 33.5 million secondary teachers (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2016). According to the UN, Algeria is one of the countries that managed to close the gap in teachers' recruitment. However, there is still a need to increase recruitment as the country is experiencing an exponential growth in school-age population. In relation to my research on EFL women's experiences, it is valuable to acknowledge their choices through learning English for achieving future teaching positions. These statements motivate my research to explore this group of EFL students who plan to improve their language skills to become teachers and academics (See Section 6.4).

## **2.7. An Overview on Tlemcen social context**

Tlemcen is a city located in the north west of Algeria. It had several names; historically it was called *Pomaria* and *Tagrat*. It was occupied by the Arabs in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> C. It is 700 KM from Algiers. It has a population of 140,158, and it includes 53 towns, with a total area 9.061sq kms. It is known for its olive plantations, and the mixed cultural ground of Arabic, Islamic, Berbers, and Andalusian descendants. The city was the capital of the Ziyamid dynasty, which lasted three centuries. The *medina* which means a city is recognised as one of the Islamic cities for its historical heritage. In 1236, it was called the kingdom of Tlemcen before it was occupied by the Ottoman empire in 1554.

Historically there were two main ethnic groups who co-existed in the city: Hadars (the Moors), and the Kouloughli (descendants of Arab women married with the Turks). According to Roberts (1983), the bourgeoisie class in Tlemcen in the pre-colonial and during the colonial

period consisted of three groups: the first group was the remnants of the old, or the bourgeoisie of the colonial era, the second group was the descendants of the old tribal nobility such as military (*Jouad*) and religious people (*Chorfa*). The third group was the detribalised peasants who had French education to make their social mobility in rural areas.

After independence, president Boumedienne pursued a socialist system (1967-1978) to disempower any formation of social classes. Education was a factor that positioned people in one social stratum, which included managerial jobs, or government employees who became politicians, or civil servants. Roberts (1983) defines that the bourgeoisie class did not refer to the ruling class, rather it depended on its economic activity through its relationship with the government. They had to move through a political mobility to be able to preserve their economic power.

Few studies in sociology have been conducted about social class in Algeria, let alone about Tlemcen. The middle class in Algeria has been affected by the economic crisis in 1986, which led the government to shift to free market system. This shift created a social mobility, and disadvantaged the middle class (Zitoun, 2013). Following Metz (1994), in Algeria the middle class includes professionals such as teachers, physicians, artisans and shopkeepers. Urbanized working class consists of workers in transportations, public and private services, and construction. Unemployed or rural class includes groups of people who lack job skills due to lack of education, and they are usually landowners.

In Algeria, the middle class represents 52% in a population of 42 million. Its group is estimated to receive from 200 to 600 dollars per month (Kahal, 2016). The living situation of this class is characterised by the income of its population, and the number of educated people. However, salaries in Algeria for the middle class is less than the consumption of the market products (Kahal, 2016). Derras (2011) found that professional mobility in 2010 is marked by an increase of 33.4%. Derras' research is a recent study which defines three groups that derivate from the *middle class* from 1986-2000. (1) A satisfied group, which is translated from French as 'groupe aisé': it includes a group of people who could join the higher class. (2) middle group includes people who attempt to preserve their social position. (3) A popular class is a group of people who are poor or earn a minimum wage. Derras found that 38% of the popular group could move to the middle group, and 26.6% of the middle group could move to the satisfied group. However, the higher demand of employment in comparison with the number of graduated students has limited the middle class with vocational jobs in the last

20 years (Derras, 2011). This class lacks job stability and their social mobility became more restricted.

Tlemcen city has witnessed different changes in its infrastructure, thus some of the social factors are discussed in this section to present the characteristics of this city. There are several forms of housing; social housing is occupied by low-income groups, and it is supported by the public treasury. Social covalent housing is occupied by middle income-groups, the government offers subsidy, and the beneficiary pays for the remaining amount. The economic status of Tlemcen is based on its geographical location, which facilitates trade through the coastal areas such as Ghazaouet and Beni Saf. These maritime zones facilitate exchanges with Europe. The agriculture is based on crops, dairy, and fruits which are exported to adjacent countries through ports and airport. The people are talented with handcrafts, such as leather, silk, and textile production. The crafts support the economic status of the city; men and women weave traditional clothes which are worn in wedding ceremonies, and events.

The university of Tlemcen gained its university status in 1989, however, it was established as a University Centre in 1974. Education in Algeria is free, therefore Tlemcen university is public. It hosts 48,870 students, and 568 international students. There are 89.9% undergraduate students, and 10.1% postgraduate students. The subjects taught in the university are: engineering and technology, life sciences (biology, agriculture, forestry, and veterinary), arts and humanities (history, languages, literature, design, performing art, philosophy, theology, and archaeology), law, physical sciences (physics, astronomy, mathematics and statistics), education, social sciences (politics and international studies), psychology, business and economics (accounting, finance, econometrics, management), and computer science (The world university ranking, 2020). In addition, there are two national schools: preparatory school of applied sciences, and preparatory school of commerce and management. Schools (primary, middle and secondary schools) are all public, and the main city has three private primary schools only. This means that most of the families send their children to public schools, as the annual fee of the private school remains higher for people's affordances.

## **2.8. Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to set a background that introduced the setting of this research. It presented the history of Algeria in three main periods: pre-colonial era, revolutionary era and independence until now. Part one built on history with regard to a discussion about girls'

education in the pre-colonial period. Part two involved details about the revolutionary period, and the continuation of the civilising mission not only through education, but also culture and religion. It also reviewed the role of women during this period, and the relationship between women and education which has reinforced their agency to act against the imperial power. Part three concerned language policies, social reforms, women in the civil war, and their involvement in different sectors. The general aim of this chapter was to discuss the key concepts used in this research from colonial and postcolonial perspectives. It reviewed how Algerian women experience social constraints practised by colonialism. It also discussed how they were inhibited to perform their social and cultural roles during the civil war. All of these periods played a crucial role which has contributed to reinforcing their national identity.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This literature review presents a synthesis of the sociocultural theory, and its theoretical perspective in relation to language learning, agency, investment, and imagined identity. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one discusses these concepts and reviews the findings of previous studies related to language learners' identities in ESL/EFL learning. Part two discusses the theoretical framework which has used the concepts above with teaching approaches; such as experiential learning, scaffolding, and process writing. It also presents how process writing and peer-feedback have been conducted through narrative writing.

### **3.2. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural approach**

The sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) serves as an essential theoretical framework for researching language learning, equally, research into identity is informed by this theory. Sociocultural theory provides an understanding about the relationship between the social and the individual practices (Norton, 2000). Piaget presented his theory of a child's development as pre-coded and genetic. Vygotsky's theory differed from Piaget's, arguing that children can use their 'silent inner speech' when they receive no speech from their environment. Vygotsky has also regarded the use of the inner speech as a problem-solving approach. He proposed that children construct the meaning of the world through the aid and cooperation of other people around them. He viewed that children develop their cognitive skills through social interaction, which is connected to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Storch, 2007).

The term scaffolding was first used by Bruner (1983), as an outcome of Vygotsky's work. Scaffolding refers to various forms of supportive assistance (Amerian and Mehri, 2014). This is an application within pedagogic action, it happens in a learning environment which makes use of the ZPD to aid learning through interaction. As a practical activity, scaffolding can occur between adults and children, between more able adults and less able adults, or between teachers and learners (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). This practice aims to develop learners' cognitive skills and to enable them to solve problems in a later stage with less or without assistance when the scaffold is no longer needed (Aubrey and Riley, 2016). Scaffolded assistance has also been used with the approach to teaching writing skills known as 'process writing'. Flower and Hayes (1981) highlighted that writing is a cognitive process that focuses on thinking and problem solving. Within this view on writing, process writing models have

been proposed in teaching. However, these models usually focused on the individual's cognition and neglected the social interaction (Kent, 1999).

Initially, the teaching of writing became unidirectional, in which scaffolding was given from an expert 'the teacher' to learners, as in product writing (See Section 3.7), hence scaffolding in this way was incorporated into traditional teaching approaches. In the new reconceptualization of scaffolding, as introduced by Donato (1994), it is seen as a mutual activity, explaining how two learners can scaffold one another. From this perspective, scaffolding was shown to be mutual - two learners scaffold each other in a task, and they can also speak as one voice to present what they discussed together. This change in the source of scaffolding support refers to peer-interaction (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Subsequently this social view of scaffolding as a bidirectional interaction was applied in process writing. The relationship between teachers and learners became more collaborative than instructional. To exemplify, scaffolding was supported either by teachers' feedback or peer-feedback in process writing (See Section 3.8.1). This implies that scaffolding enhances knowledge construction (See Section 3.8), as learners scaffold each other in classroom through peer-interaction (See Section 3.8.1) and through blog peer-feedback (See Section 4.9).

In the context of learning and identity construction, Wenger (1998) asserts that collaborative writing involves individuals in a mutual engagement/interaction which allows them to develop a sense of identity. This implies that identity is socially and culturally constructed by language in learning contexts. Based on sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), some research findings indicated that identities are reconstructed by individuals' themselves, by others' perceptions, or by other social practices (Holland Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 1998). From a psychological point of view, Thorne and Lantolf (2006) suggest that learners through their interaction with the social environment develop their cognitive activity, therefore, they become able to make personal choices based on their past experiences (Crossan, 2003). This therefore links to the idea of agency (See Section 3.4). Lave and Wenger (1991) explain that learning integrates individuals in social practices. As an example of these social practices, Davies (2007) found that ethnicity is the main factor that influences the social identity of learners. Other researchers were more flexible, and they related identity reconstruction to effects of behaviour, culture, and religion (Rich and Troudi, 2006). Norton (2000) argues that these factors 'categorise' people based on their nationalities and religions. Thus, most

conclusions on these influencing factors agree that identity is multi-faceted, contradictory and complex.

Adapting sociocultural theory in this study was supported by the view that scaffolding enables students to express themselves in an experienced-centred narrative (See Section 3.7). Engaging students in writing their personal narratives aimed to encourage, and hence to understand their reflection on their experiences (See Section 3.7.1). This thesis focused on understanding the students' sociocultural backgrounds and how they interpret their personal experiences through learning English. The sociocultural activities undertaken by participants in this research combine at least two institutional aspects which are family and education. Both family and education represent influential social environments that can shape learners' self-images (Warriner, 2010; Norton, 2006) (See Sections 3.4.2, and 3.4.3).

### **3.3. Bakhtin's dialogism**

The sociocultural theory offers a broad connection between learning and the social context. However, Harvey (2014) argues that L2 researchers have not yet offered a theoretical framework that views learners as whole, and the complex relationship between their personal and social development, and this could be because of the lack of research on the concept of 'learning identity' (See Coll and Falsafi (2010) in section 1.7.1).

Bakhtin's (1981) theory of dialogism views that language is social and ideological. Language always involves the self and its relationship with the other. Dialogism is a philosophy which has emphasis on the utterance. He criticised Saussure's definition of language as a fixed system of grammatical and phonetic rules and forms which individuals have no control over. He argued that language is not rule-bound and neutral, rather it is a *dialogue*, which is dynamic and populated with the intentions of others. Holquist in his writing about dialogism (1990: 28) defines that a dialogue "...includes the utterance, a reply, and a relation between the two". An utterance is always a response to a situation that is itself conditioned by another response of others. It is produced by its immediate situation, in a specific time and space (Voloshinov, 1981). The meaning of an utterance can only be understood in that particular context. This means that language aspects such as grammar and phonetics rules can be explained through the individual's voluntarily intentions that are contributed as utterances. However, an utterance is not a completely individual act, as it is influenced by the utterances that it has interacted with. An utterance is not only what the speaker said to the listener: it is



active; it resolves a problem; it evaluates a conclusion for the present, or extends action for the future (Holquist, 1990).

The relation between the utterance and the reply is the source of meaning-making, and this supports Bakhtin's point that the 'I' does not exist in its own, but it is in a connection with 'otherness'. Individuals' consciousness is raised as a result of the other's interaction with the self. Voloshinov (1986) agrees that consciousness is social and shared through a constant dynamic communication, and this agrees with Vygotsky's concept of 'inner speech'. Consciousness arises through discourse, which does not reflect a situation, it is a situation (Holquist, 1990: 63). Discourse enables the self to choose utterances from the other to appropriate them, to evaluate them, and to perform our identities through these choices (Bakhtin, 1981). This means that one's discourse is influenced by the other, which later begins to free themselves from the other's discourse (Bakhtin, 1981).

Bakhtin (1981) distinguished two discourses within a dialogue: authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse. He describes them in analogy with school learning and language learning. Authoritative discourse is a discourse of tradition, in the classroom, it is given by a teacher-as-expert. Its authority is acknowledged in the past, such as religious, parents, and scientific truth (Harvey, 2014). Participants often struggle against the degree of authority, thus this struggle occurs in what Bakhtin calls 'zone of contact', which makes participants feel bound, fixed, and might not be internally persuaded with its order (Freedman and Ball, 2004).

However, internally persuasive discourse is a discourse of personal narrative, it is open, contingent, and idiosyncratic (Morson, 2004). It is how we think of ourselves, and how we form our ideas which are internally persuasive for us (Freedman and Ball, 2004). Internally persuasive discourse is subject to change; each time it interacts with other discourses, it influences the individuals' consciousness and facilitates their ideological development. Thus, the dialogic interaction between these discourses enables individuals to develop their autonomous thinking, to take action, and thus 'ideological becoming' takes place (Harvey, 2014) (See section 3.5).

Using dialogues in education affords an opportunity for students to develop their own words from others. Bakhtin's approach of dialogism is conceived in the meaning of interaction that occurs between the teacher and the student, aiming at effectively developing and supporting their learning. Wegerif (2011) argues that a dialogue leads to improved thinking and enhanced

learning. Wegerif adds further that dialogue is a way of generating new perspectives and developing new meaning to learning. Meaning is constructed by the immediacy of bodies (physical, political), or bodies of ideas, which he referred to as ideologies.

One of Bakhtin's (1984:284) statements on the self and the other relation is "I am conscious of myself and become myself only while revealing myself for another, through another...". In this context, the dialogue has been used in this narrative research to find about how students construct meaning through the conversations they exchanged with their 'mentors' (teachers, family, and peers). The dialogue has also been employed as a social means to find about how the students discuss their social relations; how they develop their agency in past learning experiences, as they reflect on their social factors, and how these social factors supported them both in positive or negative ways.

Bakhtin was not interested in language learning, unlike Vygotsky there are a few studies that has used his theory in language learning/EFL research (Harvey, 2014). I have conducted a narrative research on learners' experiences, regarding how dialogues of the past are reflected in the present (See section 6.2.2). Also, how they contributed in constructing the students' agency in learning which potentially led for change and continuity in their learning.

### **3.4. From motivation to identity: theories in the context of second language (L2) learning**

Identity has been explained from different research perspectives. Within research into second language learning the starting point was Gardner's (1988) conceptualisation of motivation in learning suggesting intrinsic/extrinsic as two types of motivation. However, this theory failed to reveal the interaction between the social environment and the learner's identity. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) extended motivational theories to investigate different learning contexts, and they proposed the L2 Motivational Self System with the purpose to find about learners' reasons to study a second language. This system is based on the idea of *possible selves* how learners' future hopes and desires influence what they are doing in the present (Murray, 2011). These possible selves include three categories: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the L2 Learning Experience.

Firstly, the Ideal L2 self represents the ideal image the learner wants to have in the future which is related to language skills such as being fluent in English. Dörnyei, Csizér, and Németh (2006:92) define the Ideal L2 self as "A real image that the learner has attitudes

towards as an L2 Self. The more the learner is positive towards the L2 community, the more they can develop their Ideal L2 self”.

Secondly, the Ought-to L2 Self refers to what the learner wants to achieve as a target in order to avoid negative outcomes and to meet others’ expectations (for example from a mother, or a teacher). This can also possibly be linked to extrinsic motivation, an aspect of Gardner’s original theory. Intrinsic motivation refers to the individual’s act of completing an activity for fun or challenge, which means that it is driven by curiosity of the individual (Ryan and Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation is to complete an activity for an instrumental outcome. However, Norton and Toohey (2011) view that the concept of motivation disregarded the influence of the context and setting.

Thirdly, the L2 Learning Experience is contextualised as a target for improving language in a particular learning institution, i.e., it is concerned with the situated motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (Murray, 2011).

Harrison (2009) used the L2 Motivational System to study L2 learners’ reasons of learning languages. He investigated a 21 year old female undergraduate student at the University of Nottingham who spoke English as a first language, and German as her L2. Harrison found that this participant aimed to communicate with other speakers of German, and she had a desire to integrate into the L2 speaking community, in a way which Noels (2003) describes as an *integrative orientation*. Rajab, Far, and Etemadzadeh (2012) investigated the Ideal L2 Self to compare a group of first year and final year English learners at University in Iran. They found that first year learners aim through learning English to integrate with the target speaking community. However, the final year learners make efforts to learn L2 to achieve an ideal L2 Self. It is interesting that both groups demonstrate that they make efforts in their learning with a desire to integrate in the target-language community. Rajab *et al.* (2012) suggested that learners can establish an L2 identity as they progress in an L2 learning context. To evaluate this study, Rajab *et al.* (2012) used a questionnaire to conduct their study with 108 learners from two different learning levels. In contrast, the research project reported on in this thesis uses qualitative methods to get rich and deep data (See Section 4.4).

The results from Rajab *et al.* (2012) are similar to those reported by Ghapanchi, Khajavy, and Asadpour (2011) who found that achieving an Ideal L2 Self was the focal factor behind learners’ motivation in language learning. Learners who desire for an Ideal L2 Self become able to perform self-regulatory learning (Harrison, 2009). For example, Calvo (2015) suggests

that students with a strong Ideal L2 Self make efforts because they know their learning will lead them to achieve their ideal or future selves. This was supported by Kim and Kim (2014) who found that learners who can imagine themselves as future speakers of English tend to have a high achievement score.

However, Norton (1997) reported that there is no necessary relationship between learners' motivation in language learning and their academic success. The Ideal L2 Self model focused on learners' current reasons of learning English in order to explore how they intend to reconstruct their possible selves, hence are related to future-oriented identities. Nevertheless, the possible selves within the Ideal L2 Self model are limited to two periods, which are the present and the future. This means that learners are questioned about who they are and what they want to become. This implies that this theory did not fully explain how learners' past and present can reconstruct their future selves (Jeeves, 2013). Also, there is a lack of research on the relationship between both learners' past and present learning experiences and how they develop their future desires in L2 learning.

The study reported on in this thesis reflected on Norton's view that there is a relationship between the social environment and the learner's identity. There is ample research that revealed the factors that influence the development of L2 self-identity. However, there are few case studies that could demonstrate how these factors influence the reconstruction of learners' identities (Jeeves, 2013). The essence of Norton's (2000) argument is that learners' historical and social constructs have a relational impact on their learning of a target language. Based on Norton's argument, the current research aimed to find about how learners are affected by their past and present experiences that might contribute in developing their future becoming.

#### **3.4.1. Teachers and the social-emotional learning**

The social-emotional competence is a broad set of skills that enable children to express and understand their emotions for a lifelong process. As these skills are developed in an early age, they can be predictors of later positive learning outcomes (Goodman, Goodman, Joshi, Nasim, and Tyler, 2015). The social-emotional teaching theory refers to the cognitive, affective and behavioural abilities that are not captured with experimental tests; such as learners' attitudes, which are shaped and developed over time (Duckworth and Yeager, 2015). Effective teaching in children's early learning does not fade as they grow up, rather it can be of long-term benefit in children's education. In addition, early learning experiences can be

captured from learners' social and emotional competencies (Chetty, Friedman, Hilger, Saez, Schanzenbach, and Yagan, 2011). This theory is used, in this thesis, to understand about the students' learning process, particularly to explore the impact of the past experiences on the students' long-term learning.

McLaughlin, Aspden, and Clarke (2017) interviewed 24 teachers and found five key teaching practices that they used to support the children's social-emotional competence in classroom. These five practices are emotional literacy, social problem solving, calming down, social skills and friendship, and preventing/addressing challenging behaviour.

First, emotional literacy refers to the ability to understand ourselves and other people, and to be aware of how to use information about our emotions and the emotions of others (Sharp, 2012). Therefore, understanding these emotions can shape our actions. In early learning, children can acquire this skill when teachers promote a supportive environment that combines both teachers and learners to effectively express themselves and share their emotions (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). Emotional literacy increases individual's confidence, security and contentment (Burman, 2009). It also increases individual's contribution to the social sphere (Burman, 2009). It involves teachers' acknowledgment of children's feelings. As a practice, teachers can model their own feelings to teach children how they can recognise their feelings. Then, they revise their experiences with them to help them understand their reactions and possible responses for their future experiences.

Second, the ability to solve social problems is a skill which requires the development of children's understanding, communication, evaluating solutions, regulating emotions, and making choices (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). Teachers need to ensure that children have opportunities to express their social conflicts, and they need to support them to solve them through encouragement and guidance.

Third, calming down is to teach children to manage their intense feelings, and control and regulate emotional response. Regulation of children's emotions can be supported by making them feel secure and safe when they feel upset, and teachers need to comfort them. Also, teachers need to teach them to address their conflicted situations in the best time.

Fourth, social skills and friendships lie in teachers' roles to facilitate peer relationships, and make children understand the value of friendship. In this skill, children need opportunities to

practise forming and maintaining friendship. For example, this practice can be through teaching them proverbs to guide them when interacting with others (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017).

Fifth, prevent/address challenging behaviour might manifest either as aggression or withdrawal of children. Children's challenging behaviour might be a barrier to healthy social and emotional development. It might hinder their adjustment in school life, and later as adults (Dunlap, Strain, Fox, Carta, Conroy, Smith, Timm, McCart, and Sailor, 2006). Teachers need to consider factors that may involve children in challenging behaviour. Teachers, in this case, need to focus on more positive behaviour than inappropriate behaviour, instead of judging whether a child is good or bad (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). The key practices are presented, as they might be similar to the students' events and their relationships with their teachers in their past learning experiences. These practices might help to explain the students' self-interpretation of their events, and their emotions when they narrate about their early learning.

The term 'emotions' is used within the discourse of life-long learning (Burman, 2009). The learners' emotional states can either result in success, or acquisition block (Cohen and Norst, 1989). It is nowadays fused in education to study socialised emotions and its power relations with learning outcomes. Fear is an emotional attribute that can be derived from the learners' feelings of inadequacy, which might result in loss of their self-esteem (Cohen and Norst, 1989). Fear in learning contexts is identified when learners avoid doing their assignment or by quitting their courses. Teachers can use two strategies that enable learners to avoid failure in learning. First, fear appeal refers to the depiction of the learners' feelings of threats. Witte and Allen (2000) argue that fear appeal is identified with 'perceived threat' which refers to the degree to which individuals feel likely to experience threat. Teachers, in this case, can provide what is called 'perceived efficacy', such as talking to learners about how they can avoid threats in their learning, such as failure. Using this strategy motivates learners and engages them in tasks that enable them to succeed (Sprinkle, Hunt, and Comadena, 2006).

The relationship between fear and failure is engendered in learners' experiences (Martin, Marsh, and Debus 2003). Martin and Marsh (2001) reported that there are two categories that describe learners' fears of failure. First, learners who work hard to avoid the feeling of failure, and to succeed. This category entails learners who have a success orientation and failure avoidance. To attain success, they focus on two ways which are mastery of learning and skill development, emphasising effort and strategy. Second, learners who deal with their fear of

failure, aim to self-protect themselves from failure, and not necessarily to attain success. These learners set lower standards of success.

This research attempted to discuss the students' early learning, and teachers' support in the role of 'mentors'. I used the mentioned teaching practices found by McLaughlin *et al.* (2017) with adults, in this research to interpret how teachers contribute in the construction of the students' self-confidence and support their engagement in learning.

### **3.4.2. Family and reconstruction of L2 identities**

In the field of L2 learning, most current studies focused on international and immigrant learners' L2 identities in countries, such as Canada, United States, and Australia (Norton, 2000). However, Huang (2011) states that very few studies have been conducted on how EFL learners develop their identities in their home-country sociocultural contexts. Moreover, there is a limited amount of research that investigate the role of family and peers or teachers as social factors that can influence learners' identity and agency in learning. The main focus of this study is to investigate the different social, cultural and learning factors that triggered the re/construction of second year women learners in their EFL learning contexts.

Pizzolato (2006) highlights that family is the primary influence on individuals' identities. Harrison (2009) used the concept of *social pressure* to describe his participant who mentioned that her father was the person who encouraged her during her learning. In a similar vein, Pizzolato (2006) conducted a study with twenty-eight college learners in Midwestern University. She used interviews. Pizzolato (2006) found that family and peers are two factors that enable learners to balance their individual desires. Also, the family is regarded as the primary social source that makes learners aware about education and its relationship with their future academic and professional success. Therefore, these learners were encouraged by their parents at a younger age about three aspects: first, they identified 'feared possible selves', such as being teenage mothers. Second, they constructed their hoped-for possible selves (for example, to become a doctor). Third, as a result, their hoped-for possible selves would enable them to achieve academic success and prevent their feared possible selves. To sum up, Pizzolato found that learners whose parents encouraged them were able to overcome the discrepancy in their possible selves (fears). One of the limitations of Pizzolato's study was the use of interviews, which she herself concluded as an unreliable method which prevented her to deeply explore learners' past events. This implies that there is not a clear explanation

about the link between the past, the present and the future in previous studies on learners' identity development.

Another research has been conducted by Sa'd and Hatam (2017) with forty-five male Iranian EFL learners. They used focus group interviews to discuss three main aspects: learners' definitions of identity, the importance of identity, and the effect of foreign language learning on the reconstruction of one's identity. One of the main themes that the learners highlighted was the role of people in reconstructing their L2 identities. The results showed that 36 learners agreed that family and peers can have an effect on their identity reconstruction; five learners said family and peers hold beliefs that would be negative; three learners mentioned that their parents and peers might fluctuate between contradictory and mixed feelings, and one participant did not have an idea about this issue (Sa'd and Hatam, 2017).

Sa'd and Hatam (2017) highlighted that family and peers could be identified as influencing social factors on the reconstruction of EFL learners' identities. However, their study did not show why the majority of the learners believed that their parents and peers contributed in shaping their identity. To further discuss this theme, in the current research, the role of 'mentors' is suggested to discuss how people contribute students' learning experiences. In addition, noting that the findings from Sa'd and Hatam (2017), were quantitatively reported, and they further supported by the use of focus group interviews to capture the participants' experiences. The current research used focus group discussions, supported by written narratives to triangulate the findings to better understand the impact of both home and school in reshaping the students' identities in learning.

### **3.4.3. Events and transition in the reconstruction of L2 identities**

Other researchers showed that not only people can have influence on learners' identities, but also events that occur can have impacts on learners' identities. A Masters thesis research conducted by Romo (2015) illustrates that Kirsi, a Finnish girl, experienced two events that changed her perceptions towards learning English. At school, she was not motivated to learn English because she did not like her English teacher. The first event that Kirsi recounted was about her trips with her friends and family. She said that she relied on them as she did not speak English. The second event was her struggle in speaking English in her workplace. Due to these two events, she enrolled in an English course. She gained support from her family and friends, and as she found her friend attending the same course, she stated that she enjoyed her learning (Romo, 2015). This new experience overcame Kirsi's past learning experience,



when her English teacher negatively influenced her towards English. Either experiences of failure or success can have impacts on how learners see themselves (Papi, 2012; Islam, Lamb, and Chambers, 2013; Calvo, 2015). However, both events created a new desire of learning English. In line with this research, in the present study, ‘marks’ (See Section 1.7.4) is suggested as another theme that entails an understanding of how students’ previous experiences can be an influencing factor on developing their identities as language learners. Following the critiques on Pizzolato’s (See Section 3.4.2) and Labov’s use of interviews (See Section 3.5), in the current study students’ written narratives are employed to enable students to reflect further on the people, and also the events that maintained impacts on their current choices and future directions.

Another sociocultural view on the relationship between language learning and identity is the theme of *transition* (Norton, 2006). Transition refers to the significant changes in the self-identity that learners go through in their lives. There are few research findings in relation to this theme in L2 learning contexts. Thesen (1997) defines this theme as, for example, moving from an institution to another. Transitions are socially situated, and the concept conceives learning as developmental, and change that is constructed through the previous knowledge that learners bring with them to a new context (Crafter and Maunder, 2012). Crafter and Maunder (2012) propose three frameworks that explain transition in learners’ education from a sociocultural perspective. The first framework is consecutive transition, which refers, for example, to moving from school to university. At university, learners will be able to reflect on their previous learning and adapt to this new context. The second framework is based on understanding this transition as a challenge that learners might encounter, or a turning point which enhances their reconstruction of a new self-image. The third framework is related to communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) which necessitates participants to adapt to the values of the new community, and this results in a shift in individuals’ identities. This concept is also inferred within a social context, which can cause shifts in emotions of learners. These emotions can encourage motivation and self-regulated learning (Crafter and Maunder, 2012).

Evangelou, Taggart, Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford (2008) conducted a longitudinal study with pupils who moved from primary school to secondary school in England. This study aimed to find the influence of pre-school, primary and secondary education on pupils’ cognitive and social development. They proposed the factors that reinforced pupils’ transition are as follows: they experienced a curriculum continuity, they

received information about the rules implemented at secondary school, they found a friendly learning atmosphere, and they received advice and support from teachers. From pupils' perspectives, the attitudes that learners need to have as they move to secondary school is to be confident (so as not worry about this new transition), to make new friends, to cope with school requirements, such as to be organised, to avoid troubles by listening to teachers, and to seek help from teachers, and friends. Pupils showed that their transition to secondary school was positive, as their teachers have offered assistance with lessons and homework. They did not report any or difficult transition experiences. Evangelou *et al.* (2008) suggest that this transition enables to know - to some extent - about where they wanted to go in the next stage (after secondary school). Therefore, they argue that transition occurs in a point in time that can lead individuals to make future decisions.

Thesen (1997) investigated South African learners to find about how they developed agency as they moved from school level to university level. She conducted research on transition through life histories. She primarily observed that their previous learning experiences affected their access to university academic writing. Second, she was interested in how they construct their multiple identities in light of two discursive contexts, which are home, and a learning institution. Home represented the early socialisation, and school and university represented the formal institutional contexts. Thesen discussed that one participant noted that in his essay writing, he replaced the word *God* with *Modimo*. As she interviewed him, he explained that *God* had a western meaning, and he preferred to use *Modimo* to refer to his ancestors' meanings. Thesen interpreted his choice as a highly conscious act of identity, which this participant had developed during his transition from school level to university level. Thesen concluded that learning experiences, including home culture, school and university resulted in the emergence of students' identities, and argues that these contexts overlap one another, and they create multiple literacies. This connects to Gee (1990) who suggested that the contextual overlap orients learners towards a greater consciousness of what is going on, and what they want to do.

According to Norton (1997) Thesen's theory of transition appears to be consistent with Duff's and Ushioda's (1997) conceptions of identity as complex, contradictory and multifaceted. Norton (1997) highlights that Thesen's understanding of transition means that learners negotiate their places in a social order, by making meaning of their activities. In line with Thesen's research, the project carried out for this thesis used the meaning of transition to

study learners' reconstructions of their identities moving from past leaning experiences (primary, middle, and secondary schools) to present learning (university). The concept of transition is discussed in this context to help in understanding the turning points (Crafter and Maunder, 2012) in students' experiences through 'mentors' and 'marks' (See Section 1.7.4), which enhanced the expansion of their agency and identity through language learning.

### **3.5. Ideological becoming: mentors and marks**

Learning is a dialogic process in Bakhtin's point of view, wherein individuals form their new capacities (Morson, 2004). The role of teachers in the learning process is to enter the students into a dialogue which carries out different views of the world. The dialogue can be an opportunity to enable the students to develop an 'ideological becoming', another concept that is proposed by Bakhtin in his dialogic theory. Bakhtin (1981:341) defines ideological becoming as "... the process of selectively assimilating the words of others". Learners evaluate these utterances which lead to awareness of themselves and others, they become able to develop responsibility over their thoughts, words and actions (Bakhtin, 1990). Language is always ideological; as utterances represent how individuals develop ways of viewing the world (Freedman and Bull, 2004). Ideological becoming entails how individuals use their learning to position themselves in the world, as far as becoming is an ongoing process of learning which is an impulse with the future (Harvey, 2014).

Bakhtin regards that the authoritative voice speaks to our minds, and the individuals incorporate it with their internally persuasive voice (Monson, 2004). In a dialogue, others represent their own experiences, and their ways of communicating them. The individuals at this stage will genuinely evaluate the others' views which might convert their views, or they can either destroy or learn from the dialogue. The self can also re-examine their own point of view, and how it is different to the other. This dialogic interaction between the authoritative and internally persuasive discourses influences the individual's ideological development, and it brings a new understanding. This understanding occurs when participants assimilate the other's words into their own conceptual framework, which is called 'responsive understanding'.

For Bakhtin, participants engage in this active understanding, which raises their self-consciousness. Discussing different ideas in the tension of a dialogue for Bakhtin (1984) creates a struggle which can lead to potential transformation, new insights, and mutual change which lead the self to becoming responsible (Harvey, 2014). In this context, I assisted the

students with activities that reinforce their inclusion of a dialogue to present their ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ in their narratives. Dialogism therefore is used as a framework to discuss students’ development of agency in early learning through the lens of Bakhtin’s ‘ideological becoming’. This would enable me to discuss how the self creates an agency in their early learning in relation with the other ‘mentors’.

In addition, Holquist (1990) argues that meaning constructed from a dialogue is perceived as both social value and an event. The social value in the dialogue refers in this narrative to the social factors that influenced the students to construct meaning in their learning experiences, identified in this research as ‘mentors’. The dialogue also aimed to explain the dynamic interaction between the students and their ‘mentors’ (teachers, family, and peers). In addition, due to the critiques of motivation models and their constrained agency, I wish to present Bakhtin’s dialogical model which can help in understanding agency which I characterise as a desire for life-learning and self-development.

However, dialogues perceived as events (Holquist, 1990) refer in this context to the ‘marks’, as they manifested the students’ fears and insecurities in learning. The dialogue in this research helped in understanding the dynamic interaction between the ‘mentors’ and the ‘marks’ as two essential social factors. Bakhtin thought that dialogue can give a possibility of transgression, which means that the elements the self has cross-over other selves: the self takes from the other’s culture what enables them to achieve their new self. Holquist (1990) argues that the dialogic situation between the self and the other occurs in the present, which is not a static time, but it is a combination of the past and present relations. This supports my argument that the existing research on narrative has not regarded the link between the past and the present. For this purpose, the dialogue used in this research offers an understanding of how the past event is not only fixed, but it also reflected the past through the present lens (See section 6.2.2).

### **3.6. Agency, investment and imagined identity**

The poststructuralist theory of language conceives that meaning in language is heterogeneous varying from one community to another. As Bourdieu (1977) notes, the meanings and the values that speakers of a particular language intend are understood in their social realm. Subjectivity as a term is associated with individual’s identity which is socially and historically embedded (Norton, 2013). Weedon (1977) foregrounds that the relationship between the individual and the social is constructed through language. Weedon (1997, quoted in Norton,

2010: 2) notes that “It is through language learning a person gains access to - or is denied access to - powerful networks that give learners the opportunity to speak”. According to Norton (2013), subjectivity of individuals concerns how they construct their sense of themselves in relational terms. This means that the individual is in a position of power with other social practices (race, gender) (See Section 3.2).

Norton (2013:4) defines identity as “The way a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. Over time, they become able to identify and position themselves in the larger social world. McKinney and Norton (2008) argue that if language learners’ identity is positioned within these social practices (race, and gender), then they will have a limited access to speak, to read, and to write in the target language. However, learners can have other possible ways to interact with the social world and to enhance their agency (See below). Drawing on this understanding, McKinney and Norton (2008) argue that educators need to question what possible imaginative skills learners have, and their desires in language learning. These concepts: agency, investment, and imagined identity discuss how learners construct their identities through language learning.

Duff (2012:417) defines agency as “Peoples’ ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading potentially to personal or social transformation”. Murphey and Carpenter (2008) studied twenty learners of English in a Japanese university. These participants wrote their language learning histories, they described three contexts of their learning: in school, out-of-school, and general. These three contexts were searched to find about several activities, such as learners’ learning methods in formal education or outside the learning context. Agency was coded from the data about learners’ thinking; such as hope, expectancy and decision making. The data revealed that these learners started to have agency at university; for instance, out-of-school activities remained steady from junior high school to high school; however, these activities increased at university. Murphey and Arao (2001) also agree with these findings, and they argue that there was not much interaction between learners in English, either at school or outside it. These researchers concluded that agency is acquired only when learners interact using the L2, and hence agency is a delayed process which learners acquire as they choose English as their course study at University.

However, Murray (2008) had different findings related to L2 agency from Murphey and Arao (2001) and Murphey and Carpenter (2008). In a Japanese learning context, Murray (2008)

used interviews to investigate how learners develop their imagined identities. Murray presented Mable's story of learning English. He found that Mable had developed her desire to belong to an American imagined community during an earlier period through watching English TV programmes and films. Mable said, "*Through those experiences, I decided when I was in junior high, someday I will be in the United States and work there*". Yuichi was another Japanese learner who started to like English in high school. At this stage, he invested (See below) to improve his English level through watching American films, which he believed enabled him to gain a high grade in English. His success reinforced his choice of English at university. Both Mable and Yuichi had a peripheral participation in the imagined communities through media.

The common point between Murphey and Arao (2010), Murphey and Carpenter (2008) and Murray (2008) is that they investigated learners' agency in EFL contexts i.e., learners who studied and developed their English in their home country, not as migrants which had been Norton's concern, (See below). Murphey and Carpenter (2008) argue that agency is discursive, and it can be missing in L2 due to the lack of peers' interaction before university. However, Murray showed that his participants developed agency in their early learning through media and communities of practice, such as clubs. Other participants said that their teachers invited English-speaking sailors and tourists to their classes and introduced them to a real context of speaking language. This demonstrates that learners can have opportunities of interaction before university.

In a similar vein, Murshid (2010) conducted research with fifteen Syrian university learners. He was interested in their experiences of learning English, and their reasons for learning it; he conducted an ethnographic case study using interviews. An example from this study was Salim whose aunt inspired him, as she lived in Australia and she spoke English. Thus, he said that his aunt marked a turning point in his relationship with English and she was his role model in grade nine. This therefore links agency to investment. As Salim chose to study English at university, he invested to improve his speaking skill. Murshid (2010) concludes that learners must have had certain encounters through their long-term learning experiences that encouraged them to carry on with learning language. Salim's case demonstrates that agency is a pre-existing desire that learners construct before they choose English as their course of study at university. The striking point is that through learning English, learners

become clear about their plans, and they invest time and efforts to achieve a desirable self-image.

Norton (2000) had introduced the concept of ‘investment’, which was used several times in the previous discussions above, inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1977), who discusses the social and the historical background knowledge of learners and their desires. Investment refers to the efforts that learners make to improve their language learning (Norton, 2000). It also refers to a link between their desires (agency) and commitment to learn a language. This juxtaposition illustrates that a learner’s identity is changeable, as opposed to the earlier concepts of motivation which perceives a learner as a ‘fixed’ personality (Gardner, 1988). Norton (2000) used women’s diary entries, she studied four women immigrants in Canada; she exemplified her research with Katarina, a Polish immigrant student who spoke many other European languages, but not English. Katarina had a background of seventeen years of teaching experience in her home country. However, she was viewed as ‘unskilled’ in the host country because of her English level. She applied for a computer course and dropped out from her ESL course provided for migrants. She refused to be identified as an unskilled immigrant woman. Katarina’s experience of humiliation ended her *investment* in learning English.

Other studies have looked at identity construction of language learners using the concept of *imagined communities*. This concept was first established by Benedict Anderson (1991). Kanno and Norton (2003:24) define imagined community as “a group of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination”. Norton and Gao (2008) reviewed the previous literature in imagined communities in relation to language and education; they concluded that learners who have high investment may have a closer access to their imagined communities. This suggests that learners’ investment may have a direct influence on achieving their future goals and ambitions.

Imagined identity aligns with recent research on learners’ desires and future selves explained above (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011), and therefore I connect the two concepts of imagined identity and imagined community. Imagined community is used in L2 learning research with reference to an imaginary space for learners who aspire to become language speakers, and academics or professionals. A notable example of an EFL learner’s imagined identity is illustrated in Kinginger (2004). His study demonstrates the case of Alice who had not only a strong hope to study French abroad, but she could also imagine herself interacting with its

native speakers. She envisaged France and its culture as a Wonderland. Learners may cultivate these images to construct their identities through learning language. In Alice's case, her ideal image was to become a teacher of French, which reoriented her to invest in her learning. Alice's experience in France was challenging, as she did not find the French course as she imagined it. She became depressed and she said that she thought of suicide, as she thought that she worked for five years to save money to be able to travel to France to pursue her dream. She situated her learning in informal social networks to practise language through interaction. However, one of her companions was interested to talk about politics, and he critiqued the political actions of the US, where she comes from. Alice regarded herself as a non-participant in discussions about politics. This event changed Alice's desire towards assimilating to the French culture, which motivated her to return to the US to upgrade her political awareness, and to carry on her learning in school (Kinging, 2004). Kinginger argues that Norton's participant, Katarina was in a real context of learning English; however, her expectation to be treated at least not as an immigrant ended her investment in learning (Muramatsu, 2013). Kinginger supports the view that Alice was able to imagine her roles within this community and broaden both her learning and social opportunities. She developed an awareness about the difficulty of learning a language, and she learnt to maintain her desire and to challenge her difficulties.

### **3.7. Overview on narrative and identity construction**

Squire (2013) defines two types of narrative focus: event-centred narrative and experience-centred narrative, which overlap with each other in some points; they both focus on individuals, and their internal representations of their events, thoughts and feelings. The major difference between them appears through narrative tellers' accounts. In event-centred narratives, individuals' images remain persistent. However, in experience-centred narratives individuals' images are changeable according to the changes they experience over time, then these changes define the narrative as a process. In experience-centred narratives, events are presented in sequence and consequently they are connected by time. Thus, time in a narrative shows the chronology and sequence of events as a process.

According to Stanley (2013), in the experienced-centre narrative, the past is reconstructed for the purpose of the present telling of the event, and the present will be reconstructed in the future through future imaginings. Hence, time is a reference of three periods in experienced-centred narratives which are the past, the present, and the future. Time also demonstrates how individuals produce different narratives even from the same event (Squire, Andrews, and



Tamboukou, 2013). Narrators describe their past events, but researchers view that these events do not tell only about how they happened, rather they are interpretations of individuals' experiences, and how they want others to understand them. Some researchers like Patterson (2013) support the idea that narratives are primarily about experience, as narrators select which events they want to include. The current research focused on time as an aspect of transition from past learning experiences, moving to present learning experiences, and making plans for future becoming. Time as a process shows the sequence of events in the students' narratives. Pavlenko (2011:213) defines narratives in the context of language learning as a "Unique source of learners' motivations, experiences, struggles, losses, and gains". Furthermore, they were used in the current research to explore students' experiences and how they contributed to the reconstruction of their learning identities.

Narrative research is also interested in three main approaches: the content of the narrative, the structure of the narrative, and context-based approaches (Andrews *et al.*, 2013). For example, Labov (1982) focused on the events of the narrative (See the discussion of Labov below), and the social positioning, i.e., with the interest on individuals' consistency (event-centred narrative) as opposed to the process of change in narrative (experience-centred narrative). In contemporary narrative research, narratives that are interested in personal experiences tend to focus on the meaning that individuals construct using language to express how they are building their identities and their agency. This implies that through language, narrators focus on the events which are important to them, and how these events are sequentially connected (Riesman, 2008).

The current research has adopted Labov's narrative model (1982) (See Section 4.5.1) which focused on the sequence of actions (Andrews *et al.*, 2013), with amendments to accommodate criticism of Labov's model for lacking the notion of shift and transformation that individuals reformulate to take new actions into their lives (Goodson and Grill, 2011). Besides, it prioritises event over experience, and this event-centric approach limits the narrator to include one event in the narrative. Patterson (2013) argues that the inclusion of one event that occurred in the past narrows the reconstruction of the personal experience and its interpretation in the present. In addition, Squire (2013) notes that Labov's model is a conceptual framework which has not provided methodological guidelines. He represented events in two different ways: spoken and written, Squire (2013) argues that meaning would never be the same as the event is told twice.

These critiques are explained here to reveal that the researcher is aware of them before conducting the current study. However, Labov's model is employed in this research to explain the social and the cultural factors that EFL learners experience in their broader learning process and language learning. The narrative model designed for this research is explained in Chapter Four (See Table 4.2). The current research conducted an experience-centred narrative approach, as events can appear in different places in the narrative, focusing on the content and context of the narrative, more than language correctness and structure. Experience-centred narrative was also used to find about the turning points in the students' experiences (Squire, 2013). The turning points in the reported thesis are identified as 'marks' (See Section 1.7.4), taken from TEDX Talk (Jenson, 2015) and added to Labov's model to explore how students' experiences reinforce the re/construction of their identities and agency in language learning.

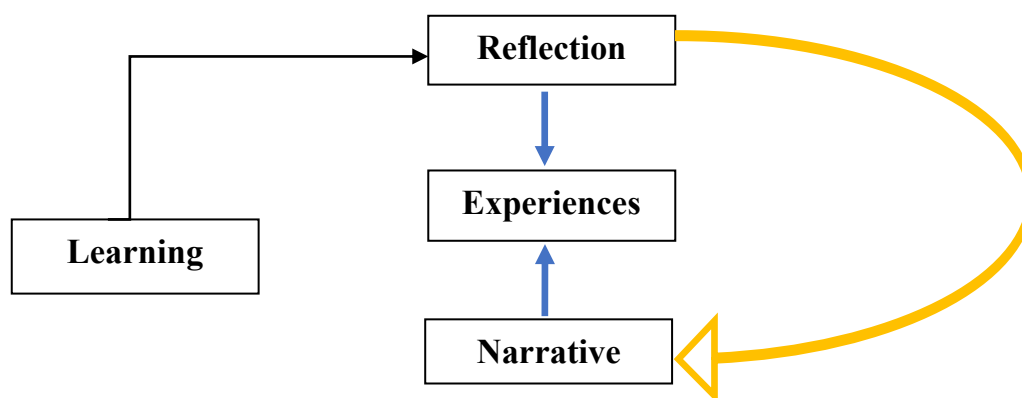
### **3.7.1. Learning experience and reflection through narratives**

Reflection is grounded in the idea that an individual's general culture, history, and politics can help them find solutions to problems generated by thinking about experience. In this case, reflection refers to a cognitive-process by which individuals analyse, reconsider and question their experiences in contexts that are affected by social, political and cultural issues.

In educational theory reflection has become a topic of much research; Kolb (1984) highlights that reflection is an instrument of cognitive and professional development. He established an experiential learning model on the basis of four cyclic stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. First, learners will think of an existing or an encountered experience (concrete experience). Second, they will engage in an activity that allows them to reflect on this experience (reflective observation). Third, they create a new concept or modify an existing concept which emerges from their new interpretations of this experience (abstract conceptualisation). Fourth, learners will make new planning based on the conclusions they had drawn from their previous experiences. Kolb (1984) has shown that the learning cycle is continuous, and following the fourth stage, learners plan for a new learning cycle based on the previous knowledge, so that learning develops. This model shows that learning is developmental and reiterative, and that it is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984).

In this thesis, activities relating to narrative and reflection were employed, and aimed to understand students' experiences. The use of narrative and experiential approaches in education focus on understanding the diversity of individuals' experiences (Phillion, He, and

Connelly, 2005). As explained above, Kolb views learning as a source of experience; hence narrative researchers regard collecting narratives as a source of accessing experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Thus, this conjunction can be investigated to reveal how learning occurs, and how learners develop their learning and their self-identities. I explain through the following figure that experience is the focal point which is constructed through a dynamic process of reflection and narrative writing.



**Figure 3.1** Experiences in learning enhanced with reflection and narrative.

Furthermore, narratives open venues for learners to share their histories and cultures with others, hence this approach can link to social constructivist approaches described earlier in this chapter. They also support them to reflect on what they learnt from their parents and their cultures (See Section 3.3.2), and their formal education. Writing narratives enables learners to recognise who they are and how they perceive themselves (Phillion *et al.*, 2005). In English-learning contexts, there are many ways of engaging learners in activities, reflecting in their personal lives and their learning through narratives. Researchers in this area suggest that questioning is an approach to engage learners in reflection (Woolfolk, 2013) and that reflective questions could be set as guidelines or scaffolding (See Section 3.2) to give opportunities for learners to evaluate themselves (Kolb, 1984; Dennick, 2008). One type of reflective questions employs experience-based activities, which usually entail open questions which allow learners to think of their feelings. These activities also involve them in writing their diaries, and to record their reflections which include how and what they did in a particular event or experience (Dennick, 2008).

Research within the sociocultural view used different narrative methods that support learners' reflection on their experiences, such as language learning histories (Murphey, Chen, and

Chen, 2004), learner diaries, autobiographies (Pavlenko, 2011), personal narratives (Liu, 2014), whose narrative is presented below as an example to illustrate narrative content (See Section 3.7.2), written narratives, and narrative frames. For instance, Murphey *et al.* (2004) used language learning histories to investigate the connection between learners' identities, imagined communities and their investment in learning English. These language learning histories engaged learners in a written assignment using reflective questions to elicit data related to their past learning, such as their positive and negative experiences, their beliefs, expectations and practices, and their plans and goals. These questions were set to find the relationship between learners' past experiences and their future learning. Murphey *et al.* (2004) argued that using reflective questions and language learning histories successfully helped them to find about degrees of learners' identification or non-identification and investment with imagined communities. Their findings showed that language teachers inspired their learners. They also could imagine themselves in the future as successful members of communities of practice. However other learners reported incidents outside their classroom learning that encouraged them to invest in their learning.

Since the concept of reflection is central to the present study, the reflective questions used (See Section 4.7.1) integrate reflective thinking and narrative writing. The students' written narratives were used to record their reflections on their experiences of the past including their 'mentors' and 'marks', and how they interpret them in the present. In addition, both written narratives and focus group discussions were used to investigate how they evaluated their current learning of English, accordingly how they drew on plans for improving their future learning.

### **3.7.2. Liu's narrative model**

Liu (2014) presents his own narrative experiences of learning in a published paper. His narrative has a twofold purpose; he begins with his learning acquisition at school, as a Chinese learner, and he ends with a narration of the process he has gone through to achieve an English language teaching identity. Liu's narrative is presented in this chapter as an example of how a foreign language learner and teacher can develop an identity.

*It was in 1984, when I was in Grade three in elementary school when my father bought our first 17-inch black- and- white TV set. It was one of the first few TV sets in my village, may be the fourth one. There was only one channel on TV and it lasted every night from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. As we did not have any other choice, I would watch everything on the same channel including the news I did not understand. The national news which started*

*at 7:00 p.m. and lasted half an hour, always started with diplomatic news about national leaders visiting other countries or receiving visits from leaders of other countries. In their meetings, I discovered that leaders cannot talk to each other directly. My family explained to me that the leaders had to talk through interpreters who were sitting between the two leaders behind the tea table. I was deeply impressed with the work of the interpreters, believing that their job was very important and admirable. I must have thought for a moment that it would be cool if I could speak a foreign language and interpret for leaders of the country. But as a farm boy, I never really thought I would have anything to do with that (Liu, 2014:266)*

This extract reflects Liu's past experience as a child, thinking aloud his memories and interpreting them in the present. He narrated about the TV programmes he watched with his family, and that he was attracted to how leaders behaved. Everyone in his village, including himself, believed an 'interpreter' was someone of a high prestige and expertise. Then, he evaluated his learning of English at a middle school, he said, *"I remember reading the vocabulary, the dialogues, and sentences after the teacher, and the teacher was the only oral input"*. He said, *"I wanted to study English to pass my tests"*, this could be linked to Gardner's (1988) concept of instrumental motivation, but it can be also linked to the concept of imagined identity, *"I question myself if I ever thought to be an interpreter for national leaders"* These quotes show that he had no clear orientation at middle school. He carried on describing his difficulties in learning English, he stated, *"It was hard for me to memorise all 26 letters of the alphabet"*, and *"It was hard for me to read each individual letter, it was hard for me to construct sentences using correct grammar (past perfect tense)"*.

Liu presented himself not only as a former learner of English, but also as a current EFL teacher and researcher. Concerning the communicative approach, he noted that the role of teachers is to engage learners in real conversational situations. Thus, learners learn the language guidelines naturally and subconsciously. He also evaluated teachers of his time as less proficient in communicative skills. He added, *"When I was in senior high school from 1991 to 1995, the goal of English teaching was to ensure that students passed the university exam"*.

His narrative revealed precise dates that appeared in sequence to allocate the different periods of his learning. It is evident that his account is an experience-centred narrative, as he described about his experiences over time. He also self-evaluated his past learning, and evaluated the teaching methods used in the past. In this regard, in narrative research, Squire

(2013) defines experience as a process, when individuals not only tell about their past, but they interpret their experiences of the past in the present (See Section 3.7).

Liu talked about his teacher who advised him to choose English as a course study at University. He said, “*My teacher said that every word like ‘foreign’, ‘international’, ‘Foreign Trade’, International Finance’ is a good major as China entered a new stage of market-oriented economic system*”. The role of the teacher in Liu’s narrative is explained as an orientation. This orientation, in the current thesis, refers to *a mentor* who supports individuals to make decisions related to a particular choice.

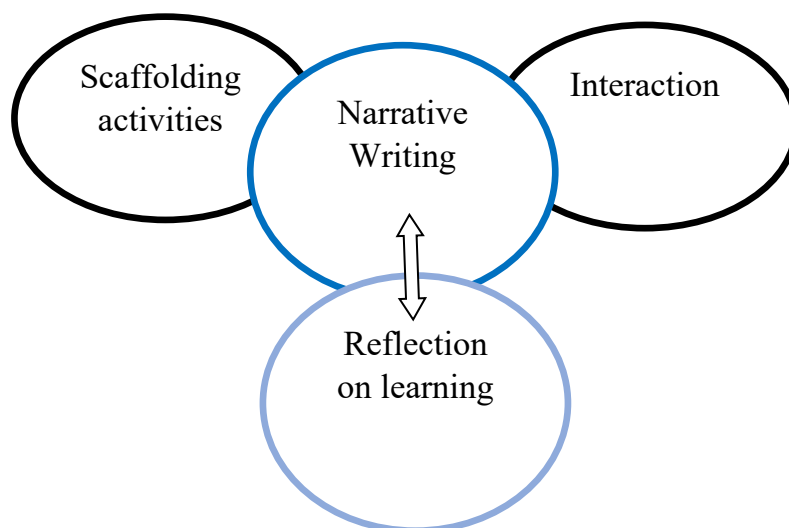
Liu had a desire to study English in order to communicate with other people from different nationalities, which related to integrative motivation (Gardner, Day, and MacIntyre, 1992) and to integrative orientation (Noels, 2013). He found that he was the weakest student in comparison to the girls who were his colleagues as he was the only boy in his class. However, he passed his exam. As a result, he maintained his desire to carry on his major without any regrets. Year after year, he said that his accent in English started to improve, as he trained himself to think in English, and he listened to the Voice of America broadcasts. These statements refer to the notion of investment in language learning (Norton, 2000).

After graduation he further invested to improve his English, but as a university English instructor. He said that he could develop a native-like proficiency by hanging out with native-speakers of English, watching and reading news in English only, and imitating the English accent. He said that his colleagues and his students were astonished by his accent, and that many of his colleagues were jealous of his accent. Liu at this stage of his narrative, is evaluating his speaking fluency in English, and Evaluation, in this project, is defined as a narrative feature (See Section 4.8.1).

To sum up, Liu shared three main periods of his social learning. The first part showed that he maintained memories related to his first exposure to English through TV. He did not only narrate his memories related to his learning, but he also interpreted and evaluated them in the present time. The second part revealed his disorientation in the middle school as he was not aware of what he wanted to become. The third part highlighted that his teacher oriented him to study English at university, and that he was willing to invest to improve his language skills, and particularly his accent in English outside the classroom.

### 3.8. Students' interaction in L2 writing: Planning and Editing

As indicated previously, the current research used five stages of process writing. Nystrand (2006) points out that scaffolding activities enhance reflective thinking. Also, Nunan (1991) found that such activities engage learners in producing, reflecting, discussing and revising their drafts. Aubrey and Riley (2016) suggest that these activities can be in a form of questions, and these questions need to be solution-oriented to enable learners to think about their learning process. Following this point, in the current research, scaffolding activities were used as questions. As displayed in Figure 3.2 which I designed to explain that the aim of using scaffolding activities with students' interaction was to encourage students' reflection on their learning experiences, while writing their narratives.



**Figure 3.2** Narrative writing environment enhanced with scaffolding activities and students' interaction

The current research used classroom interaction through pair work. Nakahama, Tyler, and Van Lier (2001) explain two types of interactive activities: structured and unstructured. Nakahama *et al.* (2001) found that the structured activity provided more negotiations for meaning, while the unstructured interaction provided complex utterances. However, Storch (2013) argues that researchers need to clarify how these activities can be applied to reinforce learners' interaction. He adds that interaction is necessitated with learners' planning and editing of their writing. In a similar vein, Hirvela (2007) states that collaborative writing can occur in two stages of process writing only: brainstorming/planning and editing. Therefore, interaction in these two stages helps learners to improve their content, to organize their texts, and to enrich

their vocabulary; however, the writing of the text is an individual act (Shehada, 2011; Storch, 2013).

As explained above, in the current research, brainstorming/planning and editing were supported with scaffolding activities to encourage students' classroom interaction and the content of their narratives (See Section 4.8.1). Students interacted in pairs in the editing stage which involved giving peer-feedback on one participant's narrative text (See Section 5.2). Brainstorming and planning activities were consecutively repeated to assist three parts of students' narratives. In the first part, they were questioned about their past experiences. In the second part, they were asked to evaluate their present learning. In the third part, they were given a writing topic with questions to imagine their future becoming (See Section 4.8.1). Using brainstorming and planning activities in each part of the narrative writing was supported following Onozawa's point (2010) that brainstorming activities can also be repeated through the different writing stages, and this creates change in the learners' preliminary ideas. In a similar vein, Hunter and Begoray (1990) recommend that these activities assist learners to brainstorm and to plan their writing.

### **3.8.1. Peer-feedback**

Peer-feedback is a stage of process writing that occurs prior to learners' revision of their texts. It is also a peer-to-peer scaffolding (See Section 3.2); learners develop socio-cognitive skills in L2 writing, as they engage in the process of giving and receiving comments. Hence, peer-feedback is based on comments that help learners detect issues in their writing (Ferris, 2003). Moreover, learners develop autonomy in learning, and a self-regulated performance in writing and revising their texts (Liu and Hansen, 2002; Crisp, 2007).

Liu and Sadler (2003) categorise peer-feedback into two basic types: global feedback and local feedback. The local feedback is related to the surface level of language in the text. It focuses on grammar, punctuation, rewording, vocabulary and mechanics. Global feedback is based on the content of the written text. This type of feedback focuses on the organisation of the text, the development of ideas, and cohesion of the text. Suzuki (2008) investigated peer-feedback in a Japanese EFL context. He found that peer-feedback focused on how the topic was discussed in the text and how ideas were presented (global level). Xu and Liu (2010) also found that learners provide comments on the organisation of the text (global level).

After peer-feedback, learners revise their drafts. Liu and Sadler (2003) also refer to two types of revisions: revision-oriented feedback or non-revision oriented feedback. Revision-oriented refers



to the comments that target issues in the learners' texts, and learners could consider to revise their texts. Non-revision oriented feedback is when peers provide comments that do not target any issue in learners' written texts. These comments can be in a form of thanking and praising learners' texts.

There are contradictory research findings about who benefits more in the process of peer-feedback (feedback-givers or feedback-receivers). Topping's (2010) research on ESL university learners found that feedback-givers' texts had more language proficiency than feedback-receivers. Berggren's (2015) research on EFL learners found that feedback-givers revised their texts focusing on the global level of the text. Yu and Lee (2015) explain that these findings differ due to the nature of the context studied (ESL/EFL, schools). Therefore, Yu and Lee (2015) claim that there is still a need for more research on the impact of peer-feedback in L2 learners' writing development.

In this project, students practised giving peer-feedback. This point is discussed in Chapter Five, session five (See Section 5.2). They also revised their narratives and published their final drafts in the blog. Therefore, neither peer-feedback, nor students' revisions of their drafts were linguistically analysed. However, these stages were used to support the content and the meaning of the students' narratives. Liu and Carless (2006) suggest that peer-feedback enrich learners' learning experiences because during this process they develop an understanding of the topic, and they become critical and reflective thinkers. For this reason, peer-feedback was used to develop students' reflection on their learning experiences. In addition, this section demonstrates that the methodology was supported by an awareness of the existing literature on these two final stages of process writing: peer-feedback and revision.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of the major theoretical approach that has provided a background on identity construction in L2 context of learning. Vygotsky's sociocultural approach highlighted the role of scaffolding and interaction in supporting process writing. The incorporation of process writing and narrative writing has provided an understanding of the role of the sociocultural factors, such as family and formal education in shaping learners' agency. These two large areas have been drawn in this chapter to be further elaborated on in the next chapter. The next chapter covers how I designed the mini-module based on the language learning theories discussed in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

## **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the research design employed in this thesis. The context of this thesis is investigated through the interpretivist paradigm which is relevant to the research aim and objectives. This project divided into two parts: a *pedagogical* activity that consists of classroom sessions and the written narratives in the blog, and a *research* activity which consists of narrative methodology for gathering data. Based on the research questions, qualitative research methods have been used for data collection and participants' recruitment. Participant observation, written narratives, and focus group discussions have been the main methods to collect data from both research contexts: the classroom and blog. The analytical strategy employed for data analysis is a thematic approach. This chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical issues.

## **4.2. Philosophical assumptions**

Conducting qualitative research requires researchers to choose a paradigm that suits their assumptions and the nature of knowledge they explore to present an understanding of the world. In social sciences, researchers need to be explicit about the assumptions undertaken in their research (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These assumptions are mainly related to ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

Ontology is concerned with the nature of the world. Reality is discussed from interpretivist and positivist perspectives. Interpretivists see that individuals as shaping their own realities whereas positivists view that reality as an external entity existing independently from individuals (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000). Ontology for interpretivist researchers considers reality as multiple, and that social reality is not external, but it is constructed by its social actors through interaction (Bryman, 2015). Hence, these multiple realities are subjective and context-bound (Guba and Lincoln, 1989). Adhering to interpretivists' view on ontology, I understand that individuals' learning experiences cannot be studied as an external reality, because learning in general and language learning in particular are subjective, as individuals construct meaning of their lives from their experiences. Individuals also interpret 'reality' which is constructed by their social, cultural, and educational experiences.

Epistemology refers to the definition of knowledge intrinsic to the philosophical stance through which research is conducted (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). It is also concerned with what individuals know about reality, and how they communicate their understanding of this knowledge with others (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Interpretivists view that knowledge is subjective, and it is

conceptualised from individuals' perceptions of the world (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). My epistemological assumption for this research is subjectivism, which is consistent with the interpretivist paradigm. I also view individuals' learning as social construct which is generated from their experiences, and this also relates to the sociocultural perspective of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Then, the epistemology used in this thesis has interpretive influences which are based on social interactions.

### **4.3. Interpretive approach**

Knowledge from the interpretive view is socially constructed, meaning that knowledge is created from individuals' perceptions which construct meaning of the world (Grix, 2010). The individuals' perceptions enable researchers to understand the multiple perspectives, as the focus of the interpretive approach is to present reality as pluralistic (Richards, 2003). I chose to approach my research from an interpretive position for three reasons. First, the interpretive approach is in line with a narrative inquiry because narrative is a way to understand human experience and events, and the interpretive approach explores individuals' insights to gain knowledge of their experiences and their perceptions of reality. Second, knowledge collected until now about the concept of identity is best understood from EFL learners' experiences, how they are socially influenced by their social backgrounds, and how they self-interpret their experiences. Third, the interpretive approach enables me to analyse the content of the participants' narratives, as Kim (2016:190) states that the narrative research is "always interpretive at every stage". This is significant to my research purposes, because participants wrote their experiences into three different periods of their learning, and each period has a meaning for them.

Hudson and Ozanne (1988) view that the role of the interpretive researcher is to understand motives, meanings, reasons and other subjective experiences which are time and context bound. This view is appropriate to the objective of this thesis, which aimed to engage the participants in activities to self-reflect on their learning process through pair groups, and then provide blog feedback (See Appendix 18) and revisions. Using this approach aims to find out about the sociocultural influences on the participants' learning experiences, this approach examines unprocessed data; it shrinks data into themes through the process of codification and recodification, then data will be represented into forms of figures, tables and texts, all of which are used in the current project. This approach has been criticised as it may be influenced by the researcher's subjectivity in the interpretation of the findings, as this approach is guided by the researcher's desire to interpret the social reality (Bhattacharya, 2008). For this reason, I used

'respondent validation' to report on the reality as presented by the participants (See Section 4.13.1).

#### **4.4. Qualitative research design**

Trumbull (2005:101) defines qualitative research as a “process of discovery of the phenomena being studied, consequently, it tends to be guided by broad research questions based upon some theoretical framework...”. Researchers through this approach look for behaviour and values as found in individuals, within a subjective world. The relationship between individuals and the context studied is reciprocal; individuals are both constructed by and constructors of reality, therefore, this relationship theorises different versions of reality and knowledge (Bryman, 2015; Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The qualitative research design has several objectives: it aims to gain insights and understanding of groups of people, and it examines the relationships between the events that participants share during the investigation. Researchers using the qualitative approach believe that details gathered from the data provide an understanding of a studied context. Researchers can gain more details through building a rapport with participants, as they are able to reflect on what participants have said. Details help in producing thick descriptions of the social setting, the event and the individuals (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2015). In addition, details also convey the individual's process of change. According to Bryman (2015:395), the process of change in individuals refers to “A sequence of events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context”. For this reason, I conducted a narrative study through a qualitative approach to enable me to explore the complexity of individual/social relationships.

Trumbull (2005, cited in Taylor, 2005) states that qualitative research methods focus on the uniqueness of individuals and their environment. According to Patton (2002) methods from this approach requires researchers to use multiple sources to check the meaning of their information. Patton (2002) proposed three kinds of data collection. (1) Data that consist of verbatim quotations which researchers collect directly from participants, such as interviews and focus group discussions. For this reason, I used focus group discussion as a qualitative research method (See Section 4.11.5) (2) Observation concerns the description of behaviour and actions. Data can be collected through field notes. I also employed participant observation (See Section 4.11.1) through field notes (See Section 4.11.4). (3) Documents can be used as a method of data collection. They are presented as written materials, which can be either official documents, such as reports, and documents from organisations, or they can be personal diaries, photographs, and

written responses to open-ended surveys. I used written narrative as a qualitative research method (See Section 4.11.2).

Conducting this research within an interpretive paradigm, I selected a set of qualitative research methods, as Kozinets (2002) argues that qualitative methods can reveal the depth of symbolic aspects within a studied context, highlighting their needs, desires, meanings and choices. This point is further discussed through each research method I have chosen in this thesis. Qualitative research is often based on in-depth data collected from a small sample of participants (See Section 4.10.1). For the purpose of this research, the qualitative approach of analysis is employed to contribute to an underpinning knowledge about how the participants develop their learning identity through their learning experiences.

#### **4.5. Narrative methodology**

Narrative inquiry is a methodology used in qualitative research. It uses personal narratives for research purposes (Ojermak, 2007). In linguistics and education, researchers are interested in narrative research in order to understand how teachers and learners construct meaning of their experiences (Barkhuizen, 2016). The stories that participants tell inform researchers about relevant types of activities to design to investigate individuals' experiences. Narrative inquiry is viewed by many researchers as a conjunction of both narrative as a social phenomenon (which is experience), and narrative as a method of data analysis, that is the knowledge constructed from the analyses of the narrative (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Barkhuizen, 2011). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that in EFL learning contexts, narrative inquiry in its dual meaning is used to explore and analyse learners' identity construction, based on what others tell them, and what researchers either collect as oral or written 'narratives of experience'.

In this thesis, narrative is used as a methodology to investigate participants' social and cultural identities, their agency, their investments, and their imagined identities in learning English. It is also used as a method of collecting data from the participants' written accounts (See Section 4.11.2), as it is a relevant way of presenting individuals' interpretations of their lived experiences (Sato, 2014). Among questions that Webster and Mertova (2007:4) believe can supply a useful framework to narrative research is "What are the features of narrative in education research".

William Labov used a personal experience model of analysis (See Section 4.2), which I have adapted in this thesis as a methodology to investigate women's constructions of their

identities. He used oral narrative stories that, after the analysis, were turned into texts. Mishler (1995) views that Labov's model treats the narrative as a story text, which focuses on the text and its functions to represent past events. Labov's model was established in a sequence of events that are retold, therefore this approach is event-centred, as the text is foregrounded over the context (Mishler, 1995). Event-centred narrative is presented in Chapter Three (See Section 3.5). I chose Labov's model because it is a 'way of recapitulating events' of the past, as the participants interact, they present not only themselves in relation to contexts, rather they negotiate and enact their identities (De Fina and Baynham, 2005).

#### **4.5.1. Overview of Labov's narrative model**

Both the pedagogic and research activities contributed to the making of a narrative model which I developed from Labov's model of analysis (See Table 4.1), with a few amendments that I made to design a narrative model to discuss the research questions. Labov used the term 'clause' to describe the six parts of his narrative (See Section 4.2). I adapted the meaning of three narrative clauses from Labov's model: Orientation, Complicating Action and Resolution. I instead used the term 'features'. I retained Evaluation as a feature, and I added three further features: 'mentors', 'marks', and 'future projection' (See Table 4.2). The concepts 'mentors' and 'marks' are appropriated from (Jenson, 2015) TEDx Talk. These features are defined in Chapter One (See Section 1.7.4). This thesis focused on the content and context of the written narratives with little focus on structure.

Labov's (1972) model was used for a sociolinguistic interpretation of Black English vernacular and was developed to investigate and to defend the black male speakers' language abilities. His model concerns oral narratives which are divided into six parts: Abstract (A), Orientation (O), Complicating Action (CA), Evaluation (E), Result (R), and Coda (C). 'Abstract' refers to what a narrator presents as an idea to start telling the story, and to prevent the listener from asking or wondering why it is being told. 'Orientation' represents "who is the story about", and "when did it happen?", and "where did it happen?" to represent the setting, and is often situated in the beginning of the narrative text. 'Complicating Action' refers to the 'skeleton plot' or the spin of the narrative and there may be several complicating actions. It also represents a chronological order of events. 'Evaluation' is defined as a revelation of the narrator's perspectives on the events that happened in the narrative. It is divided into three types: external, embedded and evaluative action. External evaluation happens when the narrator stops the story and explains to the listener what the idea is about. Embedded evaluation is when the narrator carries on the telling of the story describing their

feeling during that event. Evaluative action refers to reporting actions to clarify the narrator’s emotions in the event using intensifiers, comparators and explicators. ‘Resolution/Result’ refers to the resolution of the story that is the end of the story. ‘Coda’ is about the connection of the story with other events that are outside the story frame. The next table elucidates each part of Labov’s model of analysis with an example.

**Table 4.1 Labov’s model of personal narrative.**

<b>Personal Experience Narrative Clauses</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	Labov: “Have you ever been in danger of death?” Narrator: “ <i>Did I ever tell you about the time I got stuck in a lift?</i> ”
<b>Orientation</b>	<i>“Well, it was about five years when I was working in London”</i>
<b>Complicating Action</b>	<i>“And the lift just stopped between the eighth and seventh floors”</i>
<b>Evaluation</b>	<i>“I think the lift was going to plunge down into the basement”</i>
<b>Result/resolution</b>	<i>“I was free at last”</i>
<b>Coda</b>	<i>“I ever get into a lift on my own now”</i>

#### **4.6. Research questions**

**RQ1:** What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?

**RQ2:** How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?

**RQ3:** What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?



## 4.7. Pedagogic activities

There are six classroom sessions, sessions one and two took place solely in the classroom, later sessions also involved use of blog. After session three, participants were asked to transfer their writing plans into the blog.

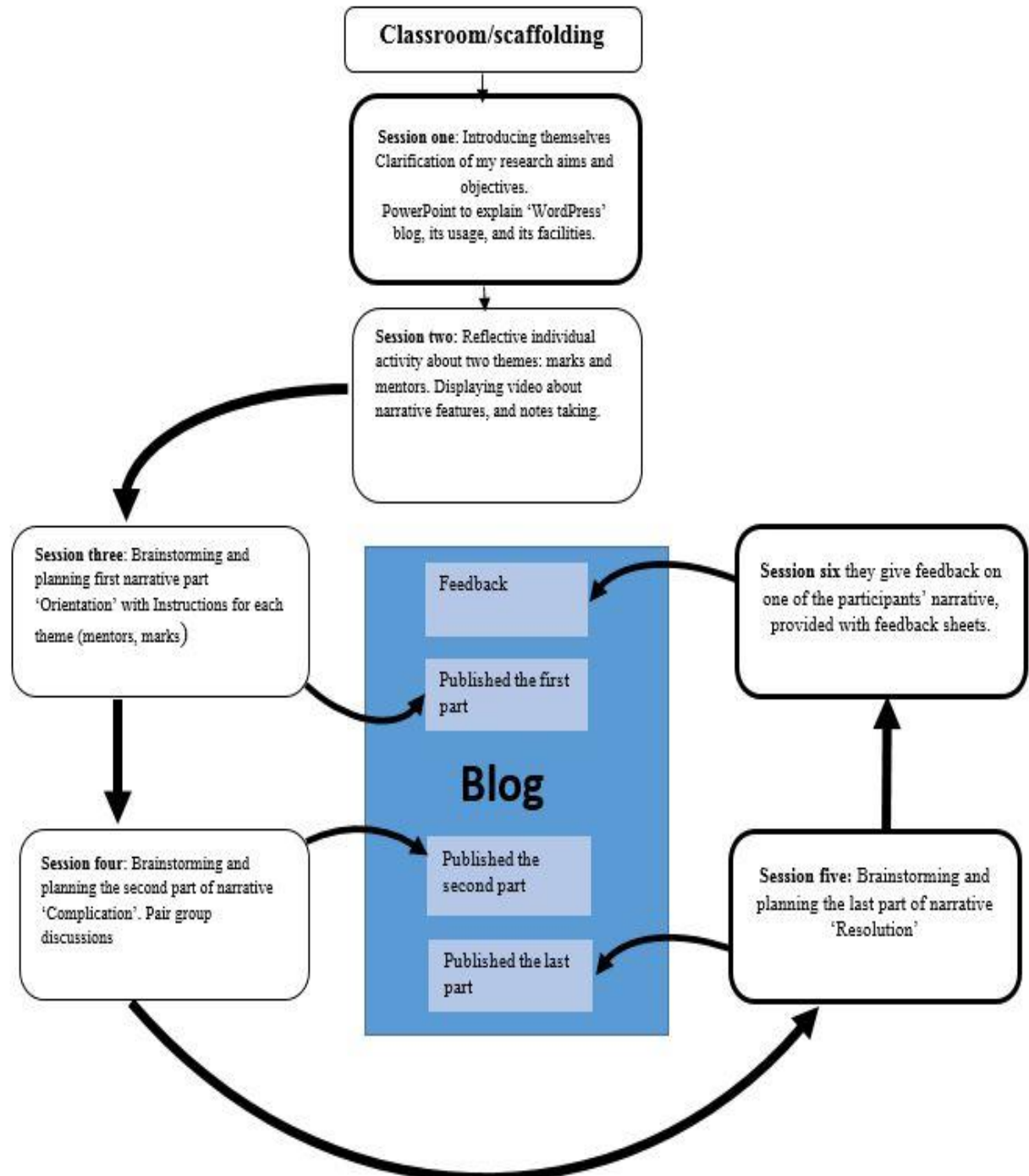


Figure 4.1 Mini-module design

### 4.7.1. Reflective activities

I adapted the meaning of three clauses from Labov’s model which are Orientation, Complicating action, and Resolution. I retained his clause of Evaluation as one of the features

**Table 4.2 Representation of Labov’s personal experience narrative vs the current research narrative model**

Labov’s Narrative Model	Current Narrative clauses	Features	Time/ Tense
Abstract	<i>Orientation</i>	<b>‘Mentors’</b>	Past
Orientation	<i>Complicating action</i>	<b>‘Marks’ and ‘Mentors’</b>	Past
Complicating Action		<b>Evaluation</b>	Present
Evaluation	<i>Resolution</i>	<b>Future Projection</b>	Future
Result/resolution			
Coda			

In session two (See Figure 4.1) I used a reflective activity as scaffolding to help students think about their ‘mentors’ as part of the orientation clause in the narrative (See Figure 4.3). This activity aimed to provide learners with a way to reflect on their life stories before they engaged in writing their narratives (Goodson and Gill, 2011). I used a series of reflective questions for three different purposes. Firstly, the questions aimed to involve students in understanding the purpose of the mini-module in session two (See Tables 4.3 and 4.4). Secondly, the questions initiated the students’ thinking about the people who had strong impacts in their learning. Thirdly, they aimed to encourage the students’ interaction, and to increase their self-efficacy and their self-presentation.

**Table 4.3 Feature one: reflecting on ‘mentors’**

Feature one	Orientation	Reflective questions
<b>‘Mentors’</b>	People	Can you describe a person (mother, father, a neighbour, a friend, or somebody else) who did something for you and you did not forget it?
		What did they do?
	Impacts	Why did not you forget about it?
		What impact did this person have on you?
	Feelings	Can you describe your feelings towards this person?
	Investment	What did you learn from this mentor? How are you going to give credit to this mentor?

A similar activity involved a list of reflective questions about the ‘marks’. A definition of ‘marks’ is presented in Chapter one (See Section 1.7.4). These questions on ‘marks’ engaged the students in understanding the meaning of ‘complicating action’ (See Figure 4.5).

**Table 4.4 Feature Two: reflecting on ‘marks’**

Feature two	Complicating Action	Reflective questions
‘Marks’	Past event	Can you think of your ‘marks’ through an event that happened to you in the recent past: a fear you felt, a moment of doubt, a moment of sorrow?
		Can you describe your feelings about it?
	Causes	What happened?
		Why did it happen?
	Feelings	What did it cause for you?
		What is its influence on you now?
	Influences	Is it still influencing you?
		Have you overcome it?
		Do you usually think of it?
	Impacts	In which way do you think of it?
		Are you trying to forget it?
		What made you talk about it particularly?

#### **4.8 Development of process writing approach**

There are two approaches of teaching writing skills which are ‘product writing’ and ‘process writing’. The product writing approach is a traditional approach of teaching writing. According to Steele (2004), product writing is divided into four stages. In stage one, learners study a model text of a specific genre such as a letter, and they are asked to focus on the language used in this model to produce their own letters. In stage two, they are required to follow the structure used in the model. In stage three, they are asked to organise their ideas. In stage four, learners present their texts individually, and teachers assess the language and the structure of these texts (Palpanadan, Bin Salam, and Bte Ismail, 2014). This shows that the final text in product writing is important.

However, in process writing, the text is written in a collaborative environment. The text needs to be cohesive, as well as meaning needs to be contextualised (Hassan and Akhand, 2010). During the writing process, learners share their texts either with the teacher or they will go through the process of peer-feedback (See Section 3.7.2). Process writing is:

[...] is a cyclical approach rather than a single-shot approach. They (students) are not expected to produce and submit complete and polished responses to their writing assignments without going through stages of drafting and receiving feedback on their drafts, be it from peers and/or

from the teacher, followed by revision of their evolving texts. (Kroll, 2001: 220-221)

Different process writing models are used for teaching writing skills. Nevertheless, Steele (2004), provides a model that consists of eight stages. Stage one is brainstorming; learners generate ideas and discuss them. Stage two is planning/structuring; learners exchange their ideas in a form of notes, and they judge the quality of their ideas. Stage three is mind mapping; it helps learners to structure their essay writing in a hierarchical relationship of ideas. Stage four is making the first draft. Stage five is peer-feedback; learners exchange their first drafts to give and receive feedback to each other, and this stage helps them to revise their first drafts. Stage six is editing/revision; learners improve their first drafts accordingly and create final drafts. Stage seven is publishing; learners submit their final drafts. Stage eight is evaluation; teachers give feedback on learners' final drafts. The current research adapted five stages of Steele's (2004) model to scaffold students' construction of their written narratives. First, brainstorming and planning were assisted with classroom activities (See Section 3.7.1). Second, students created their first narrative drafts. Third, they submitted them on the blog. Fourth, they gave and received peer-feedback on the blog. Fifth, students revised and published their final drafts on the blog, and there was no evaluation stage on the students' narratives, as the focus is on formative rather than summative activities.

These stages can be used to support writing different types of text. However, process writing has been widely used with argumentative essays. There are two main reasons that make teachers focus on teaching this particular type of essay. First, writing an argumentative essay requires both claims and supportive evidence with resources to convince readers (Hillocks, 2011). Therefore, this type of writing is regarded as a means to increase learners' critical thinking. Second, teachers aim to improve learners' use of language through applying their grammatical guidance in their essays. Nevertheless, the argumentative essay remains a difficult task for EFL learners. Chambliss and Murphey (2002) explain that EFL learners often join their English classes with little or no prior practice of this type of essay. Other researchers agreed that EFL learners find a difficulty to structure their argumentative essays, mainly how to present arguments and counterarguments (Diab, 2011; Sampson, Enderle, Grooms, and Witte, 2013).

However, the present research used written narratives rather than argumentative essays. Leki (2006) asserts that EFL/ESL learners do not have to write about what they know, and to

follow a particular structure, as this can limit the purpose of writing and learning. Richards and Renandya (2002) state that as learners become reflective and critical about their learning process, their written texts construct a unique knowledge that provides an understanding of how learning occurs. Webster and Mertova (2007) state that researchers are still not reluctant to use narrative as a method in teaching academic writing. Leki (2006) advises teachers to encourage learners' reflective skills, i.e., using different resources and a variety of themes, such as social topics to encourage learners to communicate and to engage in their writing. Palpanadan *et al.* (2014) also agree that varying the content of writing tasks can create reflective and critical texts that enhance learners' practices of writing. Therefore, enhancing learners' writing can be practised not only through argumentative essays, but also through reflective and critical texts. In this context, narrative writing was supported with learners' reflection on their learning experiences with the aim of understanding how they reconstruct their learning identities.

#### **4.7.2. Brainstorming and planning activities**

In session three (See Figure 4.4), 'mentors' in the brainstorming activity represented the orientation clause, and 'marks' represented the complicating action clause. Therefore, the complicating action in the students' narratives focused on their past learning experience which included a description of both 'mentors' and 'marks'. 'Marks' are hence identified as having an enduring impact, and the students needed to use the past tense.

Students were asked to describe their 'mentors' and 'marks' (See Tables 4.4 and 4.5). 'Marks' are divided into two chronological periods; the 'mark' can either be an event in the past or a lasting result which influenced the present. These two activities that occurred in the classroom aimed at reinforcing both 'mentors' and 'marks' during two stages of process writing: brainstorming and planning. I asked students to plan the first parts of their written narratives from the lists of questions provided.

**Table 4.5 Brainstorming and planning ‘mentors’ in students’ past learning**

Feature One	Orientation Period: <i>Past</i>	Brainstorming Questions
‘Mentors’	People	Who had an influence on you in the past?
	Setting	Where did that happen?
		How old were you?
	Feeling	What did you feel about it?
	Action and voice	How did you act at that time?
	Characters	Who was also involved?
Dialogue	What did those people say to you?	

**Table 4.6 Brainstorming and planning ‘marks’ in students’ past learning**

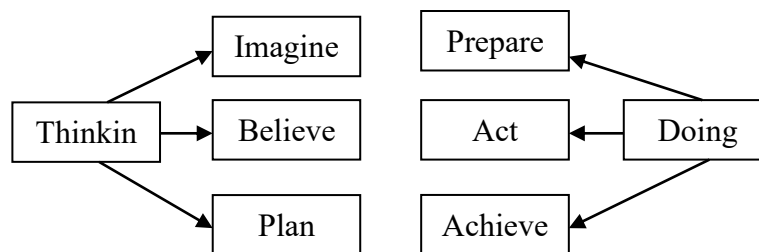
Feature two	Complicating Action/ Period: <i>Past</i>	Brainstorming Questions
‘Marks’	Past learning experience	Can you describe your past learning experiences, including your primary school, middle school and secondary school?
	People/Setting	Can you mention the people who influenced you in each stage of your learning?
	Event	Can you describe one specific <i>event</i> that <i>marked</i> you?
	Dialogue	Can you include a dialogue with someone if there was any?
	characters	Who was also involved?

The complicating action clause was further investigated to understand how students evaluated their current learning. ‘Evaluation’ is the third feature that is used after ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ in the narrative model designed in this thesis. It is defined in this thesis as students’ self-assessment of learning in the present time. The aim of engaging students in this activity was to provide a better understanding of their language difficulties, needs, and their reasons to invest in language learning.

**Table 4.7 Brainstorming and planning: evaluating the present learning**

Feature Three	Complicating Action/ Period: <i>Present</i>	Brainstorming Questions
Evaluation	Current learning Aims	Can you describe why you choose to study English? What are your aims in studying English?
	People	Does anyone help you to choose English?
	Satisfactions	How do you describe your level in English now?
	Decisions	Do you think you need to improve some skills?
	Attitudes	What do you think of writing in general?
	Actions	What are the actions that you need to take to improve your language skills?

Resolution, in this thesis represented the last feature ‘future projection’, which aimed to make students imagine their future. I used two posters to assist students to brainstorm and plan for this final part of their narrative writing. In the first poster (See Appendix 13), I presented three periods in my own learning experience, highlighting my turning points from primary school till PhD (See Appendix 12). The second poster was a diagram (See Figure 4.2) which I drew to introduce participants to two ways they can think about to plan for their future achievements. First, ‘Thinking’ involved three steps: (1) Imagine, (2) Believe, and (3) Plan. ‘Doing’ also involved three steps (1) Prepare materials, (2) ‘Act’, and (3) ‘Achieve’.



**Figure 4.2** ‘Thinking’ and ‘Doing’ stages for future learning improvement.

After these two posters, students were asked to project ten years into the future, and to plan a concluding part, which is aimed to end their narrative writing. I selected ten years because this would probably be the period when students have become established in their careers. The writing topic was as follows:

*Project your future in ten years showing where you are now, where you will be, who will be with you, what you will be doing, and what you are planning to become.*

To sum up, the model of narrative used in my research involved three learning periods: the past, the present and the future; each period was assisted with scaffolding questions; I

assigned reflective activities and brainstorming activities to understand students' life experiences in general and learning experiences. The past established students' 'mentors' and 'marks'; the focus was on the people who maintained an impact on their learning. The present established students' self-evaluation of their English learning. The combination of these two periods aimed to bring about an understanding of the relationship between students' past experience and their development of agency, investment and imagined identity.

#### **4.8. Blog and learning**

In line with the socio-constructivist view (See Section 3.2), in the blog learning context learners develop their cognitive, social and communicative processes (See Section 3.2). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, technology has become a learning resource, in which learning is enhanced with Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC consists of different online resources, such as Wikis, blogs, Twitter and forums which are used to enable learners to collaborate learn and share knowledge. These resources belong to Web 2.0 applications which started to be used in education in 2005. They are used as an aid to learning (scaffolding), and they enable peer-interaction.

This project chose 'WordPress.com' blog. Reid (2011: 313) defines this particular blog as "This site is fairly easy to use, offer step-by-step instructions for getting started, and a range of templates for the layout and design of your blog". As in formal learning contexts, learners are required to write texts, and to achieve grades; however, this way of learning can make learners lack motivation. Reid (2011) views that a blog is a space that can develop learners' motivation. On blogs learners are not limited to follow a particular writing structure (See Section 3.7); moreover, they can write about subjects that interest them. The aim of blogging is to develop learners' personal motivation towards writing, thus, this free-choice structure and content can make learners interested in writing as a practice (Reid, 2011).

There is a wide use of Web 2.0 applications for personal writing and storytelling, as they provide individual and community knowledge. Alexander (2006) suggests that to create social learning environments, it is best to integrate both learners' pre-knowledge with technology. Safran (2008) also adds that blogs are informal spaces for self-reflection. These blogs are maintained as e-portfolios which learners can use to observe their personal development. They can also be used as knowledge storage (Hain and Back, 2008). Therefore, they contribute to the construction of knowledge about learners and learning



beyond formal learning contexts. These views highlight the main purpose of this project which is reinforcing students' reflective thinking on their learning experiences.

Research in this area showed that blogs are not only spaces for knowledge construction, but they are also collaborative spaces for writing. Boas (2011) found that blog activities provide opportunities for learners to engage in the writing process, including pre-writing, drafting, peer-reviewing and revising, which are the two final stages of process writing. An experimental research conducted by Arslan and Sahin (2010) with fifty students in a Turkish university showed that integrating classroom process writing with blog writing instruction increased the performance of the learners' writing. The results demonstrated that learners' writing performance increased from a pre-test score mean 44.15 to a post- test score mean 72.29 (Arslan and Sahin, 2010).

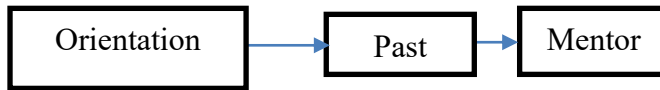
Peer-interaction/feedback in blogs is facilitated with a commentary space which allows learners to give and receive feedback (Dippold, 2009), this enables them to detect their writing strengths and weaknesses and improve their writing. Blogs can also increase learners' reflections on the content through the feedback suggested by their peers. As a learning platform, a blog was used in the present research for two main purposes. First, it carried on with the publishing stage of the students' narrative drafts. Second, the commentary space in the blog facilitated the giving and receiving of asynchronous feedback (Johnson, 2006). Both publishing and interacting through feedback provided students with an opportunity to share and to negotiate their learning experiences (See Figure 4.1).

As it was established that blogging and reflection are inextricably linked; hence, blogging was optimised to encourage students' reflection on their previous experiences to mitigate their negative feelings and attitudes towards their past experiences. Regarding this, learners' sense of identity can be nurtured out of their shared experiences, and interests and needs in learning. Then, this platform can create a new content for a better understanding of how students shape their new experiences in learning.

#### **4.9. Research activities**

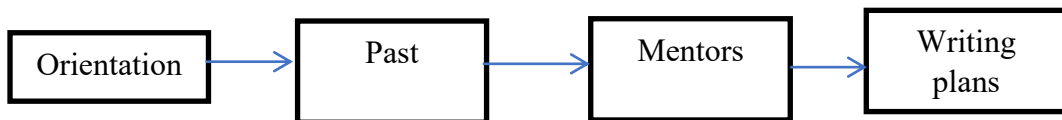
The pedagogic activities outlined above produced materials and opportunities for me to collect data from both the classroom sessions and blog, and this data could be used for the research activities as well as the pedagogic activities. The narrative designed in this thesis involved the students' development of their identity along three periods (past, present and

future). The first clause presented in research – orientation – introduced the feature of ‘mentors’ which is defined as people who had an influence in the students’ learning, who can be teachers, friends or others (See Table 4.5). ‘Mentors’ was explored as follows:



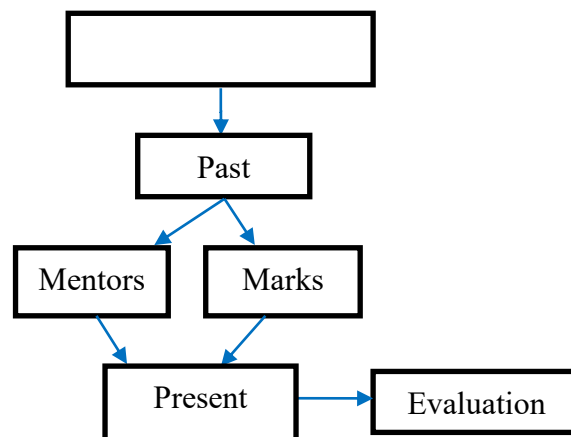
**Figure 4.3** Representing ‘mentors’ in the orientation clause

Students’ writing plans were collected after the brainstorming and planning activity. I used these writing plans to follow the development of students’ reflection along with their revised narrative drafts. However, the content of the writing plans was reiterated in their final drafts, which made me analyse the content of the written narratives only. An example of these writing plans is showed in Chapter Five (See Figure 5.2).



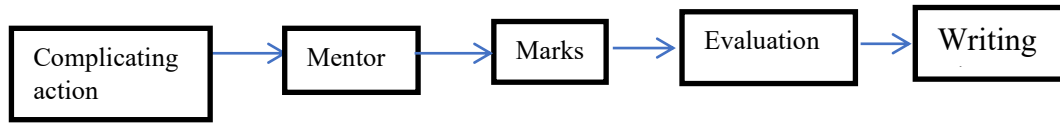
**Figure 4.4** Data collected from students’ plans ‘mentors’

The second narrative clause is complicating action; it aimed to include a description of ‘marks’ so that the meaning of ‘mentors’ stands in its own. This feature is divided into two chronological periods: past and present. The past tense was used to describe events that occurred in the past (See Table 4.6). The present tense was used to narrate about their choice of English, and their ability to evaluate their current learning (See Table 4.7). This figure describes how the complicating action clause was separated into two periods.



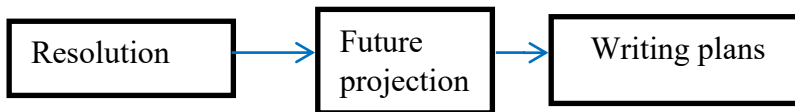
**Figure 4.5** Relationship between the past ‘marks’ and the present ‘evaluation’

Students' writing plans of the second parts of their written narratives were gathered after the brainstorming and planning activity of 'evaluation' (See Table 4.6)



**Figure 4.6** Data collected from students' plans of 'mentors', 'marks' and evaluation.

The third narrative clause is resolution; they brainstormed and planned their narratives based on writing topic I provided, which aimed to enable them to imagine and to plan their future.



**Figure 4.7** Resolution: 'future projection'

#### 4.10. Purposive sampling

In social sciences, there are two types of sampling: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is impractical for this thesis, and usually is not a matter of interest to qualitative researchers. Bryman (2015) explains that non-probability sampling is considered unrepresentative since the subjectivity of the researcher or the availability of the willing participants interfere in the selection of a target sample. However, it could be useful when the researcher has limited time, space and resources for collecting data. Non-probability sampling is used in the qualitative approach, and the sample is chosen to represent itself. It is divided into purposive sampling, convenience sampling and cluster sampling. Purposive sampling is selected following prior criteria that can be established at the outset of research. The criteria of selecting a sample are established to fit the research questions and research objectives (Wilmot, 2005; Bryman, 2015).

In a qualitative study, the quality of non-probability sampling is not based on the sample size, rather it is based on the characteristics of the sample. However, other qualitative researchers argue that the selection of a number of participants depends on the characteristics of the chosen sample, considering other variables, such as the participants' age and gender (Wilmot, 2005). Therefore, approaches that are drawn for life story methods are associated with small-scale samples because the researcher needs to provide in-depth information about each case in the study (Bryman, 2015).

In general, sample sizes in qualitative research should not be so small as to make it difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation, or informational redundancy. At the same time, the sample should not be so large that is difficult to undertake a deep, case-oriented analysis. (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007:289)

The first concern of selecting participants through purposive sampling was to fit the research questions. The second concern was to obtain a few essential details about the students' context of learning. The third concern was to understand this group of women participants' experiences deeply. As the sample size is not taken as a variable to determine the data collected from the participants, I have selected ten participants so that I could control the data shared in the blog and the classroom interactions. The final objective is concerned with the findings of research which is reaching a variation of details and interpretations to answer the research questions. This variation is concerned with two main differences: (1) participants' presentation of their 'mentors' and 'marks', (2) their differences in constructing their future identities. Therefore, new themes that emerged from the findings intended to find the common experiences that the participants share with each other.

#### **4.10.1. Research participants**

In this thesis, the term 'sampling' is substituted with 'participants', who were accessed from Tlemcen University. The Algerian system of education is presented in Chapter One (See Section 1.2). This research was conducted with ten participants at second-year Bachelor level. Second year students had an academic writing module which covered the teaching of different types of essays writing: descriptive essay, expository essay, argumentative essay and narrative essay. Students at this level were divided into groups; the total number of groups was ten. However, not all of the groups were taught the narrative essay, which motivated me to choose this level in particular. Doing a narrative research is suitable for second-year Bachelor students; they had a busy timetable and it did not require further reading of resources, because they accounted for their own learning experiences.

I accessed the ten participants through my former teacher who helped me contact them. To respect the ethical procedure in this research, I emailed the head of the English department a Permission Letter (See Appendix 24), I sent an Information Sheet to my former teacher (See Appendix 25) and a Consent Form (See Appendix 26). Second, I travelled to Algeria, I met with two groups of students which were group nine and group ten. I introduced myself, and I briefly explained that I aimed to find some volunteer students to attend my mini-module and to contribute to the blog writing. Both groups signed the Consent Form, and they agreed that I

could attend their grammar session for classroom observation. Both groups were observed in 7/02/2017. Observation of group ten lasted from at 09 am to 10 am, and group nine from 10:30 am to 11:30 am (See Appendix 1).

I observed both groups with a list of purposes: (a) Gender: observing only the women in the class. (b) Interactivity: interaction between the women in classroom activities; in both groups the number of women outweighed the number of men (c) Collaborative work: I mainly observed students working in pairs. At the end of both group nine and ten sessions, I asked them to leave their email addresses. In group ten, seven women wrote down their emails. However, some of them apologised for not taking part as they had a limited access to the internet. One woman confirmed that she could use her mobile to log-in to the blog. From group nine, twelve women provided their emails and their phone numbers. The students showed an exceptional willingness to take part in the mini-module. Some of them expressed that they were excited to see what the mini-module held (See Appendix 1).

Some of these women opened new email accounts. I also requested those whose email addresses revealed their real names to open new accounts using pseudonyms. This procedure is explained in the ethical consideration of using blogs in research. Within five days, I received emails from fifteen women; I sent them Information Sheet (See Appendix 27) and Consent Form (See Appendix 28). I also checked the students' availability during the week, and the availability of the rooms and materials with the head of the department.

Students' timetable limited them to participate because they were from different groups, I could not easily arrange to find time relevant to gather students. Fifteen women from both groups confirmed their attendance to the mini-module, nevertheless, only thirteen came in session one, and the whole project ended with ten women participants. These participants shared the same cultural and educational backgrounds. They engaged in the same sessions of the mini-module and were assigned to the same activities in pair group discussions.

**Table 4.8 Women's profile**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Year Bachelor</b>	<b>Age</b>
Alia	English	20
Bahia	English	21
Chams	English	22
Djamila	English	20
Esmā	English	20
Fatima	English	21
Gazala	English	20
Hana	English	21
Isra	English	21
Janah	English	20

#### **4.11. Research methods**

The data were collected from various methods with the purpose of providing different perspectives on each participant in different learning periods (the past, the present, and the future). These methods are participant observation, written narratives, and focus group discussions. Audio-recording and field notes are used as research procedures to facilitate the process of collecting the data.

##### **4.11.1. Participant observation**

Barker and Pistrang (2015) say that observation enables the researcher to monitor individuals' or groups' behaviour over a period in natural settings. Observation is a technique used for collecting exploratory data about the behaviour and attitudes of a specific community. Direct observation differs from participant observation; it is associated with research that requires quantitative data. Direct observation is based on a structured form to collect the data, meaning researchers look for frequency or intensity of the events and the behaviour occurring in the environment. Researchers therefore are not necessarily involved in the interaction between the participants, as they focus on observing their behaviour.

In contrast, participant observation is defined as a social observation that is featured with the immersion of the researcher within the investigated context (Barker *et al.*, 2015). Observing and participating are integral aspects that illuminate the breadth and complexity of human experiences.

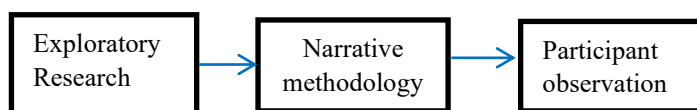
Participant observation has been used for a long-time by anthropologists. However, this method can be employed on a limited basis, and it produces a deep insight into the studied context (Guest, Namey, and Mitchell, 2013). Guest *et al.* (2013) suggest three key points which researchers need to consider in undertaking participant observation. (1) It can be used

at any context which is empowered by interaction between people. Researchers using this method should be embedded in the action, which takes place in social environments (schools, homes, and communities). (2) They need to build a trustful rapport with the participants; they need to be accepted in that community which they are involved in for observation purposes. This means that a researcher is not in a complete insider position within the context. (3) Researchers also can interact with the participants to be able to generate sufficient data their research need. i.e., they can use other methods depending on the research questions and the scope of the research.

I used this method as it enabled me to act as an insider in the research, as the aim was to approach the participants, and to involve them in interactive and reflective activities. I collected the data related to the process of writing their narratives. I could not have engaged in the classroom interaction if I used direct observation. Participant observation enabled me to design the questions I set for the focus group discussions. It taught me what to ask and how to ask (Guest *et al.*, 2013).

According to Bernard (2006, quoted in Guest *et al.*, 2013: 6), “To establish the topics of inquiry for later, more structured data collection. If your knowledge of a social milieu is so minimal you aren't even sure what topics might exist to ask about—participant observation is an excellent starting point”. I carried out participant observation in the classroom activities, as I aimed to establish the use of ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ in a narrative inquiry, according to my reading these two themes have not been used in previous works related to narrative and identity.

After discussing the different reasons for choosing participant observation method, I also explain how I have employed it. In the classroom sessions, my notes focused on the participants’ interactions during activities, their questions and behaviour. As a researcher-participant I moderated the participants’ activities over seven weeks, and the blog when they published each part of their narratives. Moreover, I documented my observations through note-taking and audio-recordings with regard to the ethical concern (See Appendix 28). The analysis of participant observation is provided in Chapter Five (See Section 5.2).



**Figure 4.8** Participant observation used for classroom and blog data collection.

#### **4.11.2. Written narratives method**

A narrative is a method used to capture individuals' experiences, learning and change. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), teaching and learning are two concepts of education that are regarded as continuous and reconstructive processes of experience, and that can be represented in narrative methods. Therefore, Kalaja, Menezes, and Barcelos (2008) state that individuals take from their past experiences and modify their future experiences. Participants' narratives, in this case, present the past which has roots in the present, and an eye to the future.

Webster and Mertova (2007) presented different perspectives which explain narrative as a research method. (1) Narrative brings together the myriad of aspects that are studied separately through other research methods. (2) It is a reflective process, and it presents a retrospective information. (3) It is an emerging method, but it is placed within qualitative methods. (4) It is a method that presents a better understanding of influencing factors on individuals' actions, and it brings them to the forefront.

Webster and Mertova (2007) state that there is a lack of a comprehensive representation of how to use a narrative inquiry as a research method. However, it can be presented through texts which are based on teachers' and learners' reflections on their own learning experiences. Another concern is raised by Webster and Mertova (2007) that a narrative method offers written research stories of learning and teaching which have been mostly oral-based. A narrative method presents the centredness and the complexity of individuals in their social and cultural realms, which can illuminate issues in teaching and learning.

In education, these texts are constructed through posing questions that help learners reflect on their learning experiences; for instance, how they learnt a foreign or a second language. Moreover, analysing written narratives enables researchers to understand social and psychological factors that influence learning a language; for example, learners' fears, motivation, struggles, family influence, etc. (Pavlenko, 2001). This method is used, in this thesis to collect participants' written narratives. I chose this method among many research methods because it allowed students to produce their texts based on reflection and interpretation of their own experiences. Investigating narratives provides a sequential analysis of periods of the students' learning process, which allows me to discover their development in learning.



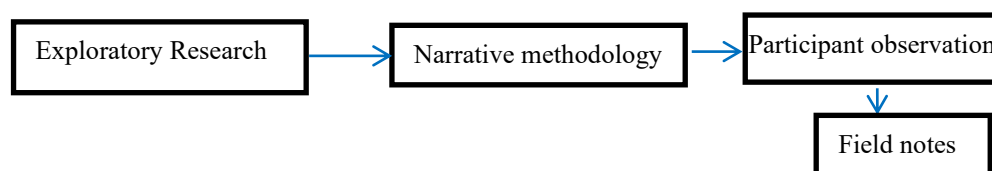
### 4.11.3. Audio-recording

Audio-recording is a procedure used for collecting qualitative data. I recorded the six classroom sessions including pair group interactions and the focus group discussions. Audio-recording saved me a great deal of time, though I had to sometimes jot down important details that the recorder could not show. The audio-recorder helped in storing the data, which I immediately transcribed after every session, so that I could remember most of the details and link them with the participant observation. The audio-recording protocol was mentioned in the Consent Form that the participants' voices would not be shared with anybody, and that data would be destroyed as soon as the research had been published. The participants agreed and signed the Consent Form during the first session of the mini-module.

### 4.11.4. Field notes

Field notes are used in qualitative research to reflect on the progress and process of research (Braun and Clarke, 2013). I took sketchy notes (words and phrases) (Babbie, 2016), then I transferred them into statements that covered more details. In this thesis, I maintained notes both during the data collection session, and I included reflections and comments immediately after. I noted down how participants were contacted and recruited. Most of my notes were presented in participant observation, for example, how they interacted with each other (See Section 5.2). I wrote the number of participants who attended and the questions they raised during the activities.

Using field notes enabled me to note down the emotional aspect of this research which included the participants' feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, and pride. Most of the participants' feelings were revealed during the classroom sessions. Note-taking of the participants' emotions added an insight into my reflections about the relationship between the themes emerged from the data. I also maintained reflections on my role in the blog (See Section 7.7). I observed participants' blog feedback and revisions, and I kept notes about their engagement in peer-feedback after three months of the end of the mini-module.

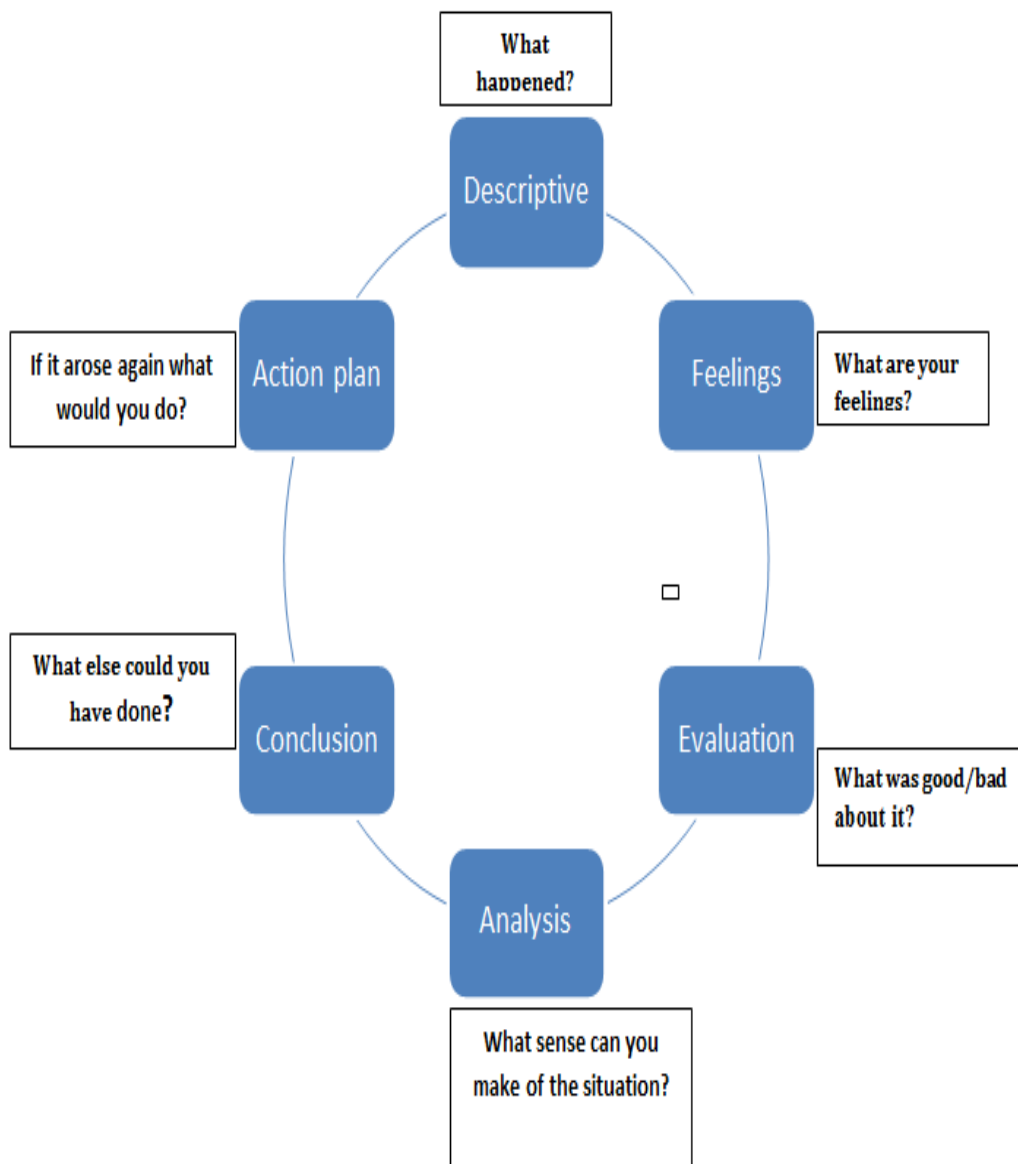


**Figure 4.9** Field notes used for classroom and blog data collection

#### **4.11.5. Focus group discussions**

Focus groups are defined as when the researcher aims to meet a specific group of people to discuss a topic that has been put for a purpose. One rule of designing a focus group is that people need to engage to the same ‘interest’ being discussed. The major steps that a researcher should consider when undertaking a focus group are: (1) Establishing an agenda which is based on the identification of a problem, (2) Going with a previous idea about the topic in discussion. (3) Considering the type of information needed to attain the research purposes.

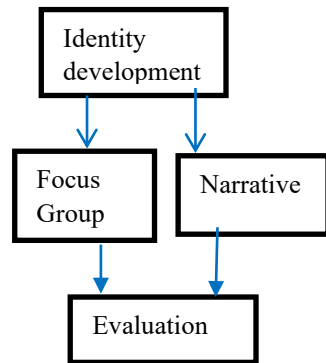
This thesis employed focus group discussions in order to deeply explore participants’ learning experiences, and the events that marked them. It was also used to create a sense of sharing their feelings and attitudes about their experiences. These discussions made learners think about their current feelings of their events in the past, and the present, and projecting their future learning identities. Participants’ written narratives were used as a stimulus for discussion, as this strategy might make the discussion rich (Colucci, 2017). Three different focus group discussions were conducted. Group one included five women, group two included three women, and group three was composed of two women. Thus, this research produced a synergic process: the mini-module was a scaffolding for the constructing of their written narratives, and thereby the content of their written narratives was the focal interest of the focus group questions. Focus group questions were adopted from Gibbs’ (1988) reflective model which was used for several purposes: (1) the model involved reflections on the past, the present, and a projection of the future, which were relevant to the sequence of time followed in the narratives. (2) It aimed to increase participants’ understanding of their unique individual approach of learning. (3) It was used to develop features: ‘mentors’, ‘marks’, ‘evaluation’ and ‘future projection’ to enrich the methodological perspective on women’s experiences from an educational standpoint. Gibbs’ model is showed in the following figure.



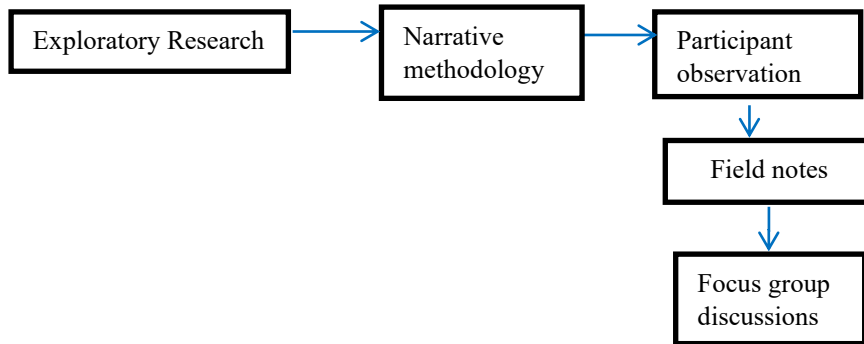
**Figure 4.10** Gibbs' (1988) model of reflective learning adapted for focus group discussions

This model involved six stages of reflective practice (See Appendix 20); each stage included several questions to study the progress of the events participants raised in the discussions. *Evaluation* is mentioned in Gibbs' model to test reflective thinking of any individual involved in a reflective practice. Evaluation is also a feature in my narrative model which aims to enable participants to evaluate themselves and their choices. Participants' self-evaluation through both written narratives and focus group discussions is as a form of method triangulation (Braun and

Clark, 2013) (See Section 4.13.1). Findings from focus group discussion were subjected to thematic analysis (See Section 4.12).



**Figure 4.11** Evaluation as a triangulating feature between narrative and focus group.



**Figure 4.12** Focus group discussions method

#### 4.12. Data transcription and analysis

Narrative is best analysed with the thematic approach, particularly when then the focus of the analysis is on the content and the meaning transferred in the narratives (Block, 2010). This process comprises three stages of their learning. As a researcher in this realm, I am looking to achieve an understanding of these periods, and to investigate how participants’ events could have an impact on constructing their learning identity.

As the narratives were published in the blog, I copied each narrative onto Word office to save copies in my personal computer. I transcribed the audio-recordings used in classroom interaction and focus group discussions. The table below represents Braun and Clarke’s six-phase framework for doing thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is based on identifying the themes from the data to discuss an issue in research. (1) I did an initial reading of the transcripts to acquire a broad meaning of the data as this was suggested by Creswell (2012) as a preparation for the coding process. My initial reading helped me to familiarise myself with the participants’ social and learning backgrounds such as their family members, their peers,

and their teachers. I could also observe that they included the school period they regarded as the most important in their learning process, including their ages in that period. (2) I thoroughly read the data, and I coded segments of the data. Saldaña (2009:3) defines a code as “A word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data”. I used inductive analysis, meaning I coded the datasets line by line to capture details (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). I worked on this coding process by hand and through hard copies of the transcripts with a pen and highlighters. (3) I worked on codes that joined together to make a theme, and then on codes that made sub-themes. A theme is an outcome of coding, categorisation and analytical reflection (Saldaña (2009). (4) I reviewed by gathering together the data which is relevant to each theme and sub-theme; I read the data to ensure whether they fit the themes. (5) I defined the themes and sub-themes and I reviewed what they involved. (6) I provided reports to discuss these themes and sub-themes which emerged from the data.

**Table 4.9 Process of thematic analysis**

<b>Familiarising with data</b>
Transcribing data, reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
<b>Generating Initial Codes</b>
Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
<b>Searching for Themes</b>
Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
<b>Reviewing themes</b>
Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.
<b>Defining and naming themes</b>
Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
<b>Producing the report</b>
The final opportunity for analysis selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

Using this framework of analysis aimed to provide a database for the findings and results, and to establish a thematic contribution from the themes found. For written narratives, for example thematic analysis is relevant, as Korhonen (2014:72) explains that analysing narratives is based on “reading the narrative first as a whole and then identifying themes based on the content reflects the temporality of the narrative and offers cognitive evidence of the participants’ experiences of language learning”. Also, for focus group discussion Braun and Clark (2006) recommended thematic analysis approach.

#### **4.13. Researcher’s positionality**

My role as a researcher has been in shifting positions: an insider and outsider. I followed Goodson and Gill (2011) who suggested that it is valuable for teachers to be in an equal process with their students, rather than to be as experts. I acted as an insider in four different ways. First, I used participant observation (See section 4.12.1), as it enabled me to approach the participants, and to involve them in interactive and reflective activities.

Second, in session five (See section 5.2) I shared my personal learning experiences in a narrative form, that is the narrative below may carry language mistakes, as it was orally presented. I also used a poster which I drew (See Appendix 12) to explain the different learning periods that highlighted my learning transitions. I talked about the sources of power as family, and the learning of French at primary school. I also talked about my weaknesses in mathematics in the middle school. These two school periods represented my early learning. I linked how my exam failure was the event that enabled my transition to secondary school. I added that this event was not only a mark, but it also turned into a turning point as I reflect on it in the present. I highlighted that this mark enabled me to enact my agency; failure was an experience which triggered my desire for creating change in my own narrative. This event presented agency as a process of *change*; as event of failure challenged my perceptions of myself and changed them; I could think of possible new self-images: a learner who can succeed as others, and a learner who become a language teacher.

To make transition from the past to the present, I shared my IELTS experience to show that I learnt from my past failure event to invest in my new experiences in order to achieve my aims. Doing a PhD was another example which showed learners can develop an ability to make their own choices. The IELTS was a way which would enable me to join a desired community of practice (PhD abroad and academia). I draw on these two examples to explain that agency is a phenomenon that is subjective to different experiences of the past and present

learning experiences. Agency in these examples was presented as a process of *continuity*, as I narrated two events which were not bound by time: they concerned the present which looked for a future achievement.

Third, sharing how I developed my learning identity with the participants (See below) aimed to support them to consider their past experiences; to increase their agency in learning; to enable them to exercise the power to reflect in change of their aims, actions, and plans; to support them to reflect positively on their future identity. I supported the use of my personal narrative with Ryan and Gill (2010) who suggested that engaging students in a self-reflective activity can produce a 'good research'.

### **Personal narrative**

*In the past, school teachers gave gifts to children who give the right answer. Usually the gift was a piece of chalk. I was among the weakest pupils in Maths. I had a wish that one of my teachers would give me a gift. Teachers adapted the behaviourist treatment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; this treatment is considered as a mechanistic reward. Reward develops children's mind focus, which motivates them to behave well to gain a reward. Children at this age zoom the goal, but the issue with this method is that the solution (the right answer) remains in the periphery, and children lack the meaning of interaction, as everybody is dealing with their own.*

*My experience in the past was perplexed, I felt less intelligent than other pupils, as math was a very important school subject, and this affected my school average and my motivation. However, I was influenced by my teacher of French in the primary school, she loved me, she used to put my essays on the board, and my average was the highest in her class. This event empowered my self-confidence. I used to imitate her behaviour in class when I played with my friends at home. I saw myself a future teacher. As I moved to middle school, I lacked interest to school subjects, as the focus was maths, physics and science. I think the educational system was not balanced, I wonder why scientific subjects required high coefficients, and many of the students failed due to their non-interest or less abilities in science.*

*I failed one year, I felt shy, and I wanted to give up. However, my parents encouraged me to persevere. I succeeded in the next school year, and I enrolled for foreign languages course at secondary school. This event I regarded as my real transition in learning; my average has increasingly changed; I looked as a smart student in class, as I was among the best students. I started to develop my own understanding about learning and school; I loved my teachers, and I studied hard. I regard this event as both a transition that occurred as I moved from middle school to secondary school, and as a turning point which changed my desire to learning and nurtured me with a sense of empowerment to continue my learning. Before I passed my tertiary exam, I was confident that I would never fail in my learning, because that failing event maintained an enduring impact in my learning process. I think my motivation towards continuity in learning and success is hugely depending on the fear of failure.*

*I chose English at University due to my father's advice, as he was a lecturer, and he said that through English I can do a lot. In my English class, I was one of the best students who were rewarded with a scholarship to the UK. I reflected on my school in*

*the past, and I whispered myself, Yes, that's my gift! I learnt that achieving your goals is about investing in it, believing in it, and committing yourself to it. Now, I perceive my learning in the past not a failure, but a bridge which opens a new trajectory. That fear of failure empowered my imagination of the future. I accepted the new challenge to PhD; I prepared myself to examine the IELTS; I spent two months working on the four language skills needed for the test. I began with the reading skills; I used to spend my days in the library checking scientific articles about the environment, health and global warming. I worked on IELTS templates; I practised the writing skill; I asked my friend for feedback and rewrote to improve the last versions of the essays. I practised the listening skill; I used to turn on the BBC radio, when they invited guests, I tried to anticipate what and how they answered the questions. These strategies helped me in improving my listening and speaking skills. I imagine myself a doctor, but this is not the end of the story, this is only the beginning of becoming that character you imagined.*

Fourth, the participants responded to my personal narrative: Isra said, *"This is a motivating experience I have ever heard"*. Bahia maintained a nice smile on her face during my presentation. Gazala expressed, *"This a long process of learning full of ups and downs"*, and Djamila said, *"It is a TEDx talk itself"*. Frost and Holt (2014) regard that the participants' engagement with researchers, positioned them as 'insiders'

However, I had a shifting position from an insider to an outsider in other ways. First, as opposed to my inclusion in the mini-module in the students' blog writing, and feedback activities, I acted as an outsider, as I approved their blog entries only. Second, though I assisted them with my personal narrative, I believe that my emotions were transmitted to them as an 'outsider'. I supported this point with a few differences which distinguished my situation from the participants: (1) I was in a different learning level; (2) I came from a different learning community; (3) I was unfamiliar with the participants' personal experiences of learning, and (4) I never met them before.

Both insider/outsider positions involved me in the research context, and they enabled me to assist the participants with the activities which supported the narrative writing both in the classroom and the blog. I could share my personal learning to build on a report with them and to collect the data that helped me to answer my research questions. The power dynamic in this research (See section 4.15.1) created an understanding of the participants' learning process, and how they develop their learning identity.

#### **4.14. Ethical consideration**

This section discusses the research ethic codes that have been maintained to safeguard research integrity; in addition, other concepts are discussed in the next section (See Section



4.13.1) to demonstrate that this research regarded the trustworthiness of the data collected through a qualitative approach.

To access the research context, I previously emailed the head of the English department of Tlemcen University a Permission Letter (See Appendix 23). Regarding the meeting, I clarified that I needed to access some facilities, such as a video projector and a teaching room. She provided me with a list of the teaching rooms available, and she signed the consent form. In the same day, my former teacher signed and handed back the Consent Form (See Appendix 26), and she arranged for me to meet with her students from two groups (group nine and group ten). I explained, in this meeting that I would observe them in their grammar sessions and invite them to take part in my research. After the end of both sessions, some students showed their willingness to volunteer, and they left their email addresses. I emailed them the Information Sheet (See Appendix 26) and Consent Form (See Appendix 27). I explained to participants that they would not be pressurised to participate in this research, and they were informed that data-gathering could perhaps take more time than mentioned in the consent form. Participants were adults, their ages were from twenty to twenty-two, and thus age did not require any additional ethical procedure.

The process of data collection was conducted through a careful consideration of all research contexts: classroom and blog, and face to face focus group discussions. Research dignity was maintained with the participants who were involved in this thesis. The British Psychological Society (2017) recommends that researchers need to maintain dignity during the process of data collection. I respected the privacy of the participants to safeguard integrity in this research context (Salmons, 2010). Privacy can be closely linked to confidentiality and anonymity. In the current research, anonymity was regarded in the dissemination of the findings; I replaced the participants' real names with pseudonyms. This could also be regarded as authenticity as other identifying names that appeared in their narratives were substituted with pseudonyms, such as the names of their 'mentors'.

I maintained confidentiality about the informal discussions between myself and the participants. Some of them shared their issues with their teachers. On one occasion, one participant felt she could be threatened that she talked to me about her teacher, and I informed her that the data they provided about their current teachers was not important, as the focus was on their current self-evaluation of their English learning. This participant felt relieved and

said, “*I do not care even if the teacher knows*”. To safeguard confidentiality, I did not use the content of our discussion in the findings.

Online research has far-reaching ethical issues. However, there is an ongoing research which aims to provide an online research protocol concerning ethics procedures. However, in the meantime, this area is provided with standard guidelines (Salmons, 2010). The issue of privacy in this research carefully considered the protection of the participants’ identities. The ethics guideline for internet-mediated research published by the British Psychological Society (2017) showed that it is difficult to maintain anonymity because researchers do not have a complete control of the online websites. Salmons (2010) advocated that researchers need to fully disclose information about participants’ names, emails and any details that can be attributed to them by search engines. However, Web 2.0 services made privacy controls that prevent the search engines from accessing the content of these web applications; hence the search engines consider these web settings. For example, WordPress blog supports the distribution of the content into three preferences: ‘public’, ‘hidden’ and ‘private’. Choosing ‘Public’ means everyone can read the site and it will appear in search engines and other contents. Choosing ‘hidden’ means that people can visit the blog, but not all search engines respect the settings of the blog. Choosing ‘private’ means that only people who the owner of the blog added can view the blog (WordPress Support Page, 2019).

To verify the blog privacy setting, I opened a trial blog, I added some friends as viewers. I ensured that the content of the blog was not found by *google.com*. Through this trial, I could reflect on protecting participants’ actual emails. I managed their anonymity in the blog as follows:

- I debriefed the participants about their anonymity and privacy in the blog.
- To protect their anonymity, I set the blog as ‘private’.
- I asked them to open new email accounts with pseudonyms.
- I invited them to the blog through these emails.
- As they accepted the invitations, they had to name their blog entry; they logged in with pseudonyms.

#### **4.14.1. Trustworthiness**

In science, the term validity is used to measure the objectivity of the study, however, in narrative inquiry the aim is to present findings that are well supported and grounded in individuals' experiences. Webster and Mertova (2007) state that data in narrative inquiry are not reported as a 'truth', but 'verisimilitude'. This means that conclusions of narrative research are open to further investigation (Polkinghorne, 1988). Webster and Mertova (2007) also regard that data is checked by 'trustworthiness' of field notes and transcription of qualitative methods. As Bryman (2008) regards that in interpretivist research, trustworthiness is important to assess data in qualitative research.

Establishing *trustworthiness*, in this thesis for the participants was necessary because they described their behaviour in the past which did not present them in a good manner, for instance not making enough effort in their learning and their lack of self-confidence in the past. This showed that the participants were willing to share details from their experiences with the whole group in different contexts: in pair works, blog narratives and the focus group discussions. This thesis was concerned with five criteria of trustworthiness that explain that this thesis is an authentic piece of research: transparency, authenticity, transferability, credibility, and triangulation.

The aspect of *transparency* concerns the researcher's responsibility to describe and explain the process of conducting a study. I have addressed the issue of transparency by providing a detailed description of how this research has been conducted. The data were collected from both classroom sessions, blog narratives, and focus group discussions.

I have been explicit about the participants' inclusion and participants' withdrawal (See Appendix 27). For participants' inclusion, I asked them if they had daily access to the internet. A few students apologised as they had not access to the internet on a daily basis, and others said that they did not have email accounts.

I also provided participants with a valid Information Sheet (See Appendix 27) that informed them about the different research methods used in the data collection. In the Consent Form (See Appendix 27) participants were also informed that they would be observed and audio-recorded during the sessions and the focus group discussions. In addition, clear explanations were provided about the purpose and the duration of this research. I also noted that their data would be analysed and disseminated, and that the data or partial data would be reused for

future publications. However, their data would be anonymised before being shared with other research teams, such as co-authoring papers. I noted that their data could be accessed by myself and in an anonymous way with my supervisors. I was explicit about the audio-recordings, participant observations and focus groups transcripts. The consent form included a clear statement that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to withdraw from the mini-module in the first and the second sessions. I also explained that they could withdraw their data from the blog three months after the end of the mini-module (See Appendix 27)

*Transparency* in this thesis was also concerned with data analysis and storage. As I made progress in presenting the research findings, I found that the content of the participants' writing plans appeared similar to the content of the written narratives. I narrowed down the amount of the data I analysed to present the foci of my research. I included an example from one participant's writing plans (See Figure 5.2). Managing the data storage, the University of Northampton provided a secure electronic space (Taundra2) that I used to preserve the research data (Ethics Code and Procedures, 2018).

*Transferability* was also regarded, as I considered how far were the participants' responses truthful? How much data was brought into discussion of the research questions? In this case, participants were not given the activity questions prior to any session. Also, in the focus group discussions, they were not aware or informed about the questions they discussed. Their answers were immediate and spontaneous accordingly with the time set for each activity, and to the focus group discussions.

*Transferability* is also concerned with the description of the context (EFL), including their experiences from different research methods (See Section 7.4). It presented a detailed description of the research settings: classroom sessions, and blog writing. This research can be applied into a similar context (EFL) (See Section 7.5).

*Credibility* in this research was maintained through checking the interpretation of the data with the participants. I aimed to report the data as interpreted by the participants to ensure that I presented reality from their own views (Gass and Mackey, 2006). On several occasions, I was confused about the meaning they wanted to communicate in their narratives; for example, Gazala mentioned in both the written narratives and the focus group discussions that she was 'playing hockey'. My primary understanding was that she used to play hockey as a game. However, as I was aware that in my region, this game was not famous, I contacted her, and I found that she wanted to say that she used to be absent from her class (playing hooky). I

adopted a ‘respondent validation’ technique suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1994); I sent each participant a transcript of the focus group discussions; I showed them how the data from their narratives have been used in the findings chapter. This technique aimed to present accurate interpretations of the data.

I also maintained credibility, as I used Chams’ narrative in session six for classroom peer-feedback activity. I asked her a week before this session. I chose Chams because during the mini-module sessions, I knew that she was taking care of her father whose health was not good. By this, she was more motivated to finish her narrative as I asked her to write her final part of the narrative ‘future projection’. In this way, I could secure her withdrawal from the last session of the mini-module. She showed an understanding of the peer-feedback activity, as she did not object when participants exchanged feedback on her narrative.

*Triangulation* refers to cross-checking the findings that derived from different research methods. Triangulation aims to present a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 1999). I have regarded methods triangulation suggested by Patton (1999). Methods triangulation is frequently used in qualitative research. Researchers use two or more research methods to draw multiple observations and conclusions (Patton, 1999). In this thesis, focus group discussions was employed to expand on information generated from the written narratives, and the field notes. To illustrate, the themes identified in focus groups were like the themes that emerged from the written narratives, however, in some instances, they were differently packaged. For example, in the focus group the theme ‘experience conclusions’ was expanded from the two sub-themes in the analysis of the written narratives which are ‘mentors’ enduring impact’, and ‘marks’ enduring impact’ (See Figure 6.2). In the narratives, participants explained how their ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ influenced them, however, in the group discussions, they focused on what they learnt from them.

This showed that their perceptions on these two aspects changed and became accepted in the present. Triangulation was also checked in a similar line with themes that appeared in both narratives and the focus groups (See Figure 6.2), (See Section 5.3.2), and (See Section 5.4).

To do this I maintained contact with the participants, and I asked them to clarify for me what they regarded ‘mentors’, and what they described as ‘marks’ to understand the possible difference between these themes. The theme ‘evaluation’ also appeared twice in both research

methods. First, in the narrative model used in this research, ‘evaluation’ was discussed as a feature of the narrative, and an emerging theme as ‘self-evaluation’ from the analysis of the participants’ written narratives and focus groups analysis (See Figure 6.2). Second, it appeared as a stage in Gibb’s model used for focus group questions (See Section 4.12.5).

To protect my participants from any harm during the research process, I put myself in a position to care for them. The participants shared their experiences in group works that occurred in the classroom; they also shared their narratives in the blog, and they exchanged peer-feedback. I observed that the relationship between them was supportive and smooth. For example, during focus group discussion (See Section 5.4), when Bahia paused suddenly during the discussion, Esma supported her to reformulate her sentence. Also, Djamila described herself in the past as a selfish child, Gazala supported her, “*You were not selfish you were a child*”. This example showed that the participants were able to reveal their experiences to each other. I was aware that some of their stories of the past could be emotional. I observed that some participants whose parents were dead were keen to present them as their ‘mentors’. For example, in session two, Janah talked about her father’s loss, and she felt emotional. I asked her to stop if she felt distressed, however, she carried on. I hugged her; and I told the group that destiny decided to take my father, and I promised him to carry on my education and be a successful woman. She said, “*I will be successful too*”. Otherwise, there was no coercion on these participants to publish their narratives on the blog, nor to provide details they refused to inform their peers about (See Section 6.2.2).

#### **4.15. Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the ontological and epistemological assumptions. It has clarified the research methodologies that guided this research. It has explained the interpretivist approach and the qualitative approach which informed the use of the research methods employed for data collection. A narrative model was designed and defined as a contribution in the investigated project. This chapter has presented the reflective activities and research activities undertaking for data collection. It has explained the approach of analysis, the research ethics, and the trustworthiness of the data. The next chapter presents the findings of three research methods; participant observation, analysis of the written narratives, and analysis of focus group discussions.

**CHAPTER 5**  
**RESEARCH FINDINGS**

## **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings based on the qualitative data collected through three research methods: participant observation, written narratives, and focus group discussions. This chapter facilitates the understanding of how EFL learners are influenced by their social backgrounds, and how they shape their identities in relation to the social factors embedded in their experiences. These findings are divided into three periods: the past experiences, the present self-representation, and future imagined identities. The past identified their social support which included family and peers, and teachers. The present represented how they perceived their past experiences, the reasons that supported their choice to study English, and their self-evaluation of their learning in both the past, and the present. The future concerned how they aspire to achieve their goals. The future also sketches out the relationship between the past and present experiences, and it constructs meaning to the participants' plans and goals to achieve their future imagined identity.

The major findings represent what happened, and how these events shaped and reshaped the participants' agency in learning. The themes which emerged from the data are defined and explained by participants' words. The participants' quotes produced lived reality which contributed to this research. The themes developed from the analysis relate to each other, and they build on the meaning of three periods of the participants' learning.

## **5.2. Participant observation analysis**

The analysis of participant observation was based on field notes that were taken during the six classroom sessions.

*Session one* took place on 12/02/2017 from 15:00 to 16:00. It was entitled 'Icebreaking Session'. Thirteen women attended this session. They introduced themselves, and they explained their motivation to take part in this project (See Section 7.6). Using PowerPoint presentation (PPT), I explained to them how to use the blog. I explained that blog is an online platform which could help them practise their writing skills and exchange feedback through 'Leave a Reply' option. I used pictures of the blog that showed how to add a post, where to write, how to publish, to view, to edit, to add a reply and to trash their blog entries. I explained the process of publishing in the blog, and I underlined that as they publish their revised drafts, they could create a new blog entry, instead of deleting the first drafts. I made them aware that their confidentiality was maintained in the blog, which was set 'private', and it would be accessed by them and myself only (See Section 4.15).

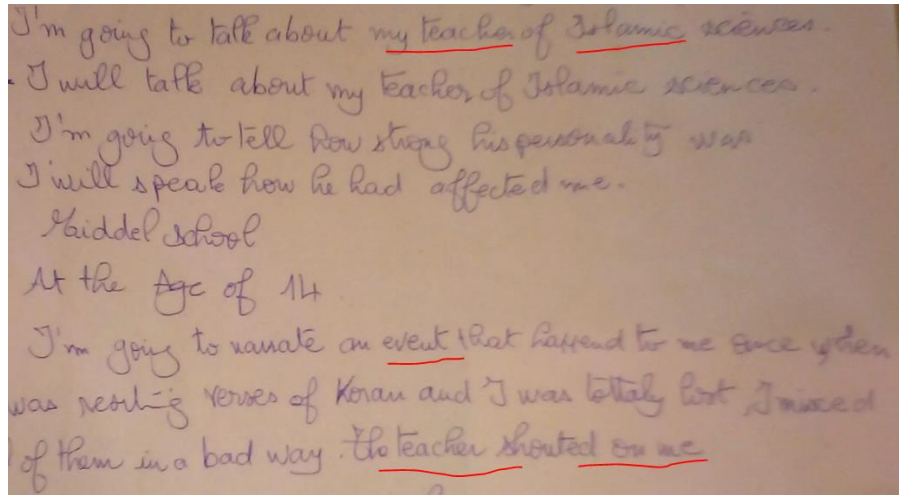


*Session two* took place on 14/0200/2017 from 14:30 to 15:45. It was entitled ‘Knowing the self’. Thirteen women attended; I introduced them to narrative features through a video presented by J. Christian Jensen (See in references), from which the main features of the narrative model used in this thesis were adapted (See Section 1.7.4). This video was used to assist participants in a Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), creating this environment of learning aimed to enhance the participants’ self-assistance which, therefore, was based on their primary reflections on their experiences. The participants took notes on the main narrative features presented in the video. The features were mentioned in the video as follows: feature (1) is *find your own marks and own them*; feature (2) is *Personal/Family stories*, which refers to ‘marks’; feature (3) is *Your Mentors*; and feature (4) is *You are the hero, use ‘I’*. The participants did not spot the ‘I’ narrative that the speaker referred to as an essential feature in a personal narrative. Details of the aim of this activity were noted in Session Two (See Appendix 3). After the video, they had a list of reflective questions (See Tables 4.3 and 4.4), then they interacted in pairs.

In peer-teacher interaction they asked some questions; for example, Djamila said, “*Should the mark be related to the mentor, or they can be different from each other?*” Fatima asked, “*Do we have to talk about positive or negative marks?*” I explained that a ‘mark’ could be either a positive or a negative event. I provided them with blank paper to engage them individually in the activity. I monitored time of the activity. I observed that Djamila, Isra and Gazala finished the activity, however, participants eleven and twelve were not involved in the questions set in the activity, which they found a little challenging. Both participant eleven and twelve withdrew in the next session; I have not given them pseudonyms, and I have not analysed their data from this session, following what I have promised in the information sheet (See Appendix 27). Participants’ withdrawal is discussed in Chapter Seven (See Section 7.8).

During the monitoring of the activity, I observed that the participants had different ways of keeping notes, which either were long statements or short paragraphs. I told Gazala that she could keep her answers shorter; Hana said, “*We do not know how to take notes*”. Bahia also said, “*I cannot take notes as I studied maths, I like numbers*”. This implies that they also thought about needing to learn about note-taking as a skill. After they finished the activity, they voluntarily shared their reflections with the group; they selected each other’s names; eventually, seven participants shared their reflective notes about ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’. I jotted notes from other participants’ written reflections.

I observed from their reflection on the ‘mentors’ that it is either supported with an event or a description of an individual’s behaviour; their reflection of the ‘marks’ was described through an interaction with individuals (See Figure 5.1). This point is further discussed in Chapter Six (See Section 6.2).



**Figure 5.1** Isra’s reflections on ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’

*Session three* took place on 20/02/2017 from 13:20 to 14:20. It was entitled ‘Plan your Narrative’. Eleven participants attended this session. I used the PPT to explain three narrative clauses: orientation, complicating action and resolution. I also used the white board to explain the sequence of these clauses in a narrative. Details of the meaning of each narrative feature were explained in Chapter Four (See Section 4.8.1)

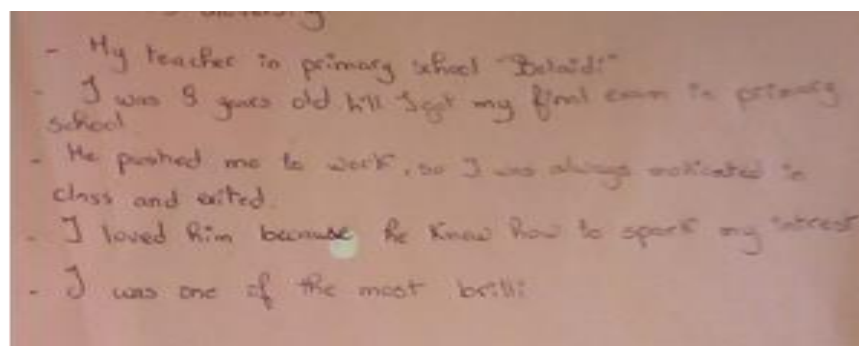
I told them that in this session and the next two sessions, they would be assisted with activities to brainstorm/plan their narratives according to these features. After that, they would expand on their writing plans and publish them in the blog as one narrative draft. To exemplify these features, I presented a short example of ‘orientation’ text (See Appendix 11). Djamila said, “*This is the introduction*”, Chams said, “*Orientation*”, and Gazala said, “*This is an introduction because the name of the narrator is mentioned and his mentors (family)*”. Some of the participants did not interact, but they showed their agreement with Gazala’s answer, which revealed that they viewed the ‘orientation’ clause as an introduction of a narrative.

Interaction in this session was twofold: peer-teacher interaction and peer-interaction. During peer-teacher interaction, Fatima and Alia asked whether ‘mentors’ had to be in the introduction or in the following paragraph. They discussed the structure of the ‘orientation’ in

their narrative, and they agreed to begin their narrative with an introduction including their names, ages and affiliations. They decided to include an introduction before they described their ‘mentors’. An example of participants’ narratives is shared at the end of this thesis (See Appendix 17). Moreover, Chams and Fatima asked me whether the description of ‘marks’ would be reiterated when describing three school stages (primary, middle and secondary schools) or would it appear in at least one school stage. This example shows that they thought about the structure and content of the narratives. I explained that the ‘mark’ could be a single event or multiple events that have reference with the past. Hana said, “*Choose one only and talk about it, it is clear*”. I emphasised that their narrative should concern their real stories. They also expressed that this activity was a little challenging, for instance, Esma said, “*This subject is crucial to our minds*”. Janah commented, “*I am lost, I cannot think*”. I observed that some of them agreed with these comments.

Participants shared their writing plans in pairs, and I monitored their peer-interaction to collect their writing plans. Janah and Djamila shared their plans. Hana finished her writing plans. I also observed that Djamila and Chams planned the introduction of their narratives.

In peer-interaction, Chams said that Janah wrote long sentences; however, Chams said that Janah wrote short notes. Djamila said that Isra wrote about a story that she liked; Isra said that Djamila provided detailed writing plans which was unnecessary in this stage of writing. Fatima said that Alia planned both the introduction and the first part of her narrative, describing her primary school teacher; Alia said that Fatima planned the introduction and the first part of the narrative including her ‘mentors’. Gazala said that Esma presented her plans in a clear way and she liked her story; Esma said that Gazala planned the introduction. Bahia said that Hana planned to talk about her ‘mentor’. As participant eleven withdrew from this project, her data was not reported.



**Figure 5.2** Janah’s writing plan of her ‘mentor’

*Session Four* took place on 27/02/2017 from 13:00 to 13:45. It was entitled ‘Present Learning Experience’. Ten participants attended this session and these ten all remained to the end of the mini-module. Participants’ were assisted with a list of questions (activity) to brainstorm/plan the feature ‘evaluation’ (See Table 4.7), which aimed to understand both how they self-evaluate their learning in the present, and how they create new self-images that adjust with what they desire to achieve in the future. In this session, interaction was twofold: peer-teacher interaction and peer-interaction.

In peer-teacher interaction, Janah asked, “*What do you mean by some skills?*”, Gazala answered her, “*Skills like listening, writing, speaking, and reading*”. They worked individually in this activity, then they exchanged their answers in pairs as follows: Hana and Fatima; Esmā and Alia; Janah and Djamila; Isra and Gazala; Chams with Alia. I took notes from their interaction, as each participant shared her peer’s writing plans with the group. An example from participants’ writing plans is presented (See Appendix 15).

*Session Five* took place on 06/03/2017 from 13:00 to 14:30. It was entitled ‘Writing about the Future’. I shared with the participants my own learning experience in three educational stages (primary, middle and high schools). To support my narrative, I used a poster (See Appendix 12), which highlighted my learning challenges. I narrated one ‘mark’ which I regarded as a transition in my learning process.

In peer-teacher interaction, participants made a few comments on my presentation. Djamila said, “*This sounds like a TEDx Talk*”; Gazala said, “*This was a long process*”; Janah said, “*Good to know about you*”; Chams said, “*Inspiring*”. They also wondered about the meaning of the bridge in the poster, “*Why this bridge is in the middle of the poster? And, “what did it mean to you?”* I explained that the bridge represented the turning point from one learning period to another (See Appendix 12). That turning point was a result of my ‘mark’ (See Appendix 12). Then, I presented a second poster which is in the Methodology Chapter (See Figure 4.2). They moved to the whiteboard to observe it. After, they were supported with a writing topic to brainstorm/plan the final part of their narratives. This writing topic is presented in Chapter Four (See Section 4.8.1) Then, they exchanged their writing plans in pairs.

*Session six* took place on the same day, from 14:40 to 15:35. It was entitled ‘How to Give Feedback’. Chams was the first participant who had published two parts of her narrative (orientation and complicating action) in the blog. For this reason, I have used it as a model to

assist them during peer-feedback activity. The ethical point regarding Chams' narrative is explained in detail in Chapter Four (See Section 4.15.1). In pairs, participants discussed Chams' narrative. Thus, the peer-feedback involved peer-interaction which was later shared with the whole group. Further details on this session are included in the end of this thesis (See Appendix 7).

Some of the participants' feedback was only on the form and or structure, whereas other feedback focussed more on content. Bahia and Esma provided feedback on the first part 'mentors' and 'marks' of Chams' narrative. They said that she described her mother and her uncle as their 'mentors'. This type of feedback is called 'global feedback', and it is related to the content of the narrative. Global feedback was discussed in Chapter Three (See Section 3.8.1). They added, "*The structure of the narrative was respected, and tenses are well used*". However, they agreed that she could improve the grammar mistakes in her narrative. Bahia suggested a correction of one sentence: 'I learn always there is a mentor for me' to 'I learnt that there is always someone who can help me'. Esma said "*Paragraph 2, line 3 is a fashion language, not a formal language*". These types of feedback are related to the surface level of language, a further discussion about 'local feedback' was given in Chapter Three (See Section 3.8.1).

Both Bahia and Esma gave content and language feedback on Chams' narrative. Also, Hana and Fatima provided feedback concerning the first part 'mentors' and 'marks' in Chams' narrative. Hana said, "*There is a combination of tenses the past, the present and the future. In the introduction, line two the sentence – I like cooking – is irrelevant*". "*There were clear future plans, as she mentioned that she wanted to be a teacher*". "*In the second paragraph, line three, there is a mistake in the tense used – my uncle Fouad gives me – it should be – my uncle gave me –*" Their feedback focused on the surface level of language which is grammar. Local feedback was discussed in Chapter Three (See Section 3.8.1). However, Esma interrupted during this interaction, "*She missed the relation between writing and reading*". This feedback was concerned with the content of the narrative. Then, Fatima carried on, "*She did not mention the skills she wanted to improve for her future learning*". Then Hana said, "*There is no dialogue, and two stages of her learning process are missed*". This feedback showed that they know that including a dialogue is necessary in their narrative, as it would provide more details about their 'mentors' and 'marks'.

Djamila and Gazala provided feedback about the second part ‘evaluation’ of Chams’ narrative. They said, “*There is a description of her experience in choosing English, however, there is no description about the middle school stage*”. They added, “*Her feelings towards her mentor appeared in paragraph one, we can read feelings of a small child, because in childhood everyone is a hero*”. Their feedback shows that they focused on the content of the narrative, particularly the feelings and behaviour.

Isra and Alia provided feedback about the last part ‘future projection’ of Cham’s narrative. They said, “*The ‘I’ narrative addresses her voice*”. They added that the narrative lacked a dialogue, and they asked her to maintain her future plans for real. Chams and Janah did not provide feedback.

### **5.3. Analysis of the written narratives**

Data from the narratives are presented in this chapter in reference to three periods: past and present learning experiences, and future planning. Each period includes themes and sub-themes with their definitions and illustrations from the participants’ narratives. The process of thematic analysis (See Table 4.9) used for data analysis, and the difference between codes, themes, and sub-themes has been explained in Chapter Four (See Section 4.13).

#### **5.3.1. Past learning experience**

Past learning experience represents the first period of the participants’ learning experiences. It includes events which have occurred at least in one school stage; primary school, middle school, and secondary school. The data related to ‘*Mentors*’ and ‘*Marks*’ contributed in the construction of the participants’ identities. The data reveals two themes and five sub-themes which show that the participants were affected by their ‘mentors’ and ‘marks’ during this learning period.

##### Theme one: Mentors’ support

Mentors’ support is presented as an umbrella theme. It explains the different ways of support the participants received in the past. It includes four sub-themes which are: teachers’ support, social mentors, moral orientation, and mentors’ enduring impact. Mentors’ support therefore its sub-themes represent the participants’ sociocultural backgrounds, and they are revealed in this way to study how they contributed to the construction of the participants’ identities.

Sub-theme: *Teachers' support*

Teachers' support in the analysis first refers to the identification of teachers whom they regarded as 'mentors'. Second, teachers' support refers to the teachers' verbal encouragements which the participants received at least once in these learning stages: primary school, middle school or secondary school.

Esma recalled memories of the primary school teacher who showed care and attention towards her.

**Extract 1: Esma:** ... *my kind teacher was a part of my wonderful memories,*  
and ... *she used to call me 'quiet Esma'.*

However, Fatima had a different experience with teachers in the primary school. She reported that her teachers had false perceptions about her level, which resulted in an inconsistency in her experience of support at a younger age.

**Extract 2: Fatima:** ...*they (teachers) were very harsh with me, may be because I did not elevate to their expectations...*

and

*I did not even understand [sic] the reason why I was mistreated.*

Unlike Fatima, Janah described her teacher of primary school whom she viewed as a great teacher. She reported that his support was overwhelming, as it included a personal comment to make more efforts in her learning.

**Extract 3: Janah:** *He was a mentor for me...*

and

*He used to call me a 'diamond of my class' and tell me that I will be a successful woman in the future.*

and

*He was that great teacher...*

Alia reported that she received support from two of her teachers at middle school (teacher of French, and teacher of Islamic sciences). The teacher of French praised her intelligence, which she regarded as a personal comment that motivated her to carry on her studies. However, the teacher of Islamic sciences advised her to manage her time and to maintain her religious duties, such as prayer, which both enabled her to be a successful student. Alia described two different ways of verbal encouragements she received from her teachers. Also, Isra talked about her teacher of Islamic sciences in middle school.

Talking about her teacher of French:

**Extract 4: Alia:** *I am so proud to teach an intelligent girl like you, I wish your life will be full of knowledge and achievement. That is what she said to me and made me full of positive energy to complete what I used to start with...*

Talking about her teacher of Islamic sciences:

**Extract 5: Alia:** *I wish your life will be full of knowledge and achievements, but only by getting a high will; organising your time; maintaining your 'Faraid' (religion duties) and the devotion of Allah...*

Talking about her teacher of Islamic sciences:

**Extract 6: Isra:** *I am going to talk about my teacher of Islamic sciences... I considered him as my idol, he was an example of the best teacher, kind and gentle but at the same time serious and strict.*

Gazala and Hana identified their middle school teachers with fewer details, but they reported that they encouraged them to work hard to improve their grades.

**Extract 7: Gazala:** *... but my teacher who I hated so much, he stands[sic] by my side, and encouraged me to do better next time,*

**Extract 8: Hana:** *There was also a guide, a mentor to show me the right path,*  
and

*Middle's school phase outstandingly was more memorable.*

Four participants revealed that their teachers' verbal support in the middle school contributed to increasing their desire to work thoroughly on their subjects and to continue their learning. Bahia and Fatima talked about their teachers' support in both middle school and secondary school. Bahia reported that her math teacher encouraged her to make efforts at middle school, which she regarded as the most successful stage in her learning experience. She also reported that her teacher of English who she viewed as the best during the secondary school, increased her self-confidence to continue her learning.

Fatima also gave a similar description to Bahia about the secondary school teacher whom she regarded as the best during her learning experience.

**Extract 9: Bahia:** *... my teacher of Math, he was always encouraging me to do all my efforts...*

and

*...middle school was a period of massive success...*



and

*... this person is my English teacher, the greatest person I have ever met...*

and

*My English teacher, the hero of my secondary period. He could instil confidence and the courage to never give up into my soul...*

**Extract 10: Fatima:** *...in middle and secondary schools she (teacher) was my ideal role model during my whole educational life...*

This table presents the main codes generated from the main sub-theme within the past learning experiences, 'Teachers' support'.

**Table 5.1 Codes from 'Teacher's support'**

Sub-theme: Teachers' support	Codes and illustrations
Teachers' support at different school stages	<i>Identification of mentors: great/ ideal /model/greatest person/ a guide/hero/ hated/ kind/mentor...</i>
	<i>Teachers' verbal support: encouraging/ instil confidence/ never give up into my soul.</i>
	<i>False perceptions: I hated so much/ he stands[sic] by my side/...I did not elevate to their expectations...</i>
	<i>Personal comments: quiet/wish your life will be.../ intelligent girl/</i>
	<i>Advice: the right path/... to do better/next time/organising time; maintaining your 'Faraid'...</i>

Sub-theme: *Social mentors*

Social mentors refer to the people who supported the participants in their learning including their families and friends. The social mentors act in the narratives as a verbal support that the participants received either as an act of encouragement or discouragement in their learning.

Alia narrated that her sister was a source of motivation, as she reported that her sister's support resulted in increasing her self-confidence at a younger age. Similarly, Bahia narrated that her parents taught her how to be persistent and optimistic about her choices in life.

**Extract 11: Alia:** *My sister Zahira has marked influence on me when I was five years old,*

**Extract 12: Bahia:** *Father ... told me once step by step, never give up...where is the optimist girl I know...*

and

*Mother ...taught me patiently the first steps I should take.*

Chams presented her uncle in the narrative as her ‘mentor’. To describe her uncle’s support, she narrated an event about her brother who had a car accident which influenced her parents and resulted in her lack of motivation towards exam revision. She reported that her uncle hosted her and ensured that she was feeling secure. Her uncle acted as a ‘mentor’, which had created her desire to succeed in the exam, and to make him proud of her. In Chams’ narrative the event was narrated to describe the ‘mentor’; the interconnectedness between the event and the ‘mentors’ is explained in Chapter Six (See Section 7.2).

**Extract 13: Chams:** *I had one person who used to show me, and he is still besides me,*

and

*He gives me best pieces of advice to gain confidence again while the others were showing rude reactions...he showed me that I can be who I want to be...*

Djamila also narrated that her parents raised her awareness about the importance of school in an early age. However, she feared to be at school, as she saw it as a strange environment. Djamila described her ‘mentor’ in a similar way to Chams; she included the event she had with Raghed whom she met with in the primary school. The verbal support Djamila received from Raghed resulted in a lifelong friendship.

**Extract 14: Djamila:** *When I was five years old, my parents explained to me that I had to go to school and study,*

and

*Suddenly, and out of nowhere a girl named Raghed who was my age...*

and

*... it is all going to be alright trust me, do you want to be a friend with me?*  
Raghed’s voice.

Esma regarded her friend Moumene whom she met with in the secondary school as her ‘mentor’. She said that he supported her to carry on her learning with the promise they set together. Moumene’s belief in her intelligence and ability of learning supported her to choose her career, and to maintain a lifelong friendship.

**Extract 15: Esma:** *Simply he was the corner stone of my successive events, and the core of my learning story. Moumene was the greatest treasure and the dearest friend whom I grant ever...*

and

*...our friendship continued during secondary school, where we discovered exactly what we wanted to be.*

Also, the social support in Gazala’s narrative is verbal, as she narrated that her cousins Ihab and Rawan promised that they would not leave her. She said that due to their support, she started to regard them not only as cousins, but also as friends and brothers.

**Extract 16: Gazala:** *These two angels are my cousins...*

and

*They keep telling me that they will not let me, and that I am their sister*

and

*They were not only my cousins, but my brothers.*

Janah described her father as her ‘mentor’ who supported during her learning process.

**Extract 17: Janah:** *My father wanted me to carry on my studies...*

This table summarises the codes emerged from the data which supported the sub-theme ‘Social mentors’.

**Table 5.2 Codes from ‘Social support’**

Sub-theme: Social mentors	Codes and illustrations
Family and peers	<i>Friendship: my cousins/my brothers/ our friendship/who was my age/do you want to be a friend with me/ was the greatest treasure/ they will not let me.</i>
	<i>Encouragement: we discovered exactly what we wanted to be/... step by step/ never give up/ has marked influence on me...</i>
	<i>Self-confidence: ...me best pieces of advice to gain confidence.</i>
	<i>School importance: wanted me to carry on my studies, my parents explained to me that I had to go to school and study, the core of my learning story, it is all going to be alright trust me,</i>
	<i>General support: who used to show me/ they will not let me.</i>

Sub-theme: *Moral orientation*

Moral orientation refers to advice that the ‘mentors’ provided to the participants, and they chose to apply to carry on with their learning.

Alia received different ways of a consistent moral orientation in the middle school. Both the teacher of Islamic sciences and the teacher of French provided her with advice that oriented her in the past.

**Extract 18: Alia:** *Due to him I got precious pieces of information about my religion and some famous Sheikhs (priests) that I never knew before...*

and

Talking about her teacher of French:

**Extract 19: Alia:** *She made me love this lovely language (French) through the way she used to give us lessons. She made me love this language. She taught us how to live life intelligently. She provided me with advice on how to organised[sic] my time, taught me about good manners and to keep positive attitudes. Her method of teaching was unique...*

Alia presented her mentors’ guidance as a credible source of information that she received, and used to develop her school subjects, general knowledge, and strategies for personal development. The moral orientation, for example appeared as an aspect that changed Alia’s attitudes towards learning French, managing her time, learning good manners, and keeping positive attitudes about her choices.

Similar to Alia, four other participants Chams, Fatima, Hana and Janah all said that they received advice from their ‘mentors’. For example, Chams revealed that she followed her uncle’s orientation to overcome her worries, and to focus on her lessons. However, Fatima, Hana and Janah received advice and direction from their teachers.

**Extract 20: Chams:** *He showed me that I am worthy, and that I can be who I want to be. He gives me best pieces of advice to gain confidence again while the others was[sic] showing rude reactions...*

**Extract 21: Fatima:** *She gave us every day a piece of advice that guided us in our daily life...*

**Extract 22: Hana:** *...a mentor to show me the right path starting off from the elementary School until university...*

**Extract 23: Janah:** *One day, you will wake up and there won’t be any time to do the things you have always wanted to do it now...*

Bahia, Djamila and Isra showed that their mentors' advice increased their self-confidence; as a result, mentors' advice held a sense of empowerment. Bahia talked about her teacher; Djamila talked about her friend Ghada; Isra talked about her colleague Rabbab; and Janah talked about her father.

**Extract 24: Bahia:** *He gave me the power to stand up and start again. I will never forget his help...*

*Come on relax...it is all going to be all right, trust me, do you want me to be your friend?* Ghada's voice

**Extract 25: Djamila:** *...try to concentrate a little bit, I know u can do it!!...calm down darling, its ok, take a deep breath and do it again...*

and

*Alright, I will try one again,*

**Extract 26: Janah:** *...he knew how to spark pupils' interest, how to motivate them and how to grow that competitive spirit...*

and

*I believe there is always a person who sparks your life and makes it special, and helps you to bring the real you to the world...that person who used to give me a huge positive energy and his enthusiasm to studies was one of the reason [sic] of my progress...*

The moral orientation is presented with reference to two meanings. First, it refers to advice or guidance that the participants showed either through dialogues or in a descriptive story in their narratives. Second, it carries the meaning of the participants' sense of empowerment through enthusiasm, self-identification, and motivation

**Extract 27: Janah:** *to grow competitive spirits...*

and

*as the real you to the world.*

**Extract 28: Isra:** *...I will try once again.*

**Table 5.3 Codes from ‘Moral orientation’**

Sub-theme: Moral orientation	Codes and illustrations
<p style="text-align: center;">Teachers And Family and Peers</p>	<p><i>Advice: got precious pieces of information/calm down darling, I got precious pieces of information...</i></p>
	<p><i>Guidance: She taught us how to live life intelligently/ advice that guided us/...taught me about good manners/ to keep positive attitudes.</i></p>
	<p><i>Self-confidence result: the real you to the world, was one of the reason [sic] of my progress...</i></p>
	<p><i>Empowerment: gave me the power to stand up and start again, calm down darling.</i></p>
	<p><i>Enthusiasm: I believe there is always a person who sparks your life, that person who used to give me a huge positive energy and enthusiasm,</i></p>
	<p><i>Motivation: I will try once again, to grow competitive spirits, Alright, I will try one again</i></p>

Sub-theme: *Mentors’ enduring impact*

Mentors’ enduring impact concerns the long-term effects of mentors’ support (teachers and social support) on the participants.

Talking about her teacher of Islamic sciences:

**Extract 29: Alia:** *I will never forget what he said to me. Some people come to our lives to inspire us, to motivate us and to help us in improving ourselves. This teacher could add something on me...*

and

Talking about her teacher of English:

**Extract 30: Bahia:** *He could instil confidence and the courage to never give up into my soul. I will never forget his help. These magical words ... were the secret of my inspiration and motivation,*

Talking about her uncle:

**Extract 31: Chams:** *From that day I learned that there is someone there always for me, and I have to work hard in order to make him proud of me, I receive trust and faith from this gift (uncle) from God to me. I am lucky to have him in my life.*

Talking about her friend:

**Extract 32: Esma:** *...promises I got from him and I still keep as he do so...*

Talking about her father:

**Extract 33: Janah:** *I can't find words to express how much he influenced me and got that amazing impact on my life [...] I can't get enough of thinking about that person... Now he is gone, and I can never see him again, but I will never forget what he did, what he said or even his smile whenever I run towards him to tell him that I had succeeded.*

These participants showed that they recalled their 'mentors' of the past, and they highlighted that they influenced them in the present. This theme emerges from the data to explain that the participants' mentors maintained enduring impacts that have re-constructed their learning identities. For instance, Djamila gained a lifelong friendship with Ghada which revealed that the social support can be reflected as a positive learning experience. As a result, their friendship is illustrated to be a re-construct of the learner's identity.

**Extract 34: Djamila:** *We gained a long-life friendship since primary school. I hope we will stay forever this way...*

Gazala, Hana and Janah had a positive experience with their 'mentors' which maintained impacts on them.

Gazala said about her cousins:

**Extract 35:** *I still remember once I had a fight with two big evil girls, and my cousin defended me. He had a great impact on me. They were always the best cousins and they will stay. I am always active when he is beside me. I still remember once I had a fight with two big evil girls, and my cousin defended me...*

**Extract 36: Hana:** *...yet middle school phase outstandingly wasn't as others, it will be memorised and attached to my mind and soul till my last day as a living person. It's odd how omnipotent and powerful words can be, their influence, eternally stays...*

Talking about her teacher:

**Extract 37: Janah:** *I can never forget him simply because he made himself unforgettable...*

Unlike all the participants, Fatima described the primary school as the most challenging learning experience. She said during this stage her teachers did not provide her with any form of support. Thus, the cumulative effect of this experience made her perceive primary school

as a nightmare. Fatima's narrative showed that the 'mentors' can either maintain a positive or negative impact; in both cases learners' perceptions in learning are affected and can contribute to the construction of their identities.

Talking about her teachers:

**Extract 38: Fatima:** *My innocence and shyness ... made my life as a nightmare. I could not improve my level during this stage and I could not even learn in the right way...*

Theme two: **'Marks'**

'Marks' appear as a theme in the participants' narratives. 'Marks' indicate the meaning of events and transitions/turning points that occurred in the participants' past learning experiences. The participants' events occurred in different contexts. On the one hand, some of the events were related to their learning experiences, and they occurred in an educational context. On the other hand, some events happened outside their educational contexts, and these events constructed meaning in the participants' learning stories.

Bahia, Gazala, and Hana delineated their learning events with their previous school teachers. Their events concerned failure in learning, however, none of them eventually experienced failure. Bahia, Djamila and Hana used a dialogue to describe their events. Bahia narrated about her fear of failure in the Baccalaureate exam (the final year in secondary school). She had a fear of failure, however, her teacher recognised that she was worried, and he listened to her. Unlike Bahia, Gazala experienced failure in the subject of history at school, however, her failure did not deter her from succeeding in the final exam.

**Extract 39: Bahia:** *He saw me sitting alone, sad and had not said any word during the whole session. He came and asked me.*

Dialogue between Bahia and her teacher:

**Extract 40:**

**Teacher:** *Are you ok?*

**Bahia:** *I replied with sad vibration in my voice. Yes Sir, I am fine. Just..., I could not catch my tears...*

**Teacher:** *Yes, Bahia I am here if you need help just tell me!*

**Bahia:** *I told him that I am afraid to get bad marks and I am not ready for my Baccalaureate exam. My teacher [sic] reaction was so great... he smiled and said...*

**Teacher:** *Come on! Where is the optimist girl I know!*



Talking about her teacher:

**Extract 41: Gazala:** *I was not interested to this subject...I was a very bad student in history subject, I was most of the time playing hockey and did not take anything in his class very seriously, and when we had our first test, I did not pass because of my neglecting. I felt so disappointed and depressed, but my teacher whom I hated so much he stands by my side and encouraged me to do better next time, indeed because of his encouragement and his trust on me, I did buckled[sic]up in the second test, and in the exam, and that made him really proud of me.*

Gazala revealed that sharing her worries with her teacher was a turning point into her learning, because she changed her behaviour in the classroom, and she enjoyed his classes and the school.

**Extract 42: Gazala:** *...and I have started [sic]enjoy his class and school also...*

Like Bahia, Hana used a dialogue to narrate an event she had with her teacher. She experienced a lack of motivation in her final year at middle school. She said that she was irresponsible in the classroom; she did not care about her lessons, and she did not complete her homework. Her teacher attempted to understand the change in her behaviour, and he opened a conversation with her to raise her attention towards the risk of failure in her final exam.

Dialogue between Hana and her teacher:

**Extract 43:**

**Teacher:** *You were never like that, Hana, imagine you not passing the exam, imagine yourself at the same classroom, studying the same lessons again, and going through the same routine for a second time. Take a minute and think about your self seeing all your happy and joyful friends with their success, while you'll spend your summer vacation waiting for another year to pass while you can be like everyone else, glad and proud of yourself!*

Talking about her teacher:

**Extract 44: Hana:** *I immediately gazed at him carelessly, I was careless, disinterested and unthoughtful about my goals and plans of the future.*

Hana's event represented a turning point experience, which resulted in her success in the final exam. She reported that her teacher's advice awakened her to invest her efforts and time to pass her exam.

**Extract 45: Hana:** *...the words he had said may seem plain and simple to another one, yet to me, it was a trigger, an alarm to wake up and get myself back together, and now I can proudly say that without those words, I would have surely and obviously repeated the year without knowing what I was capable of...*

Djamila had an event in primary school with her friend Ghada who also is represented as her 'mentor'. In a further discussion with Djamila, she said that the event she reported in her narrative indicated both a description of her 'mentor' and 'mark'. She wove them together in a dialogue to help in understanding her fear from meeting with new pupils at school.

**Extract 46: Djamila:** *I was standing there frozen off[sic] fear. It was hard for me to socialise or fit in. I think it was obvious that I was nervous...*

Dialogue between Djamila and Ghada:

**Extract 47:**

**Ghada:** *yeah me too, it is all going to be alright trust me, do you want to be a friend with me?*

**Djamila:** *why not! Sure nice to meet you Ghada.*

**Ghada:** *nice to meet you too.*

**Extract 48: Djamila:** *And ever since we became very close friends, I hope we will stay forever this way...*

and

*...my conversation with my friend had comforted me...I feared to enter the class..., I was standing there frozen off[sic] fear. It was very hard for me to socialise or fit in. I think it was obvious that I was nervous...*

Also, Fatima narrated that in secondary school she was taught by teachers who treated her better than her former teachers in primary school. Her account of this event identified a crucial turning point at her learning experience, which changed her perception of learning in general and teachers in particular. As a result, she started enjoying her school.

**Extract 49: Fatima:** *The teachers' methods were very helpful as well as the way they treated me...*

Unlike the three participants mentioned above whose events were concerned with their learning, Alia, Chams, Esma and Fatima shared their personal events, which were only partially related to their learning experiences. For instance, Alia reported that she was involved in a school bus accident, which marked a turning point in her life. Only Alia's event did not involve a 'mentor'.

**Extract 50: Alia:** *Not only people can make changes on you, but events also can do that and be the turning point[sic].*

Chams's account of her brother's car accident was presented as a thread in the narrative that illustrated that she lost motivation to revise for her exam. However, Chams' authentic event

was presented as a ‘mark’, as mentioned above that her uncle hosted her in his house to secure a peaceful space for her to revise and to pass her exam. Her uncle’s behaviour created a turning point in her learning as she passed her exam.

**Extract 51: Chams:** *I remember my brother at that time had an accident and I was preparing for my final exams. My family was not in mood so I could not concentrate. I was quite afraid till he (uncle) came and took me to Algiers to revise without stress and fear...*

Esma’s account of her event is similar to all participants, as the role of the ‘mentor’ was involved. In a further discussion with Esma, she said that her friendship with Moumene was the turning point event that influenced her learning and her decisions of the future.

**Extract 52: Esma:** *Simply he was the corner stone of my successive events, and the core of my learning story.*

Janah’s event was about her father’s interest in her studies and success which they exchanged in the hospital before his death. She reported that she was affected not only by his words, but she was also concerned that he was in poor health and he cared about her future. She said that his care was a crucial turning point for her which made her reflect on pursuing her learning. She presented the conversation between them in a dialogue in her narrative.

Dialogue between Janah and her father:

**Extract 53:**

**Janah:** *Dady! Do you feel okay now? How do you feel? How was your surgery?!*

**Father:** *Hamdoullah! (Thanks God) I am totally fine...no pain at all. How studies are going?*

**Janah:** *Really Dad! Is that the right time to talk about it?*

**Father:** *Yes! There is always time to talk about studies. Studies always comes first...*

**Janah:** *I figured out how much my learning was important to my father, and this short discussion pushes me to work whenever I lose hope and think to give up.*

‘Marks’ in the participants’ narratives were narrated as events that had far-reaching impact on their learning; ‘marks’ appeared to be related to learners’ early learning experiences, hence they constructed their identities in two relevant ways. First, they were directly related to their learning which means they occurred in an educational context as presented in Bahia’s, Djamila’s, Gazala’s and Hana’s narratives. Second, they had an indirect relationship with participants’ learning, however, they constructed meaning to their learning as presented in

Alia's, Chams', and Janah's narratives. This table summarises the codes emerged from the data which supported the sub-theme 'Marks'.

**Table 5.4 Codes from 'Marks'**

Theme: Marks	Codes
Events	<i>Failure, fear of failure, worries, exams, anger, lack of motivation, advice.</i>

Sub-theme: *Event-enduring impact*

The data shows that the participants' 'marks' maintain long-term effects on their personal lives in general and their learning in particular. This sub-theme covers how the participants developed feelings and attitudes as a result of the impact of their events.

**Extract 54: Alia:** *Every time the driver brakes violently, I remember that moment of the accident. What makes me talk about this accident is because I remember how my life was before and how it is now. I still think of it usually. I think many times that if I died in that accident, I would not have an opportunity to change my bad behaviours and ameliorate myself to be better. It affected me.*

**Extract 55: Bahia:** *... and the courage to never give up into my soul...these magical words 'step by step, and never give up', were the secret of my inspiration and motivation, I will never forget his help. From that moment I promised myself to keep moving, never look back whatever happen and never be afraid of the future...*

**Extract 56: Chams:** *...this action has a meaningful impact to me... from that day I learned that there is someone there always for me...and I have to work hard in order to make him proud of me. I receive trust and faith from this gift (uncle) from God to me.*

Djamila talked about her friend's support in the past which led to a long-life friendship.

**Extract 57: Djamila:** *...an event that stuck with me from my first day at primary school. I hope we will stay friends forever.*

**Extract 58: Esma:** *...and I still keep as he do so...*

Fatima's account of her primary school experience had an enduring impact in her learning, as it contributed to increase her self-confidence from high school till now.

**Extract 59: Fatima:** *All these experiences made my life as a rose which open and spread odour when I speak about them. I knew more about myself and my personality. This enabled me to acquire self-confidence by which I could argue and improvise in toughest conversations and confrontations. I was so glad with[sic] this change...*

Gazala narrated that her teacher’s verbal support changed her attitudes towards history subject and school. She said that his words maintained an impact on her, which led her work hard to make him proud of her success.

**Extract 60: Gazala:** *...his encouragement and his trust on me, I did buckled[sic] up the second test and the exam...and I have started enjoying his class and school also...*

Hana was also affected by her teacher’s words, which encouraged her to think about her learning abilities, which led her to work hard to pass her final exam.

**Extract 61: Hana:** *...the words he said may seem plain and simple to another, yet to me, it[sic] was[sic] trigger, an alarm to wake up and get myself back together. I can proudly say without those words, I would have surely and obviously repeated the year without knowing what I was capable of. I have gathered all these experiences...*

Janah reported that her father’s words maintained an enduring impact on her which pushed her to work more whenever she recalled their conversation.

**Extract 62: Janah:** *I keep remembering his words every single day, and that always shows the best of me...*

This table summarises the codes that entailed ‘Event enduring impact’

**Table 5.5 Codes from ‘Event enduring impact’**

Sub-theme: Event enduring impact	Codes
Marks as events and turning points	<i>Continuity, sharing their events with their teachers, and got inspired by.</i>
	<i>Increasing self-confidence</i>
	<i>Change of attitudes towards learning/ a subject/ Change of perception of the teachers. Deciding to work hard and to pass.</i>
	<i>Recognition of self-abilities, thinking of they can do/achieve.</i>

### 5.3.2. Present learning experience

Present learning experience is the second period of the participants’ learning which captures a description of their experience at university. It includes one main theme *Choice of English*,

and sub-themes that capture meaning in the participants' current experiences. The sub-themes are *self-evaluation, language skills difficulties, and taking action* to improve these difficulties.

#### Theme: Choice of English

This theme highlighted the participants' reasons to learn English. It covered codes which either reflected on the participants' own desires to learn English or their parents' and friends' support of their choices. In addition, some reasons reflected on the widespread use of English and the opportunities the participants desired to achieve in the future.

Alia said that she had initially thought to study French at university. However, she chose English.

**Extract 63: Alia:** *I was confused between French and English. I did not know exactly, but perhaps I will choose French...*

However, Bahia and Hana said that they had positive attitudes towards learning English, and it was their first choice among other language courses at university.

**Extract 64: Bahia:** *I have said that I loved English, and it sparks my interest from the beginning. I choose it because I like it.*

**Extract 65: Hana:** *It was a decision made upon my own interest and desire, no one had helped me or encouraged me to choose it. I love this language. I find it very beautiful...I find it very easy to learn...*

Moreover, Hana, Djamila and Isra had a desire to learn English from an early age. Chams, also agreed that English was her preferred language to study at university.

**Extract 66: Isra:** *I falled[sic] in love with English since my childhood...*

**Extract 67: Djamila:** *...since middle school I wanted to study English,*

**Extract 68: Hana:** *...it was hard at the beginning, but later I could adapt myself. I chose it because I like it.*

While Chams and Gazala said that English was not their first choice, they had a desire to study it.

**Extract 69: Chams:** *Choosing English was not my choice, but this has no relationship to my desire to study it...*

**Extract 70: Gazala:** *I did not want to be a student of English at the beginning, even though I was a good student of English, I just wanted to choose another field...*

Bahia reported that she did not think about studying English at university in the past. However, both Alia and Bahia changed their attitudes when they attended English classes as

they moved to university. Similar to Alia and Bahia, Esma and Fatima reported that English was a random choice, however, their attitudes towards English changed, and they started enjoying their classes.

**Extract 71: Esma:** *...it was the tendency that I did not plan for it, but after carrying lectures and getting satisfied with each single module introduced to me, I started enjoy[sic] the fact of being an EFL learner. I changed my vision towards the brunch (English stream)*

Family support is also another reason which helped some participants to choose English as a course study at university. For instance, Alia was supported by her sister; Chams, Gazala, and Isra were supported by their mothers, and Fatima was supported by her brother to choose English.

**Extract 72: Chams:** *...the person who inspired me to choose this stream is my mother...*

**Extract 73: Gazala:** *My mother was the person that encouraged me to study English and to be satisfied...*

**Extract 74: Fatima:** *I am grateful that my brother that[sic] he changed my mind to choose English...*

However, Chams and Isra reported that their mothers were teachers of English; as a result, they preferred that their daughters follow similar careers to them. Their mothers' guidance can also refer to the idea of 'mentors' which appeared as a theme in the description of the participants' past learning experiences.

**Extract 75: Chams:** *...the person who inspired me to choose this stream is my mother...she was a teacher of English in middle school. She helped me to take my decision...*

**Extract 76: Isra:** *English was not my first choice to study in university, but due to my mother's help I had chosen to study it.*

As discussed above the participants' reasons of choosing English were varied; another crucial reason that appeared in their narratives is the universality of English language. Chams and Isra, for example explained that through English they hope to develop their language skills in order to communicate with people worldwide.

**Extract 77: Chams:** *I think English language enables me to communicate, to know other cultures.*

**Extract 78: Isra:** *English have[sic] become recently a global language it is very popular and used all over the world.*

However, Chams and Gazala narrated that English facilitates the practice of other activities, such as their hobbies and the use of social media. In addition, they reported that English gives ample opportunities to secure a job and to pursue their learning abroad.

**Extract 79: Chams:** *...to use it for amusing[sic] my hobbies like games and connecting through social media. I can benefit from English language for[sic] finding a job in the nearest future.*

**Extract 80: Gazala:** *English is one of the most available languages that can give us a huge amount[sic] of chances to study abroad and [sic]even to teach outside.*

**Table 5.6 Codes from ‘Choice of English’**

Choice of English	Codes
Reasons of choosing English	<i>Participants' desire to learn English/first choice/want to learn but not a first choice.</i>
	<i>Parents'/brother's/sister's support in choosing English</i>
	<i>The status of English</i>
	<i>Language learning opportunities: travel, and social media.</i>

Sub-theme: *Self-evaluation*

Self-evaluation reveals how the participants view their current level in language learning. It also reveals their learning within three codes: current learning as a challenge; current learning in development; current learning as average or in decrease.

Describing her learning at university as a challenge:

**Extract 81: Fatima:** *I am facing[sic] many obstacles. My current learning seems to be a challenge...it is a mixture of hardness[sic] and enjoyment.*

However, Gazala and Hana viewed that they have developed themselves and their knowledge as language learners.

**Extract 82: Gazala:** *I think I am better than I used to be...my level has developed over time.*

**Extract 83: Hana:** *I have learnt, and certainly gained knowledge about life, and about myself...*

Esma evaluated her level in English as average. However, Janah evaluated her level in language from intermediate to advanced.

**Extract 84: Esma:** *...never welcoming[sic] the perfection of the learning process, but I am looking for it. I cannot restrict my level, I may place it on[sic] the average.*



**Extract 85: Janah:** *I can say that my level in English is intermediate to advance...*

Isra said that her level in language decreased due to her lack of desire to learning.

**Extract 86: Isra:** *My level in English had decreased a lot because of lack of confidence I had through my experience in biology[sic].*

and

*I lost inspiration, courage, and determination, and most of all the will of studying.*

Djamila evaluated her current learning through her ability to express herself in English more than any other language.

**Extract 87: Djamila:** *I felt that I can express myself more in English than in other language. You think I am crazy, but I am not...I do not know what is it[sic], but it is easier for me to write in English.*

Sub-theme: *Language skills difficulties*

This sub-theme represents the participants' language difficulties. It covers how they evaluate themselves in the four language skills: speaking, writing, reading and listening.

Bahia, Chams and Fatima said that they had a difficulty in the speaking skill.

**Extract 88: Bahia:** *I find a problem in speaking English even I don't understand what is said by other[sic]...because pronunciation is my 'big problem'. I should pay attention to my speaking skill that I found a weakness on.*

**Extract 89: Chams:** *...I did face[sic] some troubles in speaking...I certainly can say that speaking was my weakness.*

**Extract 90: Fatima:** *...have speaking skill and I confess that I don't speak English a lot neither in class nor out it[sic].*

However, Bahia, Fatima and Gazala had also had little difficulties in the listening skill.

**Extract 91: Bahia:** *My less likely skills are speaking and listening,*

**Extract 92: Fatima:** *...most problematic skill for me is listening, especially, when the speaker is a native person.*

**Extract 93: Gazala:** *...for me, listening is one of the toughest skills in English...*

In contrast, Esma and Gazala said that they did not have difficulty in the speaking skill.

**Extract 94: Esma:** *My skills especially speaking... the one which I find my own[sic] relaxed on it,*

**Extract 95: Gazala:** *I do believe that I am good in some skills like speaking...*

However, Esma said that she was good at the speaking skill, rather reading and writing skills remained a challenge for her. Also, Janah and Gazala said that the writing skill was little difficult for them.

**Extract 96: Esma:** *I have to classify reading and writing on the same standing which create[sic] certain spiritual sense of challenge and self-daily[sic] addiction on them.*

**Extract 97: Gazala:** *I do believe that I am good in some skills like speaking and sometimes writing...*

**Extract 98: Janah:** *Writing sometimes is a hard task...*

Sub-theme: *Taking action*

Taking action emerges as an outcome of the participants' language skills difficulties; it reveals their willingness and their actions to improve language difficulties in the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Alia, Chams and Fatima reported that they focused on improving their listening skills through English music and films. Alia said that improving the listening skill would enable her to enrich her vocabulary knowledge.

### ***Listening***

**Extract 99: Alia:** *Listening to English music to improve my vocabulary, and enrich my culture,*

and

*Watching movies. Reading short stories.*

**Extract 100: Chams:** *I learn English from movies, songs and novels.*

**Extract 101: Fatima:** *I need to improve some skills such as listening...*

### ***Speaking***

Janah said that she took an action to raise her self-confidence in public speaking.

**Extract 102: Janah:** *I am working hard to improve my current level. I am working hardly[sic] to improve my communicative skills and self-confidence while[sic] making a speech publicly. Recently, I started doing some trainings with my friend in order to enhance my level in performances in front of people.*

### ***Reading and writing***

Esma reported that reading and writing were two skills that she needed to develop. However, she believed that she might not be able to reach a level equal to native speakers in these two skills.

Chams, Djamila, Fatima, Gazala, Hana and Janah agreed that practicing writing would enable them to improve their writing skills; all of them agreed that they practised the writing skill through writing essays and diaries.

**Extract 103: Chams:** *To improve my writing skill, I will read books to learn new words and produce rich vocabulary essays...I write stories wherein I can use the[sic] vocabulary words I learned.*

**Extract 104: Djamila:** *I have always had a journal or a copybook where[sic] I write how I am feeling,*

**Extract 105: Fatima:** *...the best solution is to write everyday about a particular event which happened to me and [sic]make a combination between narration and description.*

**Extract 106: Gazala:** *I will do my best in the coming days...and I will improve my writing skill by writing essays, and reading novels and books...*

**Extract 107: Hana:** *I am even[sic] trying to ameliorate my writing skills through keeping a regular journal/diaries[sic] to write down my thoughts and events of the day in English,*

**Extract 108: Janah:** *...I do free writing...*

Janah said that the reading skill will enrich her vocabulary knowledge, which would then enable her to write essays in English.

**Extract 109: Janah:** *One important step in my journey is to improve my writing skill...to facilitate the writing task, I am aiming[sic] to improve my writing skills through many tips.*

and

*One tip is to develop reading skill so that I will get a lot of new dictions and vocabulary which will help me in my writings[sic].*

Fatima and Hana revealed that their actions needed to be upon achieving progress in their learning.

**Extract 110: Fatima:** *...the coming stage is characterised by[sic] my emphasis to build a strong knowledge and collect the basics of[sic] mastering English...by doing much efforts to achieve the progressions[sic] which leads[sic] me to the crest of success.*

**Extract 111: Hana:** *I need to develop my learning and make progress in all skills.*

Participants agreed on the actions they needed to take to improve their language skills. Alia and Janah said they needed to improve their vocabulary. First, for Alia vocabulary was a way to cultivate herself about the meaning of language. Second, for Janah vocabulary knowledge was a way to improve her writing skills. In both cases, their aim of developing vocabulary knowledge was to attain progress in the language level.

### 5.3.3. Future learning experience

Future learning experience represents the third period of the participants' learning. It covers three main themes and two sub-themes. The first theme is *Agency through learning* which includes *investment through learning* as a sub-theme. The second theme is *Future self-image*. The third theme is *Faith*, and it includes *personal beliefs* as a sub-theme. The themes and the sub-themes from this period present how the participants reconstruct their future self-images as academics.

Theme: Agency through learning

Agency through learning is about the desire to achieve a target in the future. This theme is coded from the participants' narratives in the meaning of the following words: aim, want, dream, plan, sake, purpose, hope, would like, should, and wonder. Also, the use of the future tense in these verbs is coded in the meaning of *Agency through learning*.

**Extract 112: Alia:** *I am planning to get a second diploma in Islamic sciences. I will be a professor of[sic] Islamic sciences...what I want to realise in ten years later.*

**Extract 113: Bahia:** *...this quotation gives me the power to work hard and [sic]never lose hope, to make my dream come[sic] true. I should improve myself to be a great person and have a strong personality. I want to be a teacher of English at Abou Bekr Belkaid University,*

**Extract 114: Chams:** *...I want to leave something after my death. My aim is to be an English teacher[sic] like my mother.*

**Extract 115: Djamila:** *I will study abroad or travel to new places for the sake of meeting new people...*

**Extract 116: Esma:** *I wonder if I can represent the spirit of motherhood by teaching kids the framed principles of education and respect. My aim afterwards will reach the success of the next generation.*

and

*I will be the luckiest ever[sic] if I can organise study days for language learners, and the happiest if I became[sic] the helpful[sic] hand of people and their peaceful source. This is exactly what I am seeking for it. My ambition to discover the diversities between life here and overseas pivot. I will conduct research in English major.*

**Extract 117: Fatima:** *...my purpose from studying English is to be a perfect, famous teacher and a person who deserves estimation from all people in work, home or in the roadway... to realize all these...*

**Extract 118: Gazala:** *I would like to achieve my life dream, to be a teacher of English. I hope to be a teacher with all what the word 'teacher' means.*

**Extract 119: Hana:** *...we all have goals and aims to achieve,*

and

*I want to make a change in this world, and how can I do that?*

and

*...to accomplish my desires...*

**Extract 120: Isra:** *I want to become a journalist... I would be enthusiastic towards my job. I want to finish my studies in the United States.*

**Extract 121: Janah:** *I want to teach people of young age... I want to be a teacher...*

Alia, Bahia, Chams, Esma Fatima, Gazala, and Janah all want to be teachers. However, Isra and Esma had a desire to pursue their studies abroad, and to meet people from other cultures.

**Table 5.7 Codes from ‘Agency through learning’**

<b>Agency through learning</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Future	<i>Want, aim, dream, plan, sake, purpose, hope, would like to, and should.</i>

Sub-theme: *Investment through learning*

This sub-theme refers to the participants’ efforts to develop their language skills, or desire to achieve their future self-image as teachers.

**Extract 122: Alia:** *I would read more and more[sic] about my religion. I would improve myself ... Doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong.*

**Extract 123: Bahia:** *...to improve the other skills by[sic] listening to native speakers, trying to imitate them, reading books and writing as much as possible. This dream needs hard work from now to improve my four skills...for that to happen I plan to improve my language skills in a period of ten years. I will begin with the speaking skill, I will participate in national workshops, study days in our English department and other national universities. I will present cultural subjects in Inspiration Club at our university. I will attend national and overseas conferences.*

**Extract 124: Chams:** *I should think carefully to work on my personal skills before being a teacher,*

**Extract 125: Djamila:** *...as I have mentioned I always write my feelings in a personal journal. I will start reading books more often to gain knowledge about topics I do not know about. I will start writing more stories other[sic] in blogs or in my journal.*

**Extract 126: Esma:** *...that allow[sic] me to attend international conferences... I am looking for a PhD grade.*

**Extract 127: Fatima:** *I will work on my skills to improve them... whenever a chance comes to me, I will try with[sic] all my capacities to make it real in my life. I am doing all what I can do... by improving my writing skill, by doing writing essays together with reading novels and books as well as many other ways...and also to improve my external life.*

**Extract 128: Hana:** *...with devotion and hard work; attending conferences and learn as much possible as I can[sic] make reading my new best friend and seriously do more efforts to get good grades.*

**Extract 129: Isra:** *...read and write. Everything else will flow from these two activities...*

**Extract 130: Janah:** *To improve myself I will write more, I will correct the things I did wrong...I am working hard to improve my English through developing my vocabulary and improving my writing by[sic] doing free writing from time to time... I am following some tips to enhance my presentation skills which will strength[sic] my self-confidence.*

Alia, Bahia, Djamila, Fatima, Isra and Janah explained that they will focus on reading skills. They also highlighted their focus on investing in writing skills through free writing on blogs and journals. Only Janah said that she wanted to invest in oral presentations to improve her speaking skills. Bahia, Esmā and Hana showed that they desired to become researchers in academia through attending conferences and national workshops. Fatima and Bahia viewed that they needed to improve their personal skills.

Theme: Future self-image

Future self-image refers to the participants' imagined identities which they want to achieve, hence their desire to make change as they achieve their goals. It covers codes, such as change and creating change as they achieve their desired position.

**Extract 131: Alia:** *...after ten years, everything will change my life, the place where I will be in, and perhaps me.*

**Extract 132: Bahia:** *...I put in my mind that this is the way off[sic] my future.*

**Extract 133: Isra:** *...to ignite fire into the stagnate[sic] minds of tomorrow.*

**Extract 134: Janah:** *...I want to change the fact that some teachers are really bad teachers. I can see myself as a very successful teacher of English. I want to be a model for my student[sic]... I want to be a mentor for my pupil as I used to have a mentor who is my primary school teacher. I want to change the image of teachers in the eyes of their pupil[sic] to the best. I will teach the new generation to be more productive...that what I want to realise in ten years later...to be a good example for my students.*

They said that they would like to make change either in their lives or in others' lives such as their students in the future which they referred to as 'generations'. Other participants viewed themselves in different positions, for example Djamila had different images that she looked to achieve.

**Extract 135: Djamila:** *I never had a permanent or a solid dream job. In ten years [sic] time, I see myself in several positions...someday I dream of being a flight attendant, and other [sic]days I see myself a successful reporter. I always dream of writing other peoples' emotions, stories and journeys. I wish that I will be a famous writer who is[sic] known internationally.*

and

*...experiencing new cultures to write about them later in my books.*

However, Fatima viewed herself as a 'rosebud' that could travel to discover the world. Gazala reported that she would be superior meaning to achieve a higher position.

**Extract 136: Fatima:** *I will go in a journey outwards to discover and learn more. I will come back to practice[sic] what I learnt with the rosebuds of my country...*

**Extract 137: Gazala:** *...so I can be superior in the coming days...I can be superior...*

Theme: Faith

Faith concerns the participants' religious and spiritual background, such as inspirational and strength factors that made them believe in themselves and their futures. Faith was showed through the concept of God that appeared many times in their narratives.

**Extract 138: Alia:** *I want, you want, and Allah does what he wants. I would be a true Muslim.*

**Extract 139: Esma:** *...in which I found my real thoughts, future expectations and Allah's gifts to me...it is my opportunity to show the aspects of Islamic religion...*

**Extract 140: Hana:** *...yet only Allah knows what the future really holds...*

The participants show that their beliefs in God can create their future positions. God appears with the word gift in their narratives to illustrate their willingness to do their best for his sake. For example, their abilities to speak English will enable them to talk about him and their religion with other people. This is as a form of reward to him. They also show a solid relationship with him, and they believe that he will take care of their future.

Sub-theme: *Personal beliefs*

Personal beliefs refer to the participants' own conclusions from their experiences. Hence, they are inspired by the views of international authors and politicians; and they quote from them to express their convictions and their aims in life.

**Extract 141: Bahia:** *If you can dream it, you can do it.*

**Extract 142: Chams:** *I believe learning is practice...*

**Extract 143: Esma:** *I believe that in ten years after I will gather the harvest of my efforts and get the fruits of my considerable plans...*

and

*Promise yourself to be too strong so that you can pave the way for a shining future.*

**Extract 144: Janah:** *I believe that we must start from the bottom, kids are the future, children are the cradle of prosperity and success, they need to be well-educated, given enough attention and care so that once they are grown-ups[sic], and they will be efficiently productive and reflect positively on our society.*

Djamila and Hana used quotes from two international figures.

Quoting from Abraham Lincoln:

**Extract 145: Djamila:** *“That some achieve great success, is proof to all that others can achieve it as well”*

Quoting from Frederick Douglass:

**Extract 146: Hana:** *“I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows[sic] disappear, my courage is reborn”* Anne Frank. *“It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men”*

The participants are interested in success. They reflect on what they learnt from their experiences of the past, and on authors' views, they report that practice facilitates learning, and it is the best way to success. They desire to invest in children, as teaching children in a younger age enables them to contribute to the development of communities.

#### **5.4. Analysis of focus group discussions**

Similar to the analysis of narratives, focus group discussions also show the development of the participants' identities along three periods: the past, the present, and the future. Five themes and three sub-themes emerged from these discussions. Theme (1) concerns the participants' current *Self-evaluation*, and their *efforts* in learning as a sub-theme. Theme (2) analyses their *Conclusions of their experiences*, including two sub-themes their *change of*



*attitudes and self-confidence*. Theme (3) is *Agency*. Theme (4) is *Investment* including a sub-theme *reasons of their investment*. Theme (5) is *Future self-image*.

Theme: Self-evaluation

It includes the participants' reflections of their past learning (before learning English), and their present learning of English. Also, it covers both their satisfaction and dissatisfaction about their learning in these two periods.

They showed that they were not satisfied about their learning in the past.

**Extract 147: Alia:** *Was not bad... and annoyed when studying Sciences or Physics...*

**Extract 148: Bahia:** *I was not good...*

**Extract 149: Chams:** *I did not take things seriously...*

**Extract 150: Esma:** *In the past we did not have the chance to develop our capacities, we were restricted...*

**Extract 151: Gazala:** *I made many absences... we did not take everything seriously in learning the English learning[sic]...*

**Extract 152: Hana:** *My speaking was bad in the past...*

Some participants showed that they were not satisfied about their levels and their behaviour in learning. However, some participants showed that they are satisfied about their development in their current learning.

**Extract 153: Gazala:** *...it is getting very well...*

**Extract 154: Chams:** *...it's going well...*

**Extract 155: Djamila:** *...it's going fairly well...*

**Extract 156: Hana:** *My learning is going fine...*

**Extract 157: Djamila:** *...is going too slow...not that bad...*

**Extract 158: Fatima:** *I have a problem... (silence), I am not satisfied.*

**Extract 159: Esma:** *I am not satisfied...*

Sub-theme: *Efforts*

This sub-theme reveals how the participants evaluated their efforts in learning.

**Extract 160: Alia:** *I would do my best...to do all my best to learn and realise something good...*

**Extract 161: Bahia:** *I am trying to do my best...*

**Extract 162: Chams:** *I don't make effort. I say to myself even if I hate this module I should make efforts... even if we make efforts...*

**Extract 163: Esma:** *In terms of personal efforts...*

**Extract 164: Gazala:** *...even if you make the efforts...*

**Extract 165: Isra:** *I am trying to learn as much as possible...pushed me to make efforts...*

and

*I make lot of efforts in my previous stages of learning...*

**Extract 166: Janah:** *...homework and efforts are hard... I do not think I am making efforts...*

This theme shows that the participants are aware of their language needs. The point of making efforts to improve their learning relates to investment. Participants' efforts refer to persistence in learning, as they reconstruct their motives to challenge their difficulties in a few language skills. They learnt from their learning process such as their 'marks' that making efforts is the key to their success.

Theme: Experience conclusions

This concerns what the participants learnt and drew from their past 'marks' and 'mentors'. It covers codes such as persistency, motivation, recognising mentors' roles, which they learnt from their family, friends, and teachers.

**Extract 167: Alia:** *I learnt a lot from my teachers and my mistakes...*

**Extract 168: Chams:** *I learnt that whatever happens I never give up and I keep trying...*

and

*I learnt to share time with family.*

**Extract 169: Djamila:** *I learn that when you talk about your issues you get out of the shell...*

Gazala and Janah reported that their 'mentors' were a source of motivation, and they emphasised that the role of 'mentors' is important to individuals to succeed in their lives.

**Extract 170: Janah:** *I learnt that motivation can help lot[sic], it can bring the best of you, and makes[sic] you move fast...I could not study without a motivator. If you do not find that person, it can be a topic ...that sparks your attention.*

**Extract 171: Chams:** *I do believe that if you have a person who stands beside you and support[sic] you, this is the main thing that happen[sic] in your life... and you will be good in it.*

**Extract 172: Esma:** *I learnt to be confident...we are trying...if I did not have that event I will not change and be the person who is[sic] now.*

**Extract 173: Isra:** *I learnt that there is a[sic] part of your life[sic] you are not yourself and it is ok, it is not the end of the world. I learn[sic] to be social and people are not cruel.*

The participants show that they understand the role of ‘mentors’; they know the importance of having ‘mentors’ in their lives, which they view as their source of motivation. ‘Mentors’ provide support, guidance, advice, and feeling of security.

Sub-theme: *Change of attitudes*

Change of attitudes refers to the participants’ perception about their past experiences in the present. It also concerns how they viewed the changes that occur due to the influences of their ‘marks’ and ‘mentors’. It covers the meaning of inspiration, feelings, purpose, and vision.

**Extract 174: Alia:** *My experience had a positive outcome, because...I could let a little touch during[sic] my learning. I still feel it was a turning point...*

**Extract 175: Bahia:** *Yes, it should be changed. I was lost but now I know the right destination. My feelings have changed (silence)... It made me challenge myself to be better.*

**Extract 176: Chams:** *I changed my personality...now I changed completely my mind. It does not look important for me now.*

**Extract 177: Djamila:** *I plan to find the best solution without being angry because it will not work.*

**Extract 178: Esma:** *...I found the purpose of my life... I was in a fancy area why[sic] I could not change my life in that time simply because I was young. It was the point of change...*

**Extract 179: Fatima:** *I changed my way (silence)... uhm looking at things, and everything like my classmates, the way of speaking to teachers and the way of treatment. It was the turning point in my life. Everything changed, the way of thinking of people, the way I behave with them I was famous in middle school and that motivated me... because it made me realistic and idealistic, I have ideas and I adapt them to reality.*

**Extract 180: Gazala:** *...started to change my perception on[sic] his classes. I can think better than I was, I have new perspectives.*

**Extract 181: Janah:** *I was a bit selfish, I did not expect criticism...I thought I was perfect.*

The participants’ experiences of the past influenced their attitudes and perceptions. ‘Mentors’ and ‘marks’ motivated them to change or to think of changing their behaviour. They both contributed in shaping their agency and investment in learning. These two main themes are

also regarded as social factors which increased their self-confidence and enabled them to imagine their future. This sub-theme could link between two periods, their perceptions of their past experiences into the present.

Sub-theme: *Self-confidence*

Self-confidence refers to the influence of the participants' 'marks' and 'mentors' on their personal development. It covers codes, such as gaining courage and becoming responsible.

**Extract 182: Alia:** *A lot of shocks teach us to be more solid...*

and

*I think we are mature, and we have our responsibility to achieve...*

**Extract 183: Chams:** *Learn how to take initiative and be mature and confident...to take responsibility.*

**Extract 184: Djamila:** *I became courageous and open to people.*

**Extract 185: Esma:** *If we are confident, we find that other have more confidence than us. I learned to be self-confident...*

**Extract 186: Gazala:** *I became confident.*

**Extract 187: Isra:** *I get confidence at that time...*

**Extract 188: Janah:** *I became motivated...*

'Mentors' and 'marks' resulted in increasing the participants' self-confidence, which helped them to pursue their learning. They use both the past and the present tenses to describe how they feel about themselves in the present, which means both periods are being reflected, as a result of a narrative telling (See Section 6.2.2).

Theme: Agency

Agency in focus group analysis also shows the participants' desires to become future academics.

**Extract 189: Alia:** *A university teacher*

**Extract 190: Bahia:** *A teacher at university*

**Extract 191: Chams:** *A teacher at university*

**Extract 192: Djamila:** *Flight attendant*

**Extract 193: Esma:** *A professor at university*

**Extract 194: Fatima:** *A teacher at university*

**Extract 195: Gazala:** *I would like to be that teacher...*

**Extract 196: Isra:** *My plans completely changed I do not know...*

**Extract 197: Janah:** *I want to teach people f younger age...*

In the focus group discussion, they all said that their aims of learning English is to become teachers of English at university; Isra was uncertain only; Janah said that she was interested to become a teacher at a school level. They presented different reasons of becoming teachers (See below).

Theme: Investment

Investment is related to the participants' efforts in learning, which also reflect on their awareness of the language skills they need to improve.

**Extract 198: Alia:** *Writing and speaking skills...improving my thoughts and my behaviours[sic], I will read Islamic books. I am watching Islamic videos like Zakir Naik and Ahmed Didaat.*

**Extract 199: Bahia:** *Writing*

**Extract 200: Chams:** *Reading*

**Extract 201: Djamila:** *Writing*

**Extract 202: Esma:** *My writing skill needs to be improved. For writing I read books. I take quotes and transform them into my own way, even for speaking I watch TEDx talks specially[sic] the motivational videos...*

**Extract 203: Fatima:** *Improving my writing skill*

**Extract 204: Gazala:** *Listening*

**Extract 205: Isra:** *I think speaking...*

**Extract 206: Janah:** *Developing our vocabulary, improve[sic] our writing*

The participants show that they have a metacognitive skill, and they are developing a self-regulated learning (See Section 6.3), as they can recognise their areas of strengths and areas of development in each language skill. They highlight that the writing skill is more important than other skills for some reasons.

Sub-theme: *Reasons of investment*

The participants' awareness of the areas of language they need to improve reveal their reasons for making efforts to improve their skills. This sub-theme covers codes such as exams, grades, improving their understanding, and overcoming their difficulty.

**Extract 207: Esma:** *I think writing because in our system, evaluation is on writing, essays and exams. Those who have a correct writing style have a priority in*

*achieving good marks, others in speaking even if they do more efforts, they are not seen...*

**Extract 208: Hana:** *...because writing is the most important skill in our educational system.*

**Extract 209: Janah:** *Everting is based on writing like grammar mistakes, punctuation, when you fail in writing you cannot develop your skills...*

**Extract 210: Chams:** *...writing is very important especially grammar rules if you are a teacher you need to do no mistakes...*

**Extract 211: Fatima:** *I want to improve listening to improve my understanding...*

**Extract 212: Gazala:** *Because I don't understand the when I listen to a video the first time or even when I repeat it...particularly the British accent...*

**Extract 213: Isra:** *...because I think more than I speak and when I try to speak in English I do not find words in my mind...*

They report that the writing skill is more important, because the teaching system emphasises on their written production (essays), which enables them to pass their exams. They also think that developing their writing skill is necessary mainly when they become teachers; they need to present well written contents to their students, which are coherent and written in correct grammar and punctuation. Speaking is highlighted also as an important skill, as they need to develop their speaking proficiency to communicate with others.

Theme: Future self-image

Future self-image refers to the participants' willingness to make changes as they achieve their future imagined identity (teachers). They reflect that change can be either by becoming 'mentors' to their students, or through making possible changes in the teaching methods.

**Extract 214: Alia:** *...to show the[sic] student the Islamic role in[sic] building this humanity, give them the real image about the religion, teach the non-Muslim what is true Islam and who is the true Muslim...simply to choose the positive view about Islam into positive one.*

**Extract 215: Esma:** *Create new methods of teaching, understand the psychology of students...we will die, so we leave knowledge that we transmit to others...*

**Extract 216: Fatima:** *Learn how to deal with the student and do my best to make the students understand me...I want to teach in the correct way, and transmit my knowledge to others...*

**Extract 217: Gazala:** *I would like to be that teacher who stands by her students not just a teacher with a name...*

**Extract 218: Isra:** *...with that innocence you can grow them, we still see a teacher like a prophet, and you can use this weapon to grow them up.*

**Extract 219: Janah:** *...we want to change the view of teachers, there is a lot of hatred to teachers in the society.*

Participants imagine their future identities which show how they desire to make change either on people or content when they can perform their future position as academics. They aspire to become ‘mentors’ for their students who can provide them with guidance, support, and to orient them.

#### **5.4.1. Focus groups interaction analysis**

The following themes are elaborated from the participants’ interactions during focus group discussions. The themes are analysed as discussion support, disagreement, and agreement.

Theme: Discussion support

During the group discussions, the participants in each group shared a friendly support of their ideas. For example, Bahia stuck in her answer; Esma suggested to her to reformulate her sentence. Bahia said that she forgot the question. I repeated the question.

Djamila said that she was a selfish child, however, both Gazala and Chams told her that she could think of her behaviour not as selfishness, but as a common reaction of a child.

**Extract 220: Gazala:** *You were not selfish you were a child.*

**Extract 221: Chams:** *She was not conscious.*

In another example of interaction, Djamila said that she would die when she did not know how to solve her problem. However, Chams and Gazala interrupted her discussion, and they explained that she needed to feel positive about her worse experiences. This example shows that there was an interaction between the participants in the discussion of their thoughts.

**Extract 222: Chams:** *You must be optimistic...it does not deserve.*

**Extract 223: Gazala:** *I will not suicide. I am not going to die.*

During Isra’s discussion, she said that her experience in the past taught her to be social. Chams replied to Isra that she is a silent person. Their interaction showed that Chams agreed with Isra, but she wanted to ensure that her silence does not mean she is not sociable enough.

**Extract 224: Chams:** *I think she is silent in the beginning, but when I get used to her, I can see her real character...*

There was also an interaction between Gazala and Chams, as Chams asked whether Gazala regarded her uncle as her ‘mentor’. This interaction also supported Chams’ narrative which included a description of one ‘mentor’ only, who was her uncle.

**Extract 225: Chams:** *Your uncle was your idol...*

**Extract 226: Gazala:** *He is still my idol.*

Theme: Disagreements

Disagreements refer to the participants' different opinions about the content they discussed in groups.

Isra said that she did not know what she wanted to become in the future. However, Janah's discussion about her desire to teach children as they can learn language faster in an early age. This interaction reinforced Isra to reflect on her own desire for the future. Isra showed agreement with Janah's point. However, Chams disagreed with them, and added that she could not teach children.

**Extract 227: Isra:** *My plans totally changed, I do not know... Janah gave me an idea that children with that innocence you can grow them, we still see a teacher like a prophet, and you can use this weapon to grow them up.*

**Extract 228: Chams:** *I love children, I cannot teach pupils of primary school, they are not educated...*

In another example, Chams said that she is currently making more efforts than in the past. However, Isra said that she made more efforts in the past than now. This interaction showed that the participants pursue their learning differently.

**Extract 229: Isra:** *I am the opposite of participant three, I make lot of efforts in my previous stages of learning...*

Theme: Agreement

This theme explains the participants' common views on the efforts they make in learning.

**Extract 230: Gazala:** *Sometimes even if you make the efforts and you feel teachers are cheating.*

**Extract 231: Isra:** *We make efforts and we get nothing... She accuses our writing all the time.*

**Extract 232: Janah:** *...especially for writing...she does not like change. Sometimes I see childish essays. And she loves them...*

This example reveals the homogeneity of the group interaction, as they belong to the same class, and they are taught by the same teacher. This homogeneity is explained through their common opinions.



Group two: Bahia, Esma, Fatima also agreed that their feelings about their past events can improve their actions in the future.

**Extract 233: Alia:** *Yes*

**Extract 234: Gazala:** *Yes*

**Extract 235: Fatima:** *Yes*

Group one: Isra said that she cried because her teacher was angry with her. Chams, Djamila, and Janah also agreed that they would cry if they had similar situations.

**Extract 236: Chams:** *I cry when I fail too.*

**Extract 237: Isra:** *I do too.*

**Extract 238: Djamila:** *I cannot help myself I cry too.*

The participants' interaction discussed the content of the data; both *discussion support* and *disagreements* revealed diverse ways the participants viewed themselves. Participants of both group one and group two showed their *agreements* on opinions, feelings and reactions, which created dynamic interactions. However, group three did not show similar examples to group one and two. Moreover, participants in group one interaction was homogeneous, as they were all taught by the same teacher.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

This chapter presents data collected from the different research methods. The themes and sub-themes emerged from the narratives and focus group discussions are illustrated with quotes from the participants' data. The data analysis shows the sequence of events in the participants' narratives; participants' influences and remarkable changes in their learning process; how they are investing or will invest to realise their goals in the future. The data analysed aims to answer the main research questions, which are discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **DISCUSSION OF THE WOMEN'S LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

## **6.1. Past learning experiences**

The following sections discuss RQ1: *What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?*

The first research question is discussed in relation to women's past learning experiences. This period included three learning stages: the primary school, middle school, and secondary school. Two main themes informed this period 'mentors' and 'marks'; they both emerged as sociocultural factors which affected the students' learning identities.

First, the theme of 'Mentors' support' in the findings was presented as teachers' support, and the theme of 'Social mentors' represented the support students received from their family and peers. All of the teachers and family and peers represented the idea of 'mentors' in the students' past experiences in two social contexts: teachers' support occurred in formal learning environments (schools), while family provided social and cultural support in informal learning environments (home). These two different contexts positively affected the students' learning experiences, and they represented their' social background (See below).

Second, this period also revealed the theme of 'marks' which are defined as events that occurred either in educational contexts, or outside, and they constructed meaning to the students' narrative experiences (See below). To discuss the first research question, both 'mentors' and 'marks' are discussed as socio-cultural influencing factors which contributed to the emergence of students' learning agency and identity.

## **6.2. 'Mentors' in past learning experiences: school and home**

The first research question was discussed from a sociocultural theory perspective of learning as social, and learners' interaction with their social background can draw on the construction of their identities (See Section 3.2). Following this view, the findings showed the students recalled their teachers of the primary school, however, some recalled their teachers of middle and secondary schools. For example, Janah said about her primary school teacher, "*He was a mentor for me*". Esma described her teacher at the middle school (See extract 1 presented in the previous chapter). One possible reason that highlighted teachers as 'mentors' in the women's narratives is their verbal support which appeared in different forms, such as personal comments (See extract 3). Teachers' support had also the meaning of 'moral orientation'

which refers to advice that students chose to apply to carry on with their learning. Teachers' moral orientation aimed to cultivate the students to develop their learning (See extract 19)

In another example, advice was beyond a moral orientation, and it extended to a religious belief, as Alia's teacher of Islamic sciences said, "...*but only by getting a high will; organising your time; maintaining your 'Faraid' (religion obligations) and the devotion of Allah (God)*". This excerpt showed two purposes of the teacher's advice: first, the teacher advised Alia to improve her learning through time management and positive thinking. Second, he encouraged her to improve her relationship with God to reinforce her spiritual belief which will help her to achieve success. This understanding can be interpreted through Wong's (2012) claim that students can develop their learning when they are able to connect who they are with what they can do. However, Blazar and Kraft (2017) argue that the inclusion of a religious aspect in learning is an area beyond the core of academic skills. Alia's quote may also help in understanding that students in this context were not only assisted with social knowledge that concerned learning skills, or time management, but learning was influenced by a moral orientation which included different ways of verbal support and spiritual motivation. In this case, Alia's past learning experience was enhanced with both a reflection on the self-development through learning skills, and a reflection on the self that belongs to a particular religious background (See Section 6.4).

Teachers provided different forms of verbal support to the students (See Table 6.1). Teachers' advice empowered the students to develop persistency to continue their learning. It also increased their students' self-confidence as in Bahia's example (See extract 24). In another example Bahia gave different reasons which helped her recall her teachers, which implied that the verbal support maintained an enduring impact on students (See extract 30).

The teachers' support can also be interpreted as social and emotional scaffolding which can create an effective learning environment that provides learners with the feeling of security (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017). In this thesis, the students showed their positive emotions towards their teachers' support, as they expressed that their school experiences remained remarkable and unforgettable due to these teachers (See extract 36). Blazer and Kraft (2017) argue that emotionally supportive environments contribute to improving the students' social and emotional development (See Section 3.4.1).

Fatima's experience with teachers was different from other students. Her narrative showed that she acquired a negative perception about teachers in the primary and middle schools, as

she described it as a nightmare, “...*the teachers were very harsh with me...*” This excerpt matches what I observed during the classroom session (See Section 5.2), when she asked whether the ‘mentors’ and the ‘marks’ could be described only in positive ways, or they could also be described in negative ways in the narrative. She said, “*Do we have to talk about positive or negative mentor and mark?*” This implied that she wanted to confirm that she could talk about her relationship with her teachers in both ways. She described not only how they treated her, but she also interpreted their behaviour towards her, she said, “... *may be because I did not elevate to their expectations...I did not even understand the reason why I was mistreated*”. Fatima used ‘may be’ as a modal verb to explain the reason why her teachers mistreated her in the past. Although this event occurred in the past, in Fatima’s mind it is still valid for interpretation. Pals (2006) views that when the past is narrated in the present, it presents not only a description of the event, but it also presents the narrator’s self-interpretation of that event, which then provides meaning within the narrative.

In addition, Fatima said, “*My innocence and shyness... made my life as a nightmare. I could not improve my level during this stage and I could not even learn in the right way*”, this excerpt demonstrated that Fatima was not only influenced by her teachers’ behaviour in the past, but they maintained an impact in her learning process. Fatima’s narrative has been employed as an experienced-centred narrative approach, which according to Squire (2013) is based on individuals’ interpretation of the past into the present (See Section 3.7). Another possible explanation of this finding is that Fatima had a negative experience; as a result, she lacked teachers’ support and security in her early learning. This finding is in line with what Norton (2000) and Higgins (2010) noted that either negative or positive experiences can shape learners’ perceptions of learning, and they reconstruct their identities, Norton highlighted that this might occur particularly with women. Fatima’s negative perception about teachers and learning changed when she moved to secondary school and she received more positive behaviour from other teachers (See Section 6.1.3).

Chams’ narrative was also crucial; it did not involve the role of teachers in her learning experience. This could be interpreted as she might not have received a remarkable support from her teachers in the past, rather she described her uncle as a ‘mentor’ in her learning (See extract 31). Teachers’ support also caused the students to change their attitudes towards the subjects they studied (See extract 7). This excerpt demonstrates that emotional and social

support reinforce the creation of an environment that brings teachers and learners together (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2017).

It was not only teachers who were presented in the students' narratives as 'mentors', but also their family and peers played roles of social mentors. Their family and peers also contributed to shape their confidence, motivation and willingness to continue their learning. Their way of support was verbal, similar to teachers. The findings revealed that family and peers were revealed as two main influential mentors which raised students' awareness about school in their early learning (5 years old). In addition, family and peers represented the primary source of motivation in the students' narratives (See extracts 11 and 14). These two extracts demonstrate that social support is instilled in the women's life experiences. These findings supported Pizzolato (2006) who asserts that family is the primary social source which introduces children to the importance of education and future academic success (See Section 3.4.2). This point also refers to the role of family in shaping individuals' identity (See extracts 13 and 17).

Some women presented their friends as their 'mentors' of the past. Esma said, "*Moumene was the greatest treasure and the dearest friend whom I grant ever[sic]*", and (See extract 15), this is explained by McLaughlin *et al.* (2017) that children who experienced social and emotional events with their friends tend to form and maintain their friendship. Also, social support was revealed in the meaning of 'moral orientation' (See extract 20 and 23). These findings are consistent with those of Sa'd and Hatam (2017), which show that 36 learners out of 45 male students agreed that family and peers can influence their identity reconstruction (See Section 3.4.2). This thesis showed that families and peers played an emotional role in the students' past learning experiences. It also showed that the verbal support family and peers nurtured students with positive emotions which affected on their learning, they helped them to increase their self-confidence, and this enabled them to recognise their potential self-abilities. This supports Bamberg, De Fina, and Schiffrin (2011) who claim that individuals' internal emotions are intersubjective, because they have been negotiated in social and cultural contexts.

The discussions of 'mentors' (teachers and family and peers) were presented as a 'moral orientation' in the students' narratives. They both focused more on raising the moral awareness of the students than their focus on school learning skills, which added a complexity to the students' negotiation of their past experiences. Then, the past learning experiences were

not curtailed with a description of people, but it extended to the self-negotiation of belonging to different social contexts (home and school). From a sociocultural theory perspective, social interaction in home and school contexts plays an important role in the mental development of students (Mohammadi and Izadpanah, 2017). Also, social identity affects learning, and learning affects learners' identity (Tseng, 2002).

'Mentors' in a broader sense in the students' narratives were presented as powerful means of students' inclusion in learning in the past – except in Fatima's case – as students did not experience a *social pressure* (Harrison, 2009).

Insufficient attention has been paid to how EFL learners develop their identities in their home-country sociocultural contexts. In addition, there has been little discussion in the literature about the impact of family and peers in the development of learners' identities. This thesis contributed with the theme of *social support* that presented a better understanding of the impact of the social surroundings on the students' past learning. To sum up, the findings showed that teachers, family and peers have socially assisted the students to negotiate and develop their identities in the past. These findings have confirmed Thesen's (1997) results which found that transition in learning occurs as an overlap between home and school as discussed in the next section.

### **6.2.1. 'Marks' in the past learning experiences**

'Marks' are presented in this section as events that maintained an enduring impact on the students' learning process. Most of the women shared their events in the form of dialogues with their 'mentors' (teacher, friends and family). 'Marks' in the students' narratives are presented in educational contexts, and teachers contributed to the mutability of the students' identities. The students reported that they were overwhelmed with the feeling of fear in their learning in the past, which Witte and Allen (2000) say that is a common experience for many learners during schooling stages. The participants supported their narratives with a dialogue to narrate how they shared their fear of school (See extract 46), and how their mentors supported them (See extract 47). Other participants such as Bahia wrote a dialogue with her teacher to present the 'mark' concerning her fear of failure.

**Bahia:** *He saw me sitting alone, sad and had not said any word during the whole session. He came and asked me!*

**Teacher:** *Bahia, are you ok?*

**Bahia:** *I replied with sad vibration in my voice. Yes Sir, I am fine. Just..., I could not catch my tears...*

**Teacher:** *Yes, Bahia I am here if you need help just tell me!*

**Bahia:** *I told him that I am afraid to get bad marks and I am not ready for my Baccalaureate exam. My teacher reaction was so great... he smiled and said...*

**Teacher:** *Come on! Where is the optimist girl I know!*

A possible interpretation of this finding is that fear is a result of a feeling of inadequacy in learning or lack of preparation for exams (Cohen and Norst, 1989). Another interpretation of their feeling is ‘perceived threat’ which refers to the degree to which individuals feel likely to experience failure. The teacher offered to help “*I am here if you need help just tell me!*” The teacher’s act is relevant to the social problem-solving practice found by McLaughlin *et al.* (2017) (See Section 3.4.1).

Hana also presented her mark in a conversation with her teacher who observed that she was about to quit her learning, she lost motivation, and she was misbehaving in his class (See extract 44). Hana’s loss of motivation can be interpreted as an outcome of the feeling of fear (Martin and Marsh, 2003), as she noted that she feared failing in her final school exam.

The teacher’s behaviour can be explained as a use of preventing/addressing challenging behaviour practice, as explained by McLaughlin *et al.* (2017) (See Section 3.4.1). Hana regained her motivation towards learning (See extract 45), and she worked hard to succeed in her exam. Hana’s behaviour can be explained by Martin *et al.* (2001) that when learners feel the threat of failure, they protect themselves by working hard to succeed in their exam. However, Gazala narrated about her failure in the test of history and explained the reason of her failure (See extract 41). It is evident from this extract that Gazala was demotivated to learn history due to her negative attitudes towards her teacher, as she said, “... *my teacher whom I hated so much...*”.

‘Marks’ in the narratives extended beyond the learning context, and this is consistent with the findings of Murphey *et al.* (2004) that events which occur outside classroom can also reinforce learners’ investment. In the current study, ‘marks’ that occurred between the women and their parents or friends constructed meaning and purpose for them to pursue their learning.

Janah presented a conversation with her father:

**Janah:** *Dady! Do you feel okay now? How do you feel? How was your surgery?!*

**Father:** *Hamdollah! (Thanks God) I am totally fine...no pain at all. How studies are going?*



**Janah:** *Really Dad! Is that the right time to talk about it?*

**Father:** *Yes! There is always time to talk about studies. Studies always comes [sic] first...*

This example is relevant to what Harrison (2009) referred to as *social pressure* to describe his female participant who cited her father as the person who encouraged her during her learning. Chams also demonstrated her mentor's support, and said what her uncle did for her, had an enduring impact on her life and learning experiences (See extract 51). This extract "*I was quite afraid till...*" demonstrates that she felt threatened with failure as discussed by Martin *et al.* (2001). In addition, her uncle's act was the 'mark' in her narrative, as he provided a supportive environment for her to revise in order to succeed in the exam. This is evident that the focus in her 'mark' was not her brother's accident, rather it was her uncle's act to protect her from failure.

Alia's 'mark' was different from other students; she talked about a bus accident which was not related to her educational experience (See extract 54). Alia's 'mark' is instilled in her life experience, as she said, "*It affected me*". This example demonstrates how the feeling of fear can create a long-life impact.

### **6.2.2. The present in reflection of 'marks' as turning points**

This section addresses RQ2. *How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?*

This research question concerns the relationship between the past and the present, which was revealed through the students' negotiation of their identities in these two periods. In this thesis, 'marks' are interpreted as events and as turning points/transitions which occurred in the students' past learning and constructed meaning of change and transformation to their learning in the present. Most of the students' events were regarded as turning points which were triggered by actions of change (See extract 50). Also,

**Hana:** *... the words he had said may seem plain and simple to another one, yet to me, it was a trigger, an alarm to wake up and get myself back together, and now I can proudly say that without those words, I would have surely and obliviously repeated the year without knowing what I was capable of...*

This extract demonstrates that she interpreted her success in the middle school due to her teacher's advice and warning about failure. As Hana viewed that transition occurred when she could make her success from middle school to secondary school, this example has the meaning of transition as moving from one school to another (Thesen, 1997; Evangelou *et al.*, 2008). In this sense, what Hana regarded as a 'mark' had the meaning of change in her

learning trajectory, as it created an understanding of her abilities, of what she can do to succeed.

Gazala said, “...and I have started enjoying his class and school also...”; in the focus group discussion, she said “...started to change my perception on[sic] his classes. I can think better than I was, I have new perspectives”. These examples showed that students’ ‘marks’ reinforced them to reflect on changing their behaviour and engaging in learning activities. From a sociocultural perspective, individuals’ cognition can be understood through their conceptual development, which can be revealed through their desire to practise their learning activities (Johnson and Golombek, 2011).

For Fatima, the turning point in her learning experience was the change of the teachers’ behaviour towards her – in both stages which were primary and middle schools, she had negative opinions about teachers and learning. Fatima has not clearly stated what teachers have done to her. This point revealed in the peer-feedback process; Bahia asked her for a further description of her event, however, Fatima commented that she did not want to present details about this particular event in her narrative (See Appendix 19). I respected her decision as this can be a protection of the participants’ lives (See Section 4.15.1).

In Fatima’s narrative transition occurred when she moved from middle school to secondary school, she said, “*The teachers’ methods were very helpful as well as the way they treated me*”. This example is evidence that transition can be about moving from one school level to another, and this agrees with Thesen’s (1997) findings (See Section 3.4.3). It can also be a result of an event that creates change in the learners’ experiences, and this agrees with Crafter’s and Maunder’s (2012) framework of transition as a turning point, which concerns a challenge that learners encounter, and which enhanced their reconstruction of a new self-image (See Section 3.4.3).

In the focus group discussions:

**Fatima:** *I changed my way (silence)... uhm looking at things, and everything like my classmates, the way of speaking to teachers and the way of treatment. It was the turning point in my life. Everything changed, the way of thinking of people, the way I behave with them I was famous in middle school and that motivated me... because it made me realistic and idealistic, I have ideas and I adapt them to reality.*

In the narrative:

**Fatima:** *All these experiences made my life as a rose which open[sic] and spread [sic] odour when I speak about them. I knew about myself and my personality. This*

*enabled me to acquire self-confidence by which I could argue and improvise in toughest conversations and confrontations. I was so glad with [sic] this change.*

From a narrative perspective, the transformation of a negative event to a positive event, in Fatima's narrative, can be explained as a narrative coherence (Pals, 2006). This happy end in a narrative is further explained by King, Scollon, Ramsey, and Williams (2000) as an indicator of an emotional resolution of the narrator. Another possible interpretation by King (2001) is that adults' sense of maturity and satisfaction is indicated by their ability to narrate about their past difficult experiences, including the more positive changes that occurred. One may point out that the students' turning points were exhibited in the sense of fear in their narratives. Their feeling of fear represented a tension that enhanced their learning trajectory and their desires to make new ways to continue their learning.

The findings about 'marks' as events and turning points in the students' narratives do not support the findings of Murphey and Carpenter (2008), who claim that learners do not acquire agency thinking until university (See Section 3.6). In this thesis, the students' narratives showed that they had a comprehensive support from their teachers and families which helped them to defeat their fears, to develop their learning, to succeed, and to transfer to university. This shows that change in students' narratives is presented as positive, as Molouki and Bartels (2017) found that positive change influences personal continuity. Bakhtin's (1981) dialogic approach draws on the role of utterances that individuals exchange with each other. Bakhtin refers to change as shifting identities through utterances. This statement agrees with Holquist (1990) that an utterance is not only what is said, but it resolves a problem, it evaluates a conclusion for the present, or extends action for the future.

I argue that the dialogues that students exchanged with their 'mentors' created change in their narratives. From Bakhtin's point of view individuals' consciousness is social, as it was yielded by a dynamic communication with their environment. Students' consciousness arises through a situation (Holquist, 1990). This situation refers, in this context to the 'marks' that happened and created change, continuity and emergence of new self-images. In the context of this research, agency is discussed as a desire that is produced by its environment, and then expanded by its individuals' choices.

Both 'mentors' and 'marks' are presented as discursive factors that helped the students to construct new self-images. As these 'marks' occurred, the students started to think about their future, for example Bahia said, *"From that moment I promised myself to keep moving, never*

*look back whatever happen and never be afraid of the future*". The students' change from self-awareness to action, for Stromquist (2015) can be interpreted as women's agency. Whether change that influences continuity, or continuity which reinforces change; in this research the terms are not in a competing position, rather they are slightly contextualised according to the meaning constructed from students' experiences. I argue that the relationship between these two terms is cyclic because in different events desires can be about changing a situation or continuing the process only.

Agency in this context can be discussed as a process of *continuity* and *change*. In this context, continuity includes different aspects that have led participants to make change to their learning. These aspects are participants' recognition of their abilities, self-awareness of their needs, feeling responsibility in acting (need to make personal efforts), developing positive attitudes, and replacing their fears, and increasing their self-confidence. Continuity is reinforced by their will to make change to improve their learning. The dialogues (interaction) therefore the participants exchanged with their 'mentors' enabled them to acquire a sense of empowerment (Bakhtin, 1981), and develop a sense of continuity in learning.

However, change as a term is also discussed in the meaning of agency. Change in this context refers to an act which aims to change a fearful/challenging situation. This change enables individuals to perceive themselves and the world around them differently. This research suggests that these 'marks'/turning points have empowered the students' agency, which is discussed as a process of continuity and change.

Dörnyei's findings that secondary school students think of their future as hazy, as they lack what he called "superordinate vision" (2009: 25) contradict with the current research findings. To illustrate, the students' interpretation of their 'marks' revealed that they gained self-understandings, they reflected on their abilities of the past, they discovered their hopes, and they constructed new self-images. From the narrative perspective the students' extracts showed that they negotiate their self of the past in the present, within a complex presentation of challenges, hopes, fears, and development, and this matched with Norton's claim (2013:45) that "... a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time".

### 6.3. The present and agency in learning

This section carries on the discussion of research question two which addresses students' learning as they open their past to reflection and reappraisal. Findings are corroborated from both the narratives (See Figures 6.2) and the focus group discussions (See Figures 6.3). Students' learning in the past and present is situated in a social context, hence, many of the students showed that they were assisted by their families (mothers and brothers) to choose English as their course to study at university (See extract 72). Both Chams' and Isra's mothers were teachers of English, and Gazala's mother also was a teacher. It is possible that these mothers inspired their daughters to choose English because they themselves acknowledged that they had identities, and they hoped for their daughters to develop these identities as well (Mills, 2004). Alongside the mothers' desire for their daughters (students) to study English at university, the students had ambivalent attitudes towards it (See extract 63).

For example, Fatima included in her first narrative draft that her brother helped her to choose English (See extract 74). After blog peer-feedback, she revised her narrative and she added a dialogue to illustrate that her brother supported her to choose English instead of Spanish. The aim of peer-feedback was to enable students to engage in a reflective process of the content of their narratives (See Section 3.8.1). However, not all the students focused on their revision on the content of their narratives. Both of the initial and final drafts of the students were analysed for the purpose of answering the three research questions, and not to check how blog peer-feedback was efficient to make the students revise their narratives.

In the first draft:

**Fatima:** *I didn't choose English because I love it. I confess that it was a random choice. My first one was Spanish and there were two persons who could change my mind to choose English and I 'm grateful to them.*

In her revised narrative:

**Fatima:** *My first one was Spanish and there were two persons who could change my mind to choose English and I 'm grateful to them. One of the two persons was my brother. So, we discussed the topic of my choice.*

Dialogue between Fatima and her brother:

**Brother:** *Why did you choose Spanish?*

**Fatima:** *I have chosen this language because I love it so much, it seems easier than English and French.*

**Brother:** *Don't think like that because you will regret.*

**Fatima:** *What?! What do you mean?*

**Brother:** *You must be intelligent and don't think just of your feelings, you have to think also about the future. I want to say that if you choose English, you will have more chances of work, and more than that, English is the language of the world. I'm sure you will not regret.*

**Fatima:** *Yes brother, it's all right. I will consider this to get the appropriate choice. Thank you because you clarify a lot of things for me.*

It is important to note that the family suggestions did not limit students' access to learning, rather it encouraged them to study English. This research did not find any relationship between L2 identities and social structural constraints that position learners differently or limit their access to become members of an EFL learning community. This is contrary to findings in immigrant contexts, which reported that L2 identities are negotiated either as imposed identities or identities with limited access to target communities of practice, as noted in Norton's study (See Section 3.4). The support of family was revealed, in this thesis, in the description of the students' present choices of learning English. The family's support added a social understanding of the complex relationship between the 'mentors' and the students, not as children, but as adults who are able to make their own decisions. Then, the family is a social marker of identity that contributed to the negotiation of the self in different points in time (Norton, 2013).

The following findings about students' personal choices of learning English are discussed in relation to the concept of agency. According to Bakhtin (1986), individuals' identities are contested as varied and contradictory. Thus, the concept of agency captures a dual meaning. First, agency is situated in the interaction between individuals and the social world, and in this case, it is produced and inherited. Second, individuals through interaction can develop their ability to express their own meanings. In this context, students' desires to study English resulted from a dual decision, as they were not only assisted by their family to choose English, but they also had self-desires and positive attitudes towards English (See extracts 65 and 66). In some cases, the students were ambivalent about their choices to study English, however, they did not deny their preference of this language (See extract 69). This example demonstrated that students' agency to learn a language is contradictory and complex, as having a desire to learn a language may be produced by the social world (media, family, television), then individuals develop their own desire to learn it. In this thesis, the students' personal choices and family support to learn English were represented as motivating factors to their agency.

However, there were other reasons which were involved in conjunction with the status of English as an international language (See extract 78). Agency to learn English is presented with the students' desires to expand their social identity to a 'global identity', as Gu (2011) used the term to describe learners' intentions to belong to communities of practice. In this thesis, the students' intentions were depicted in the narratives in different ways: they desired to belong to communities of practice, by travelling, and securing jobs either in national or international contexts (See extract 115). The discussion of students' agency in learning English in the mentioned examples was revealed in relation to 'space', which was presented as imaginary (Giampara, 2004). They aspired to position the self in new imaginary contexts (job and travel). These findings reflect on the poststructuralist theory which highlights that identities are not only socially constructed, but they are also negotiated by their agents who desire to position themselves (Norton, 2013).

In 2018, 72% of the students enrolled to study English course in Tlemcen University were women, and 28% were men. This can be due to the widespread use of English and the opportunities it affords to women. It can be also that these women aspired to position themselves in different imaginary spaces, such as becoming school teachers, finding a job, or traveling (See Section 6.4).

### **6.3.1. Present self-evaluation**

Following the discussion of the second research question, students also self-evaluated and reflected on their current language level, and particularly their difficulties in the different language skills. There are similar findings from the narratives and the focus group discussions (See Figure 6.2). In her narrative, for instance, Fatima said, "*I am facing many obstacles. My current learning seems to be a challenge...it is a mixture of hardness and enjoyment*", and in the focus group discussion, she said, "*I have a problem... (silence), I am not satisfied*".

In the focus group discussions, they also compared their level in English in the past and the present, as Hana said, "*My speaking was bad in the past...*". Gazala said, "*...it is getting very well...*"; in her narrative, she said, "*I think I am better than I used to be...my level has developed over time*". They showed satisfaction with their learning of English in the present (See extract 154). Self-evaluation is defined as a metacognitive strategy that learners develop as a self-regulated learning skill (Gao and Zhang, 2010). It is also a manifestation of both an ability to evaluate the self-learning process, and a development of an autonomous learning skill. Metacognition is closely tied with learners' exercise of agency (Gao and Zhang, 2010).

In this thesis, the students' ability to evaluate their learning in the past, and the present, and particularly in each language skill, included an evaluation of their whole learning process (See extract 147).

Students' self-evaluation of the past and the present was rehearsed in both the narratives and the focus group discussions. Their self-consciousness in the present offered an insight into the relationship between the past and the present learning. They noted difficulties in language skills consecutively, as each student revealed difficulty in at least one or two skills. In the speaking skill, for instance, they showed that they had few or no difficulties (See extract 94). Students regarded listening, writing, and reading as the most challenging skills (See extracts 92). Learners' reflection, therefore, enables them to think of resources that help them to improve their language learning (Gao and Zhang, 2010). Their ability to think of their needs in language refers to their metacognitive consciousness. Tseng, Dörnyei, and Schmitt (2006) argue that L2 learners are defined with their intentions and efforts in learning. In a similar vein, the students' intentions to make efforts are regarded as an exercise of agency, which allows them to continue with the will to become teachers (See Section 6.3).

#### **6.4. Future self-images**

This section discusses RQ3. *What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?*

The students' imagined identity was engendered with the different goals and hopes to become teachers of English. They showed that they aspired to achieve their imagined identity through making efforts, because they know their learning will lead them to achieve their ideal or future selves. Both the narratives and focus group analyses entailed findings that discussed this research question.

Students' agency in learning English resulted in the emergence of academic and religious trajectories. Their identities are shaped by a cycle of a narrative experience that is made of the past, the present, and the future: their future academic identity was influenced with their interaction with their 'mentors', and their 'marks'. They reinforced them to find new pathways, and to imagine their future identities as teachers. For instance, Fatima said in her narrative, *"I wonder if I can represent the spirit of motherhood by teaching kids the framed principles of education and respect. My aim afterwards will reach the success of the next generation.* This extract showed that Fatima's experience in the past influenced her desire to



become a teacher who can treat children better than how she was treated by her teachers (See Section 6.1).

In the focus group interaction analysis (See Section 5.4.1), Janah said, *“I want to teach people of younger age...”*, which made Isra reflect on her plans, she said, *“My plans totally changed, I do not know.... Janah gave me an idea that children with that innocence you can grow them, we still see a teacher like a prophet, and you can use this weapon to grow them up”*. These extracts showed that group interaction helped Isra to reflect on her future becoming. Their plans are also supported with their will to make changes when they achieve their future academic identity. They thought that they received poor teaching in the past, and they needed to become better future teachers. For instance, Gazala said, *“I would like to be that teacher who stands by her students not just a teacher with a name”*. They also hope to change the perception of teachers in the community, as Janah said, *“...we want to change the view of teachers, there is a lot of hatred to teachers in the society”*. These extracts can be interpreted as a development of a personal identity that is accumulated with their past observation and perception of their teachers, and the common view about teachers in their community. Their extracts are interpreted from the narrative perspective that when people talk about their experiences, they become meaningful, and they formulate their selves through the process of reflexivity (Haynes, 2006).

Moreover, they understood the role of ‘mentors’ in their lives, which made them want to become ‘mentors’ for their students in the future, as Esma said, *“Create new methods of teaching, understand the psychology of students...we will die, so we leave knowledge that we transmit to others”*. Findings that appeared in the focus group discussions showed that their plans/ actions to change referred to investment (Norton, 2000). They disagreed that their current efforts are sufficient to improve their grades; however, they noted actions using verbs, such as ‘will’ and ‘want’, and others which were included in the theme ‘Agency through learning’ (See section 5.3.3). This theme explained their actions to improve their language skills to be able to achieve their future identity as teachers (See extract 123).

Their reasons to invest in their learning can be interpreted as developing a self-regulated competence (Wenden, 1998). For instance, Gazala said, *“I want to improve listening to improve my understanding”*. They highlighted that the writing and the speaking skills will enable them to raise their grades and to be competent teachers in the future (See extract 210).

In addition, they hope to share their established social identity with the world. Their social identity, in this thesis, revealed their affiliation to their religious beliefs, as Mohammadi and Izadpanah (2019) noted that religion is one category of social identity along with ethnicity, nationality, age, and gender. Religion also contributes in shaping students' behaviour and attitudes (Vaughan and Hogg, 2002). For instance, Hana said, "*We make plans, work and hope for the best, yet only Allah knows what the future really holds*". This example illustrated that their agency is nurtured with their social belief, and they consider faith as salient to their learning, and their future achievement.

Alia said, "...*I think many times that if I died in that accident, I would not have [sic] an opportunity to change my bad behaviours[sic] and ameliorate myself to be better...*" Alia's behaviour is a demonstration of what she learnt from her religion (Amadasi and Holliday, 2016). She met with an accident which made her reflect that she had a chance to change her behaviour. Amadasi and Holliday (2016) explain that the match between behaviour and religion is an example of a narrative thread. Alia also said, "*Writing and speaking skills...improving my thoughts and my behaviours, I will read Islamic books. I am watching Islamic videos like Zakir Naik and Ahmed Didaat*". Alia is investing through both improving language skills, such as writing, speaking, and reading, and widening her knowledge about her religion through media, such as listening to two influential Muslim speakers, Zakir Naik and Ahmed Didaat who she regarded as references of knowledge.

Therefore, the aim of investing in her learning is twofold: first, she can imagine herself as a teacher who can influence students and assist them with religious behaviour and principles, and this can have the meaning of becoming a 'mentor' for her students, and to provide a 'moral orientation' as she experienced herself. Second, she aims to create change in others' perceptions of Islam. This implied that Alia perceives religion not as a personal ownership, but she feels responsible to raise awareness of members of other communities. As Shafie *et al.* (2010:58) say that "Students bring with them their cultural and religious beliefs, previous life experiences and knowledge about the world..."

**Alia:** ...*to show the [sic]student the Islamic role in building this humanity, give them the real image about the religion, teach the non-Muslim what is true Islam and who is the true Muslim... and to show them what is real Islam, not the one that is described in ugly way on media, simply to choose the positive view about Islam into positive one.*

Alia's teacher of Islamic sciences in the middle school influenced the construction of her religious identity, as he was the first person who advised her to maintain her religious duties (See Section 6.1). Wong (2018:15) argues that, "The teacher's spiritual identity can be a positive motivating factor when teachers approach spiritual identity as pedagogy from an informed critical stance". Wong also states that he used 'spiritual' instead of a religious identity as it is an inclusive term which permits discussion of different structures (ritual, tradition) associated with religion (Wong, 2018). Alia negotiated her religious identity as one entity of her multiple identities (See Figure 6.1) which are constructed by the impact of her social background (school, home). In addition, Alia highlighted in the focus group discussion that after she finishes her Bachelor in English, she will apply for an Islamic sciences course. This finding agrees with Kubota (2018) who states that religious identity is socially constructed, and it may develop an individual's agency. This implies that her religious identity has been socially constructed, and in the current time, she has developed an individual agency to better practise this identity.

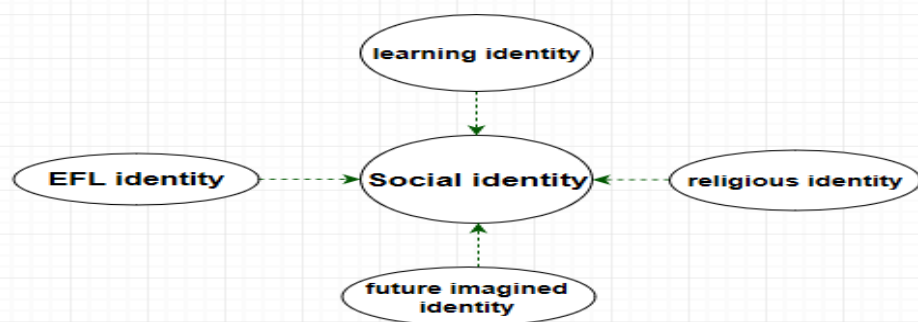
I argue that in Algeria, religion does not cause discrimination between students, as people hold a similar religious faith. The influence of religion on the teachers' identity is a marker of their identity (Kubota, 2018), which they practise as a pedagogy to assist the students' social and emotional behaviour (Wong, 2018). The connections among learning identity, religious identity and future academic identity are accumulated to construct and reconstruct the students' multiple identities (See Figure 6.1). These findings are significant to the Algerian context, which is investigated from an EFL perspective, as Islamic education was established to raise awareness about the local identity and religion. A background on women's education, identity and religion, in Algeria was presented in Chapter Two (See Section 2.3).

The students' future identity is also affected by the views of world politicians and writers. Most of the students translated quotes and noted them in their narratives. These quotes showed as association with their agency in learning. Djamila said, "*I would like to share with you a quote that inspires me day in and day out...*"; she quoted from Abraham Lincoln, "That some achieve great success, is proof to all that others can achieve it as well.". Also, Esma said, "*My writing skill needs to be improved. For writing I read books. I take quotes and transform them into my own way, even for speaking I watch TEDx talk specially the motivational videos*".

To sum up, students' negotiation of their past learning, present choices and desires, and future plans demonstrated that 'identities' are shaped and reshaped. Their identity is constructed as non-fixed, multiple, and transformative (See Figure 6.1). Findings from the thesis are in line with the understanding of poststructuralist identity (Norton, 1997). Their trajectory identities are situated in webs of social relations which are revealed in the findings as (1) home, (2) schools, (3) university, (4) religion, (5) English, and (6) media. These social relations contributed to the construction and reconstruction of their multiple identities (See Figure 6.1) and enabled them to make choices that are appropriate to their social background. In addition, the variety of social, cultural, religious and learning process make the narratives of the students unique.

Students' learning and personal desires are explicitly linked to professional aspirations. Their desires to become teachers is a way to reorient themselves in the world, wherein they share their own strategic learning, their personal experiences, and their resources to create change. This research proposes that EFL students are shaped by their social practice (home, school, and university) which reinforced their continuity of learning and resulted in the emergence of their imagined future identity (teachers).

The figure below shows that identity in the students' learning process is cyclic, as the narrative model designed was assisted with experiential learning (See Section 3.7.1). Students develop multiple social identities; learning identity and religious identity are reinforced by the themes discussed. They have developed multiple social identities which are: learning identity, religious identity, language identity, and future imagined/teaching identity.



**Figure 6.1** Social multiple identities

## 6.5. Conceptual contribution

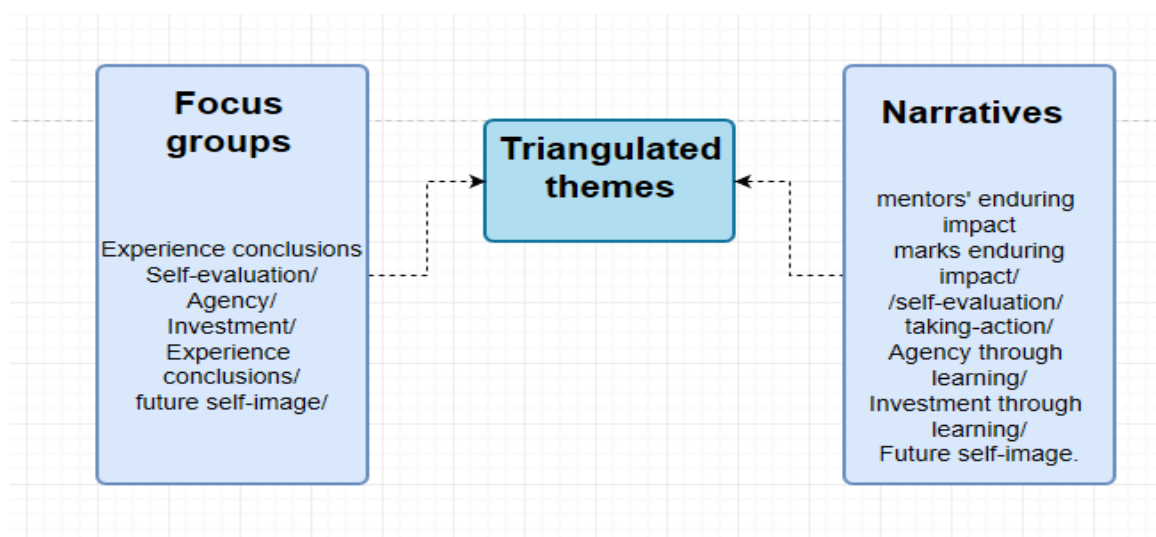
Learning identity is a concept contributed by this narrative research. It involves a discussion of three learning periods which highlighted students' learning experiences. A learning identity is developed as a process of integration of both students' social and academic learning experiences. Their narratives presented the past with two influencing social factors (mentors and marks), which represented the role of people, and events through dialogues. The present involved the students' current learning and their ability to imagine their future identity. A learning identity is concerned with how students develop within a process of becoming learners (See section 7.2).

In reviewing the literature, no discussion was found of any overlap between 'mentors' and 'marks'. There is also not much research that explain the role of family and teachers in shaping the students' social identity in an early learning. It is evident, in this thesis, that each student's 'mark' was assisted by a 'mentor', in both the past and the present learning. In the narratives 'mentors' and 'marks' are interrelated, and they affect each other. The students narrated about their 'marks' which concerned events and involved their 'mentors' who supported them. Students regarded individuals as 'mentors' and represented them as their role models, and they presented their performances as 'marks'. The dialogues in their narratives illustrated that their 'marks' could not occur without these people.

Previous studies in this area focused on the life and learning experiences of adults; by their reflection on their past learning experiences, researchers capture the development of their identities. For a similar purpose, this thesis has been an attempt to thoroughly explain not only what factors influence the development of the students' identities, but it also provides findings and interpretations which present how these factors reinforced the construction of the students' new-images. Discussion of the emerging themes: 'mentors', 'marks', and 'moral orientation', and the interrelationship between them answered *RQ1: What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?* (See Sections 6.1/ 6.2).

This research has also discussed that identity as a phenomenon of constant change which is also used in the meaning of *transitions/ turning points* (See Section 3.4.3). To my knowledge, few studies have explored the *turning points* through EFL/ESL learners' narratives, either as results of learners' events, or as learners' engagement in these events. Further discussion in the findings are presented (See Section 6.2.2), which answered *RQ2: How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?*

This thesis suggests that what students regarded as ‘marks’ had not only maintained impacts in their learning, but they changed their attitudes and perceptions about learning. These ‘marks’ also increased their self-awareness which reoriented them to initiate change at the personal level and the learning level, which was presented as a sub-theme ‘Change of attitudes’ (See Section 5.4). The turning points in the students’ narratives constitute the discovery of their new self-images which are nurtured with new hopes, self-confidence, desires and motivation, presented as a theme ‘Experience conclusions’ (See Section 5.4), and as a sub-theme ‘Self-confidence’ (See section 5.4). Thus, these new-images can be achieved through ‘investment’ (See Section 5.4), and the theme ‘Agency through learning’ (See Section 5.3), and as a sub-theme ‘Personal beliefs’ (See Section 5.3.3). ‘Marks’ in this research are not concerned only about the events that occurred in a fixed past, and they are not reflected on, or processed or compared with other events of a long-life learning process, ‘marks’ are also about transitions or the turning points caused by our reflections and interpretations at any time after they occurred, which could be the present desire for a better future. ‘Marks’ are constant events that contribute in the growing of perpetuated desires which individuals acquire after each positive or negative events. These ‘marks’ are accumulations of agency, which in conjunction with investment enable people to reshape their new-images to achieve their imagined identities. Most of the themes discussed from the present and the future have been triangulated from the written narrative analysis and the focus group discussion analysis.

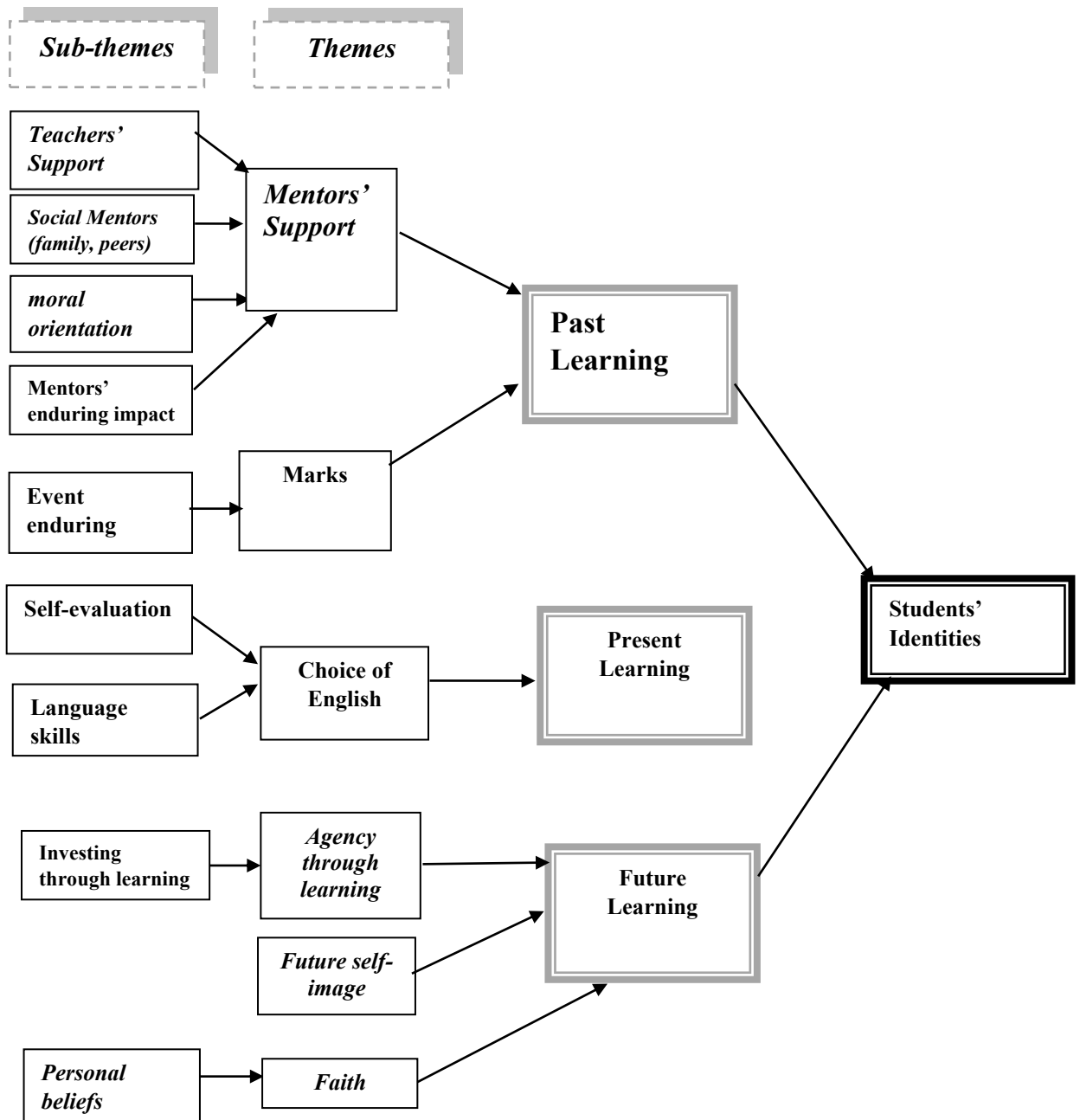


**Figure 6.2** Method triangulation

Students' future self-images are presented through their agency of becoming teachers. They discussed their future identity (teaching) which inspires them to learn English to expand on their religious identity. Religion represents social harmony, which implies that gender and motivation to learn language are intrinsically linked, and they reconstruct the students' future identities (teaching). The women's future self-images are combined with symbolic practices, such as their perception of teachers and the value of teachers in their community. In their religion, a teacher's role has the meaning of a 'prophet' who delivers a valuable message (See Section 5.4).

In this thesis, gender emerges in a process of social relations, it interacts with other social practices which are, in this context, language, and religion. Students' will and hope of change is theorised by the conclusions they drew from their experience in their local communities. Their learning identity has strengthened their religious identity. Their use of English has a sense of empowerment to express who they are. This view is linked to the relationship between English and feminism, as these young women desire to perform who they are using English. This discussion answers *RQ3: What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?* (See Section 6.4).

The following figures represent the relationship between three periods of the women's learning experiences, within which the data is discussed. The first figure represents the interconnectedness of the findings in the written narratives. The second figure represents themes and sub-themes that are corroborated from the focus group discussions.



**Figure 6.3** Conceptual themes from the written narratives



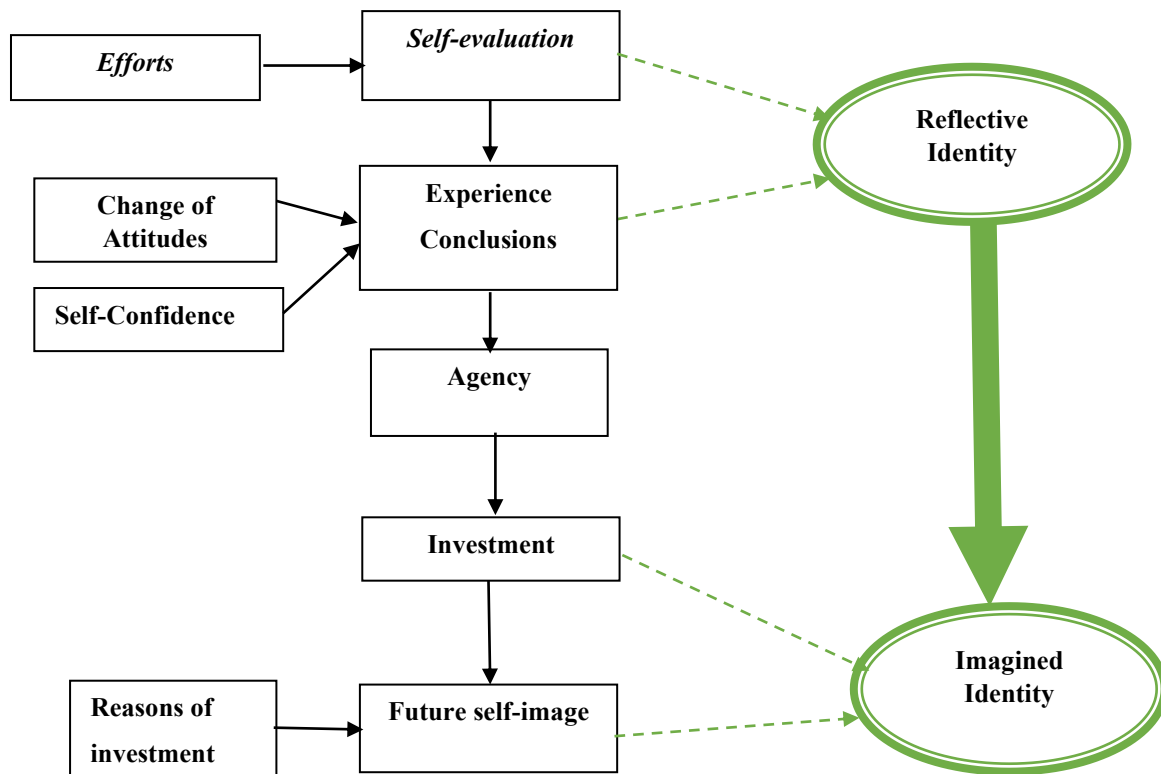


Figure 6.4 Conceptual themes from focus group discussions.

### 6.6. Future implications of ‘mentors’

This thesis reveals the theme of ‘mentors’ which from the findings is presented with various features as shown in the following tables. These features can be used to interpret teachers’ social and emotional practices in the classroom from learners’ narrative perspectives (See Table 6.1). The next table explains the features of family and peers support in learning which researchers can expand on.

Table 6.1 Teachers’ support in the women’s past learning

‘Mentors’	Features	Examples
<b>Teachers’ Verbal support</b>	<i>Personal comments</i>	<b>Janah</b> “He used to call me a diamond of my class”
	<i>Advice</i>	<b>Jana</b> “One day, you will wake up and there won’t be any time to do the things you have always wanted to do it now” <b>Alia</b> “She provided me with advice on how to organised my time”
	<i>Instil self-confidence</i>	<b>Fatima</b> “This enabled me to acquire self-confidence”
	<i>Moral orientation</i>	<b>Fatima</b> “She gave us every day a piece of advice that guided us in our daily life”

**Table 6.2. Family and peers' support in the women's past learning**

'Mentors'	Features	Examples
<b>Family and Peers support</b>	<i>Strategic support</i>	<b>Alia</b> “ <i>She provided me with advice on how to organised [sic] my time</i> ”
	<i>Awareness of education</i>	<b>Djamila</b> “ <i>When I was five years old, my parents explained to me that I had to go to school and study</i> ”  <b>Janah</b> “ <i>...and his enthusiasm to studies was one of the reason [sic]of my progress</i> ”
	<i>Gained friendship</i>	<b>Esma</b> “ <i>...our friendship continued during secondary school, where we discovered exactly what we wanted to be</i> ”

## **CHAPTER 7**

## **CONCLUSION**

## 7.1. Summary of the thesis

This thesis involved seven chapters. *Chapter One* presented an overview; I briefly described my personal narrative which contextualised the role of social support which contributed to improving my learning. This chapter introduced the educational system in Algeria known as LMD (See Section 1.2). It set out the aim and objectives raised to meet with the research questions. The conceptual frameworks were introduced in relation to each research question, and the main concepts of which were then defined in detail in the literature review in chapter three.

*Chapter Two* presented a detailed review of the students to show how the emerging themes can be discussed in relation to the students' socio-political, religious and historical background. This chapter showed how Algerian women have been educated in different historical periods. It was also noted how they defended their rights which enabled them to have access to different fields, such as education and the labour market. This background helped in understanding the findings – the reasons these students have not been limited by social constraints – rather they were supported to pursue their learning, and to imagine themselves as future teachers. This chapter included Zohra Drif's narrative which was used to introduce the concept of 'agency' from a postcolonial view, and within the context of the Algerian revolution.

*Chapter Three* concerned the literature review. It discussed how sociocultural theory informed teaching approaches, such as scaffolding, process writing, and reflective learning. It presented the sociocultural view on narrative, experience, and identity. It presented how other research works in the area of L2 identity defined and evaluated the main concepts, such as agency, investment, and imagined identity from the poststructuralist theory. This chapter highlighted the need for further research related to how the sociocultural factors can influence the construction of learners' identities (See Section 3.4). Liu's narrative was presented in this chapter as an example of how an EFL learner can develop a language learning identity (See Section 3.7.2).

*Chapter Four* discussed the research methodology and the research methods that have been employed for data gathering. It also explained how a narrative approach was used as a methodology to assist students to reflect on their learning experiences within three periods (past, present, and future). Moreover, narrative as a method was used to collect the students'

written narratives. This thesis used an interpretivist epistemology which views that narrative is interpretivist in nature because its knowledge is socially constructed.

*Chapter Five* presented the findings from the main research methods used: participant observation, the written narratives, and the focus group discussions. It defined the themes and the sub-themes which were extracted from the participants' transcripts. This chapter has provided rich data which was discussed in Chapter Six.

*Chapter Six* discussed the themes in relation to the theories which were discussed in the Literature Review chapter. This chapter reported on how data supported or contradicted the theories discussed in the literature review chapter. It also showed the main arguments and contributions this thesis suggested. It has showed how this thesis attempted to answer the research questions.

*This chapter (seven)* summarises the chapters of the thesis; it reviews the contribution of the thesis; it states how the aim and the objectives have been met, by referring to the discussion of the research questions in the previous chapter. It also evaluates the research methods used, implications, recommendations and future research.

## **7.2. Contributions of the thesis**

Findings from this thesis addressed the research questions and made contributions to the theoretical understanding of L2/ EFL learning identity, since research in this area is relatively new and the related literature is still limited. The context of this research is EFL, which has differed from ESL contexts, or other research findings in US, Australia and UK contexts (See Section 3.4.2). This thesis contributed to the understanding of the group of EFL women's learning experiences and their learning identity development during the different periods of their learning.

Previous studies focused mainly on the influencing factors within which L2 students develop their identities. These previous studies investigated the students' present learning experiences to understand whether they are able or limited to develop their agency and invest in language learning for the future. However, this thesis has studied three periods which represent the students' learning process. It found out about not only the factors that influence the students' progress and continuity in learning, but also how these factors can help the students to construct their identities, as this was promised in the literature review (See Section 3.4).

This research has contributed a definition to the concept of ‘learning identity’, as promised in chapter one. Studying three periods of the students’ learning process through a narrative research enabled me to look at the concept as a process of self-development that is affected by different social and individual aspects. The ‘learning identity’ is developmental, it is an integration of social, personal and academic learning. Developing a learning identity is not only an outcome of one period or event, rather it is learning for becoming. Each period is marked by its actors, struggles, and it is solved by individuals’ efforts. The social identity contributes to it with different attributes such as social relationships (family, teachers, and peers), in addition to the influence of other social factors such as religious or spiritual beliefs. This means that a learning identity is a journey of becoming, as it is not time bound, every present turns into a past, and every present looks for a better future. I have come up with a metaphor which says that developing a learning identity is what the learner in the present takes up from the past, to modify the future.

The past as a separate period has identified the themes of ‘mentors and ‘marks’. These two themes were revealed as sociocultural influencing factors which maintained enduring impacts in. Within the context of this research, mentors’ roles have been highlighted as a support which the students received in their early learning (See Section 6.1).

‘Marks’ were also revealed as influencing factors in the findings; they supported the students in their past learning experiences, and they reinforced their agency to continue and to improve their current learning (See section 6.1.1). These themes concerned the first research question: *What are the experiences of the past, which influence the self-identities of the women students?*

Then, the relationship between the past and the present was revealed through the influence of these ‘marks’, as they constructed the meaning of *turning points/transitions* in the students’ learning experience (See Section 5.3). These *turning points* resulted in making transformations and changes to the students’ choices, and perceptions of learning and education in their early learning. I argue that dialogues exchanged between students and their ‘mentors’ provided the students an opportunity for change. As a result, these themes played a crucial role in creating the students’ new self-images (See Section 6.2.2). The discussion of these new images was presented in the previous chapter (See Section 6.5). ‘Mentors’ and ‘marks’ have created a dynamic interaction between the social environment and the students’

desires, plans and actions in their past learning. The emergence of students' agency was revealed during their reflection of their past learning experiences. This finding has been raised as a contributing point in this thesis. Previous research highlighted that learners develop their agency in learning when they become members of a language learning community, however, this limits the ground of studies on agency in relation to the present learning and to L2 learning.

In the introduction chapter (See Section 1.7.4), the relationship between both 'mentors' and 'marks' was identified, suggesting that there would be little distinction between them in the students' narratives, and the findings agreed with this. Both themes have created a 'thread of narrative'; 'mentors' as a theme was presented as a separate feature from the 'marks', however, it was found that each 'mark' did not occur on its own, rather it involved the role of 'mentors' in it. The support the students received from their 'mentors' as advice was also interpreted as a 'mark', since it maintained an impact on the development of their agency in learning (See Section 6.4). Although the students' narratives were complex, they informed this thesis about how students were influenced by past learning experiences, and they have demonstrated a significant rapport with their choices in their current learning. These findings discussed the second research question: *How can reflection on past and present learning experiences provoke the development of a new self-image?*

Another contributing point to the area of L2 identity development is that this group of EFL learners' past experiences have not limited their ability to construct new identities, nor to imagine their future identity with strategic plans and actions. Agency is not presented as an outcome of submission or resistance, as presented in the colonial context (See Section 2.4.2) or the civil war (See Section 2.5.5). Agency is seen in the past learning experiences through the students' desire for continuity and change. In the present, agency is seen through students' ability to invest in their language learning to achieve their imagined community either by becoming teachers in different school levels or by travelling abroad. In addition to 'mentors' and 'marks', the theme 'moral orientation' was revealed as an influencing social factor in the students' current choices; it increased their 'faith' and 'personal beliefs' to make change, and these 'personal beliefs' reinforced their 'future self-image' (See Section 5.3.3). 'Faith' was revealed as a significant theme during the students' future learning period (See Section 5.3.3). These findings showed that the students have developed multiple identities, and a religious identity was revealed (See Section 6.3) with social and learning identities. This discussion

concerned the third research question: *What are the plans and actions the women are currently investing in to develop a future identity?*

My findings enhance knowledge about how this group of EFL construct their identities, which was highlighted as a need for research in the area of L2 learning. This gap was highlighted in the Literature Review (See Section 3.3). The context of this thesis provided an understanding of the social factors that have triggered the students' agency and investment in learning in general. These findings have contributed to the understanding of this group of EFL women students and how they have developed multiple identities along three periods in their narratives. Then, the findings reported on in this thesis met with the aim of the research which has contributed to the knowledge of women's learning experiences in EFL learning in the context of Tlemcen University.

There are two methodological contributions in this research. First, this research responds to Webster and Mertova (2007) that there is a need for identifying narrative features in research in education. This research contributed with a narrative model designed with four narrative features: (1) mentors, (2) marks, (3) evaluation, and (4) future projection. Second, this research shows that it is possible to apply process writing with narrative writing, as well in teaching argumentative essays.

### **7.3. Research objectives**

The discussion of the research questions has met the research objectives.

Objective 1. *To explore the value of using scaffolding as a method of applying sociocultural learning for teaching process writing in English department, Tlemcen University.*

This thesis adapted the sociocultural view of the writing process as a cognitive and interactive activity. I used Scaffolding as a teaching method to support process writing (See Section 3.2). Scaffolding helped the students to think and to interact about their learning experiences. They have been assisted with this method in two different ways. First, I assisted them with reflective activities (See Tables 4.3, 4.4), and brainstorming activities during the classroom activities (See Tables 4.5 and 4.6). Second, they assisted each other during the activities through collaborative work: classroom pair work and blog peer-feedback. These activities supported them to reflect on themselves in the past, and to solve their learning problems in the present to meet future goals. Scaffolding also helped the students to interact and discuss their



learning differences and to draw conclusions from their past experiences. They showed their willingness to invest in improving their current learning. Thus, interaction in the blog helped them to revise the content of their narratives.

*Objective 2. To promote process writing in the EFL classroom based on collaborative writing; and to establish the importance of peer-feedback and peer-revisions.*

My reading about this topic revealed that process writing has been widely used with argumentative essays (See Section 3.7), however, in this thesis, process writing has been used as an approach for teaching narrative writing to assist the students' reflectivity and self-evaluation of their learning in the past and the present (See Section 3.7). Moreover, using process writing aimed to raise the students' awareness about the different stages their narrative writing can be built on, to produce a coherent text and a clear structure. For the purpose of this research, process writing was used with narrative methodology. Six stages of process writing were adapted from Steels' (2004) model to increase the students' writing performance, and particularly to increase their reflective thinking on the content. This objective has been met with regard to the content of the students' narrative which was revealed in their writing plans (See Figure 5.2), and in their first and revised drafts. Revision-oriented feedback was revealed in Fatima's narrative (See Appendix 18) This objective was to some extent achieved as the students revised their first drafts. However, this objective was not important as reflection as an activity was employed to study the content of the students' narratives and particularly their reflection to present an understanding of the learning experiences (the past, the present, and the future).

*Objective 3. To encourage students to reflect on their past and present learning experiences and to encourage them to plan for their futures.*

This objective was discussed through the second research question as explained in the previous section. Narrative as a methodology was supported with a narrative design (See Section 4.6) which assisted the students to not only write their narratives, but also to reflect on their 'marks' which were also presented as *turning points* in learning. Students' turning points could link both periods: the past and the present which have reinforced the development of their agency in learning in general (See Sections 6.2.2). The findings showed that the students

were able to reflect on their past experiences, to self-evaluate their learning in the present, and to plan and invest to become future teachers (See Section 6.3.1).

Objective 4. *To reshape a model of narrative writing in education, for the purpose of understanding learners in general, and in this thesis women in particular.*

This thesis focused on experience, and how individuals develop their identity across time, and in a sequence of events that can be interpreted through a narrative research. For this reason, the narrative model designed to conduct this thesis helped the students to structure their narratives in a sequence of time and events; to interpret their own behaviour, feelings and transformations along the three periods.

The narrative model provided depth in understanding the change in the students' learning process. Their past learning experiences provided details about their sociocultural backgrounds; and how their family, friends, and teachers have contributed to their continuity of learning. It has also provided a deep understanding of the whole process of learning as part of the women's identity development as this thesis aimed.

#### **7.4. Evaluating the research methodology and methods**

- Using a narrative approach as a methodology enabled the students to interpret their personal trajectory, which fits with the nature of using the interpretivist approach in the analysis of the students' narratives (See Section 4.6).
- Narrative methodology enabled this thesis to observe the changes in the students' learning process (fears, strength, self-confidence, planning, taking actions, and imaging the future).
- Participant observation helped me to understand the participants' feelings about their 'mentors' and 'marks' during the classroom sessions.
- The use of narrative as a method for data collection provided longitudinal analysis of the students' backgrounds, and the development of their learning which contributed to the construction of their multiple identities (See Figure 6.1).
- The mini-module assisted students to reflect on their 'mentors' and 'marks'; it enabled them to self-evaluate their learning, and to imagine their future identity.

- The written narratives provided knowledge of this group of EFL women learners. These narratives promoted self-reflection and self-interpretation of a ‘hidden system’ (personal narrative) which each student was able to share in this thesis.
- The focus group discussions functioned as a collective narrative; students discussed what they have individually written in their narratives. They self-negotiated their multiple identities which showed that they have developed their relationship with the social world through symbolic, institutional and individual practices.
- The use of a reflective model to expand on the students’ written narratives provided depth and breadth to their experiences.
- Evaluation of this thesis relied on the following points: (1) the research methods offered qualitative data, which included students’ views about the social world, and how they allocate themselves within different social contexts (family, friends, schools, university, and future travel and job), (2) triangulation of the research methods (See Figures 6.2), (3) thick description of the data collected, (4) the data has answered the three research questions, (5) the research questions were relevant to the process of the students’ narratives, (6) the use of purposive sampling which was relevant to the context of the students, (7) ‘respondent validation’ that was used to check the interpretation of the data after I finished data analysis.

## **7.5. Implications for future research**

Gruba and Zobel (2017) suggested different areas which can help researchers to think of how to apply the methodology and the findings of their research. I have discussed three areas within which this thesis can be applied: (1) pedagogy, (2) professional development, (3) personal development.

### **✓ Pedagogy**

This area concerns how the findings from this thesis can be applied for different pedagogical purposes. Four points are discussed below.

First, using a model of process writing to scaffold narrative writing showed that students wrote their narrative in a sequence of time and events. They brainstormed and planned each period of their narratives which informed about their learning development. The stages in process writing treated the writing activity as thoughts that are produced and discussed for revision. In this thesis, both brainstorming and planning stages reinforced students’ reflection

and interaction about these periods. I found that the content of students' writing plans was reiterated in their narrative drafts which demonstrated that they deeply reflected on each period within their narratives. I suggest that the use of the different stages of process writing – stages that reinforce thinking, such as brainstorming and planning, and peer-feedback – can construct personal accounts within which the self is reflective and evaluated. This thesis showed that process writing can be applied to teaching narrative writing. Process writing enabled students not only to write their narratives, but also to interact about their writing plans before they transferred them into paragraphs. This interaction enabled students to negotiate their behaviour, emotions and actions, and they also negotiated their relationship with the people who influenced them. Then, the aim of interaction through narrative writing offered opportunities to students to negotiate their multiple identities. However, negotiating self-identities might not be achieved with argumentative essays, as students focus on others' views which might limit their critical thinking and hinder their voices as writers.

Second, considering the social aspects of a particular community renders benefits to the curriculum design and teaching approaches. Narratives can inform the pedagogic practices about learners' social background, learning challenges, areas of strength, learning orientations, goals, plans, and actions. Students' narratives offer teachers with information that they can use to update their teaching objectives, to vary the content of their syllabus, and to recognise students' areas that need further assistance.

Third, teachers can use blogs to apply two other stages of process writing which are: online publishing and asynchronous peer-feedback, so that students can improve their writing skills.

Fourth, educators can employ blogs to encourage personal writing. Blogs can provide an understanding of how students develop their learning process and what influences the reconstruction of their learning identities. They can be used as a platform for research and knowledge construction, thus they can be interpreted to deepen the content of the institution curricula. Moreover, blogs provide profiles on students which can create smooth individual relationships among learners and their teachers.

### ✓ **Professional development**

This area concerns how this thesis can be applied for research purposes.

First, the narrative model designed in this research can be applied with different qualitative research approaches; the narrative features have social significance that can be used to

investigate the individual development. It can also be used along with the concepts of identity, agency, investment, and imagined communities (See Figure 1.1). For instance, this model can be used as a methodology to conduct an ethnographic research on online identities. It could be applied to study nurses' identities, teachers' academic identities, and other related areas, such as ethnic and gender identities in real and imagined communities.

Second, this research involved the past learning experiences to provide findings about first language (L1) background, which confirmed that individual's identity is multiple and developmental. In education, this thesis informs L2 researchers about the sociocultural factors that can influence EFL learners. I suggest that first language researchers can also apply the narrative model to capture the development of L1 identity.

### ✓ **Personal development**

This area concerns who can benefit from this thesis:

First, using online learning in this thesis added considerably to the students learning of a new CMC tool, as the students reported that they have not used blogs prior to this study. The role of teachers and researchers can involve learners to develop their personal learning using blended learning.

Second, teachers need to provide learners with an interactive space within which they can share their experiences; they discuss their ideas and establish their own perspectives on the social world. Students can benefit from interaction to raise their worries about the intense learning programs, tests, and exams.

Third, online interaction can increase learners' confidence. It can help them to develop their learning strategies and their self-regulated learning. Personal development relies on understanding the self, and the social world which can help learners create a societal position of this self.

Fourth, I suggest that language teachers need to mediate narratives with online or blended learning to decrease the social distance between their EFL learning environments and their imagined communities of practice.

### **7.6. Field notes on the classroom sessions**

In the first session, I asked the students about their reasons to participate in this project. Djamilia, Esma, and Gazala said that they wanted to improve their writing skills. For them all

the mini-module was a learning space to practise the speaking skills. For example, Esma reported that teachers used to talk more than students, which limited students' opportunities of discussing different topics. Bahia and Fatima said that they wanted to be involved in this mini-module to interact with others to overcome their shyness. Djamila and Isra said that they liked me, and they wanted to see me as their teacher. There were other reasons that showed the students' willingness to take part in the mini-module, for example, they sent emails before session one 12/02/2017 to confirm their attendance. They attended session one and they informed me that they would attend the next session. They also told other students about the mini-module, and a few of them asked to join the mini-module. However, I could not invite any as the mini-module moved to session two.

I was particularly keen to determine if the students were genuinely motivated by my research. As the mini-module advanced, I checked on the students about their impressions and motivation towards these sessions. At the end of session four, I had a chat with Djamila who said, *"This mini-module is interesting, I am lucky to be in this group, and I will finish this work with you"*. She added *"I get tired from doing homework and revising for the tests I have next week, but I am staying"*. I also asked Isra to suggest how I can keep students motivated in this mini-module. She said, *"When I attend your session I feel motivated and I like to attend it because each time I learn how to plan, think and write"*. She added, that *"I think you are doing your work in a good way, but we as students like to procrastinate work mainly writing as we think it takes time"*.

During the mini-module, I knew that a few students were assisted with narrative writing in their usual classes. I arranged a meeting with one lecturer of academic writing to understand how they have been taught about the narrative writing. She said that some of second year classes dealt with narrative writing. Luckily, five students who participated in my mini-module knew about narrative writing. In the same vein, five students told me that their exam question was to imagine a *complicating action* which was missed in the narrated story. They reported that they were able to differentiate between the different narrative features due to the mini-module. They also said that they developed an understanding of the content and the structure of a narrative. This reflected that the mini-module met with the students' expectations and their learning needs.

In the last session, I observed that they were keen to know about my personal narrative. Isra said, *"This is a motivating experience I have ever heard"*. Bahia maintained a nice smile on

her face during my presentation. Gazala expressed, “*This a long process of learning full of ups and downs*”, and Djamila said, “*It is a TEDx talk itself*”.

### **7.7. Blog reflections**

- In 23/02/2017, I observed that four students accepted their invitations to the blog. At the end of session four, I asked them how they found using the blog. Students had not a prior experience to the blog, which made them encounter some difficulties and not able to publish the first part of their narrative. Fatima said she did not know how to publish her first draft. Djamila and Esma said that they could not view their peers’ blog entries. I checked the setting of the blog; I found that a few blog entries were saved as drafts, and students could not view each other’s narratives without the administrator’s approval. I changed the students’ roles from editors to contributors.
- In 24/02/2017, seven participants published the first part of their narratives. However, the rest published two parts of their narratives in the week after. By 12/03/2019, Djamila, Esma and Fatima published their full first drafts on the blog. Participants engaged slowly with the blog, and I had to remind them every week to publish their full drafts.
- In this research, I played multi-roles; I was a teacher during the class sessions; I was a researcher during the data collection. However, in the blog, my role was critical. My question was *what is my role as a teacher-researcher during the students’ blog interaction?* Dohn(2010) discusses the same point when he explains that teachers do not know how they can be involved during the blog activity. I positioned myself as a ‘moderator’ during the blog interaction. I approved the submission of their blog entries, and I reminded them to provide feedback for almost three months after the end of the mini-module. I supported my role in the blog with the socio-constructivist theory which views that students are the owners of knowledge, and blog is a learning space that supports the construction of this knowledge (See Section 3.6). However, I argue that there is a need for more clarification on the role of teachers in blogs.
- The students’ narratives had many language issues, such as the lack of punctuation and capitalisation, the lack of subject-verb agreement, and the use of contractions. Blogging is a free practice of writing. However, its flexibility in use could influence the learning goals, such as improving the writing skills, the use of proper grammar, and punctuation and style.

- Students' revision of language in their narratives was neither evaluated nor analysed, as peer-feedback aimed to engage them to reflect on the content of their narratives. However, I observed that I was often worried about the students' participation in the blog interaction. My point is that focusing on students' participation might diminish the goal of using blogs, which is language learning, and evaluation of the students' blog writing and reflection.
- Asynchronous peer-feedback aimed to support students' interaction and reflection. However, some students preferred that I had to provide them with feedback, instead of receiving peer-feedback. This showed that they viewed a teacher's feedback more valid and relevant. I reflected that there can be a lack of trust in peer-feedback in this context of learning, as students often receive feedback from their teachers only. This latter can also be a limitation to the use of blogs in EFL classrooms, as it engages learners less in the activity. In a similar vein, Dohn (2010) argues that learners lose trust on the quality of the activity, as they receive assistance through peer-feedback only.
- At the end of the mini-module, students' interaction in the blog started to slow down. I had no more face-to-face contact with them, and it was difficult to know who withdrew from the research. Some students after a short period published their second drafts in the blog, however, two of them sent me their drafts on Word Office Documents.

## **7.8. Key limitations**

This thesis was for me a constant process of reflection, and some limitations were highlighted.

**This research necessarily used purposive sampling, which is typical of exploratory research. This constrained me to generalise the data gathered, so my findings cannot be generalised. Therefore, further research is recommended (See 7.10)**

- As explained above, not all of second year LMD students were taught narrative writing, and some of my participants were taught narrative writing. I regard this point as a limitation, as I could have observed how some of the teachers assisted students with the content and structure of the narrative writing. As I explained earlier, I met with a teacher of academic writing who taught the narrative writing as a type of essay writing. She explained that students in this concern could write about a story that began with an 'introduction', a 'plot', 'characters' and an 'end'. I asked her further whether the story needed to be real or imaginary, she said that students can write both.



- I introduced the students to the blog in session one (See Appendix 2), however, there was a lack of the video projector in the English Department. I shared my PPT slides with the students who sat into two small groups, and I moved between them.
- Time constraint was also a challenge. I collected 15 emails from students, however, only 13 participants attended in session one and session two (See Section 5.2); 11 students attended in session three, and 10 students remained till the end of the mini-module. **Three students withdrew from this research**, as session two took place at 14:30 to 15:45, and this time was not convenient to them. One student said that she had a handball session after class. The two other students were friends; one said that she had a job, and the other apologised for her withdrawal. I changed the time of the following sessions to 13:00 - 14:00, after they agreed as it was time for their lunch break. They used to have ten minutes off before my session. Lunchtime was more convenient, as they had to carry on with their regular class, and this secured my research from further participants' withdrawal.
- I carried out sessions five and six in the same day (See Section 5.3) because one week remained before the mid-term holidays. During the same week, I also finished the focus group discussions: the first group discussion occurred on 08/03/2017, the second group discussion occurred on 12/03/2017, and the third one occurred on 13/03/2017.
  - From 08/03/2017 to 20/03/2017, there was an internet outage which delayed the students to publish their narratives on the blog. Fortunately, the network improved in 12/03/2017, and they published their first drafts in 14/03/2017. In the same day, some of the students started to exchange feedback in the blog.

## **7.9. Challenges in doing narrative research**

- This research is often flexible; however, I spent a long time to determine the methodologies and methods that fit for the nature of this research.
- It is difficult to characterise the experiences of students, even though they belong to the same background, however, generalisability is not the target.
- Identity is revealed by acts of change in the narrative. Change can occur in the past and the present, each event occurs in the past is narrated and interpreted in the present. Meaning in these two periods is cyclic; it is difficult to depict when change has occurred in the students' narratives.

- The participants could have further events to narrate, but due to the narrative structure, they decided about the events to include in the content of their narratives. For this reason, it is difficult to interpret that the selected events have been the most influential points that created change and shaped students' identities.
- Students' experiences showed their ability to imagine their future ideal selves, however, students' plans and actions cannot ensure that they will become true. After two years from the end of data collection, I received emails from Alia and Esma who shared their news with me. In both experiences, there is a change in their narratives. Alia was in doubt whether to accept the offer she received to carry on her Masters degree in English, or she would enrol for an Islamic sciences course, and end her studies of English. However, Esma said that she travelled abroad to pursue her Masters. These two examples showed that it is difficult to decide about the end of the narrative, as change in narrative is a momentary manifestation (Bakhtin, 1986).

### **7.10. Recommendations for future research**

In this context some of the findings can be improved or extended further.

- Apply the narrative designed in this research with a group of male students. This would give a better impression on the narrative model, and it can allow for a comparison between the findings from a gender perspective.
- Conduct a narrative research with secondary school students to understand their transitions from primary and middle schools, engaging them in activities that enable them to imagine their future identities, before they study English at university.
- Construct a narrative model differently instead of using the same features. A further narrative design could be based on themes which emerged from others' findings. As data is generated, the concept of identity can be discussed, and researchers can explain how students' identity is influencing and is influenced, and how it is shaped and reshaped.
- Extend the time of doing a narrative research: investigating the students' learning process from their middle school or secondary school till they graduate, as this would provide a detailed study on the main concepts: agency, investment and imagined identity, similar to Alice's case in Kinginger's (2004) study.

- Design an interview which will provide detailed data about individuals' perception of their written narratives: they write their narratives then they discuss their events, emotions, challenges, attitudes, and changes as a way of narrative telling.
- Explore how students' learning process can contribute to create change in education, regarding them as agents of change and active decision makers.
- There is a need to look at agency **in spite of** social constraints or colonialism - as this research did.
- Researchers in narrative identity need to reflect on how learners' feelings contribute in reconstructing knowledge about their learning, as feelings reinforce agency, boost investment and enable learners to achieve their goals (imagined community).
- There is a need for research on EFL students' sociocultural background, as I suggest that understanding their social lives is necessary to explain their agency as a pre-exist discourse, as a result of a dialogue.
- This research was not interested in gender imbalances, or inequalities, rather on reporting women's learning experiences; who supported them; what influenced them; how they develop their learning identity. The findings did not reveal features of gender that affected the way women developed their learning identity. I suggest that further research could also be undertaken on the women students' gender identities, focusing on race and ethnicity to find about social constraints that might limit the development of learners' identities. I also suggest that the pedagogic activities should include questions that help in discussing how gender identities can affect learning identities, both positively and negatively.
- Finally, there is a need for increasing research on teachers' and students' learning experiences, which can contribute in interpreting curricular actions.

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## **Appendix (1): Observation of Grammar Sessions Transcript**

As it is previously mentioned, the first contact with participants was through my attendance to two grammar sessions. Both of group ten and nine were observed, as my previous teacher helped me to have access to both classes. Both groups were observed in relation to the duration of the session, the classroom layout, the number of students in each group, and their interactivity with the teacher. The first contact with both classes was in the 7/02/2017. I started with group ten from at 9 am to 10:30 am. She introduced me to them and asked me to clearly say the reasons of them being observed in her session, I explained that my aim of observing them is to be able to run my research with the students who were reluctant to volunteer and to attend my separate mini-module and to contribute into the blog writing. In this observation, I focused on the women students only, as the aim was to invite women to the research conducted.

There were four rows arranged horizontally, each row was composed of four to five tables. Each two students shared a table that fit two places, women were seating in pairs. The number of students in group ten was 35; 28 were women and 6 were men. The teacher used the whiteboard and hand-outs as teaching materials. She provided them with hand-outs; she asked them to work on the first activity either individually or in pairs. The activity included thirteen sentences in the active voice that they were required to change them into passive voice form. She allotted half an hour for the first activity; half an hour was divided into fifteen minutes for doing the first five sentences, followed by another fifteen minutes of class correction. She told me “I gave them five sentences to start with, only to put them in the mood of activity and motivate them to start”. She walked around the first and the second rows in the right side of the classroom to check that they were doing their activity and copying it on their notebooks. She also helped them to correct their sentences, and to think of alternative answers when their answers were wrong.

After fifteen minutes, they started the correction of the first five sentences; the teacher selected one student to write on the whiteboard and another student who volunteered to give the correct form. The teacher would ask them “Do you agree with your friend’s answer?” they would say ‘Yes’, or ‘No’. In all, the teacher’s role was to select a student to write on the whiteboard, and to ask students’ opinions about the suggested correction, if the majority agreed, then the sentence would be copied. The teacher was only facilitating and monitoring this session. The types of questions from the students to the teacher were mainly explanatory as they concerned clarification of the activity; for example, one woman asked her about the difference between ‘until’ and ‘till’ in a sentence. The language used in this session was limited with their opinions about the sentences by ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.

The second classroom observation was with group nine; it took place from 10:30 am to 11:30 am. The teacher introduced me again to the students. She used the same teaching materials, she asked them to work on the same activity, but in pair groups. In the first ten minutes, one woman called her to check her two sentences. serving them. The number of students in group nine was 33; there were 33 women and 3 men. I observed that the students’ language in group nine is



stronger than group ten, they read the whole sentence, and then, they give the full answer. Another example that made me noticed that they were more interested to the activity, the teacher, for example asked them, “Do we mention the agent in this sentence?” one student said, ‘No’, as an answer, and she justified her answer without being asked by the teacher to do so.

there was both student-student interaction and teacher-students interaction. For instance, a woman seating in the first table of the first row on the right side of the class used Arabic language to explain to her peer why they use the passive voice in general, and why the subject is avoided in the passive form. Another example, during the correction of the activity, a woman student answered, and a man interfered and asked her to repeat her answer. She repeated her answer “it were swept”, he corrected her “it was swept” in a confident tone in his voice.

The types of questions that the students raised, in this group were also explanatory, one student raised a question to the teacher, “Do we put the subject between brackets?” Another student asked the teacher why the verb ‘to have’ cannot be in the passive voice? The teacher replied that it is a special case.

After the end of each session, I asked the students to leave their emails if they were interested to participate in my research. In group ten, six women wrote their emails, however they mentioned that they had not a frequent access to the internet. Only two students them left their emails and phone numbers and accepted the invitation to the mini-module. However, twelve women from group nine left their emails and phone numbers, and they said, “we are excited to see what your course has for us”. The students’ engagement in the activity was an indication that most of the participants that accepted to volunteer in my research were from group nine.

## Mini-module Design

### Appendix (2): Session One

Title	Session One Timing: 1h	Teaching Materials/ Further Actions
<b>Icebreaking session</b>	<p>15 min: Participants introduced themselves.</p> <p>20 min: I clarified my research aim and objectives, the length of this mini-module, and the research instruments I used to collect data.</p> <p>15 min: I presented a PowerPoint to explain WordPress blog, its usage, and its facilities.</p> <p>10 min: I checked if they had questions.</p>	<p><b>Icebreaking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introducing the participants to each other aimed to break the ice between them in the first meeting; some were familiar with each and others came from a different classroom.</li> <li>• I used PowerPoint (PPT) slides to explain blog features and usage like: sharing, posting, and comment giving. I also showed the participants that the group was set private.</li> <li>• I used pictures of <i>WordPress.com</i> blog to exemplify how they would be added to the blog, how they publish their narratives, and how they could use the commentary space to give feedback to each other.</li> <li>• I informed them that they would receive invitations to the blog via their emails. I added that every participant would open his own blog phase to publish their narratives, and to interact with other peers through giving and receiving feedback. After that, they would revise their narratives and publish their final drafts.</li> <li>• 10 min were devoted for their questions</li> </ul>

## Appendix (3): Session Two

Title	Session two Timing: 1h	Material/ Activity/ Aim/ data collection
<p><b>Knowing the Self</b></p>	<p>5 min: A short presentation about the video 15 min: Presenting a video about narrative themes, and participants took notes.</p> <p>20 min: participants' reflection on <i>marks &amp; mentors</i>.</p> <p>10 min: Some participants shared their notes with the group.</p> <p>10 min: I jotted notes from their answers.</p>	<p><b>Video presentation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I displayed a video by J. Christian Jensen which was taken from TED talks: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuCUgD3Si-M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuCUgD3Si-M</a></li> <li>• The video explained four themes that construct a narrative. <b>Theme one</b> <i>Personal/Family stories</i>, <b>theme two</b> You are the hero use 'I', <b>Theme three:</b> Your Mentors, <b>Theme four:</b> Marks.</li> <li>• Reflective activities were used immediately after the video.</li> </ul> <p><b>Activity one: Reflecting on 'mentors' and 'marks'</b></p> <p><b>Mentor Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe a person (mother, father, a neighbour, a friend, or another) who did something for you and you did not forget it?</li> <li>• What did they do?</li> <li>• Why you did not forget about it?</li> <li>• What impact did this person have on you?</li> <li>• Can you describe your feelings towards this person?</li> <li>• What did you learn from it?</li> <li>• How are you going to give credit to this mentor?</li> </ul> <p><b>A mark Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you think of your marks through an event that happened to you in the nearer past: a fear you felt, a moment of doubt, or a moment of sorrow? Can you describe your feelings about it?</li> <li>• What happened?</li> <li>• Why did it happen?</li> <li>• What did it cause for you?</li> <li>• What is its influence on you now?</li> <li>• Is it still influencing you?</li> <li>• Have you overcome it?</li> <li>• Do you usually think of it?</li> <li>• In which way you think of it?</li> <li>• Are you trying to forget it?</li> <li>• What made you talk about it particularly?</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity was individual-based; each participant reflected on her own personal life based on the mentioned themes, they noted them, then they shared them with each other. Then, some participants shared their reflective notes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims of the Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity aimed to prompt participants in a reflective thinking, and to encourage their cognitive thinking skills which enabled them to associate these themes with their personal and learning experiences.</li> <li>• This activity also drew a primary understanding of how a social life and psychological effects could have a mitigating impact in reconstructing the participants' learning experiences.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data collection</b></p> <p>I recorded the participants' interaction which helped me to remember how they discussed their thoughts and performed them. I also took notes from other participants who did not share their answers with the group.</p>

## Appendix (4): Session Three

Title	Session three  Timing: 1h	Material/Activity/aim/data collection
<p><b>Plan your narrative</b></p>	<p>2min: I explained that they needed to write their planning notes in a paper, because they would transfer them later in the blog as full texts.</p> <p>15 min: I presented a PPT about process writing approach and how they plan their activity.</p> <p>15mn: for planning their first paragraph.</p> <p>15mn: for planning their second paragraph.</p> <p>10mn: peer-interaction about their writing plans.</p> <p>3mn: I asked them to transfer their writing plans into paragraphs, and publish them in the blog.</p>	<p><b>Teaching process writing approach</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using PPT, I explained the narrative features: content and language features and stages of process writing approach.</li> <li>• I presented an outline for a narrative text, I explained both stages of process writing: planning and drafting. During this, I explained that each part of their narrative they plan in the classroom, they would expand on it and publish it on the blog, until we would finish the whole narrative text.</li> <li>• I used short extracts from a narrative to explain the topic sentence and paragraph coherence.</li> <li>• I also presented a list of transition words to help them in writing their narratives.</li> <li>• Participants were asked to use their notes taking from session two to help them in brainstorming and planning their narratives.</li> <li>• Planning was performed individually, but since writing is a complex process, they discuss in pairs their introductions, and their first body paragraphs.</li> <li>• Participants planned the introduction of the narrative which was optional, and the first part which included two parts, a paragraph narrating about their mentors and another about their marks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Activity:</b></p> <p><i>Planning part one: People/setting/ feeling/ action and voice/ characters/ dialogue</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who had an influence on you in the past?</li> <li>• Where did that happen?</li> <li>• How old were you?</li> <li>• What did you feel about it?</li> <li>• How did you act at that time?</li> <li>• Who also was involved?</li> <li>• What did those people say to you?</li> </ul> <p><i>Planning part two: Setting/characters/problem/Event/resolution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe your past learning experience including your primary school, middle school and secondary school?</li> <li>• Can you mention the people who have influenced you in each stage of your learning?</li> <li>• Can you describe in one part of your narrative a <i>specific event</i> that marked you?</li> <li>• Can you include a dialogue with someone if there was any.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims of the Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity aimed to scaffold the participants in both brainstorming and planning their narratives. Also, peer-interaction was used to support participants' negotiation of the meaning of their social lives through sharing their past experiences.</li> <li>• This activity also aimed to encourage participants to be confident about their past experiences and reflect to build on it with the next activity. Additionally, this would increase their interpersonal skills when they interact their social habits. Consequently, it will enable them to reflect on the events that they might forget to note in their writing plans.</li> </ul>

## Appendix (5): Session Four

Title	Session four Timing: 45mn	Materials/Aim/Activity/data collection
<p><b>Present learning experience</b></p>	<p>5mn: I reiterated the structure of the narrative.</p> <p>20mn: brainstorming and Planning</p> <p>10mn: peer-interacting</p> <p>10mn: reporting each other answers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I explained that we ended with the past period of their learning, and we had moved to discuss their present learning of English.</li> <li>• In this session, participants were scaffolded with questions that help them to brainstorm and plan about their current learning. They also discussed about their choice to study English language, evaluated their language skills.</li> <li>• Participants worked in pairs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Activity: Let's Think of our Current learning.</b></p> <p><i>Planning part three: current learning/ people/satisfaction/</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you describe why you choose English?</li> <li>• What are your aims in studying English?</li> <li>• Did anyone help you to choose English?</li> <li>• How do you describe your level in English?</li> <li>• Do you think you need to improve some skills?</li> <li>• What do you think of writing in general?</li> <li>• What are the actions that you need to take to improve your language skills?</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims of the Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The aim of this activity was to involve participants with a self-reflection on their current choice to study English, who supported them to take this decision, and to know about their attitudes and satisfactions of what they were achieving.</li> <li>• The aim of peer-interaction was to prepare them to imagine themselves in the future, and to start thinking of plans reflected by their present learning.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data Collection</b> Peer-interaction was recorded, and I maintained notes during the session.</p>

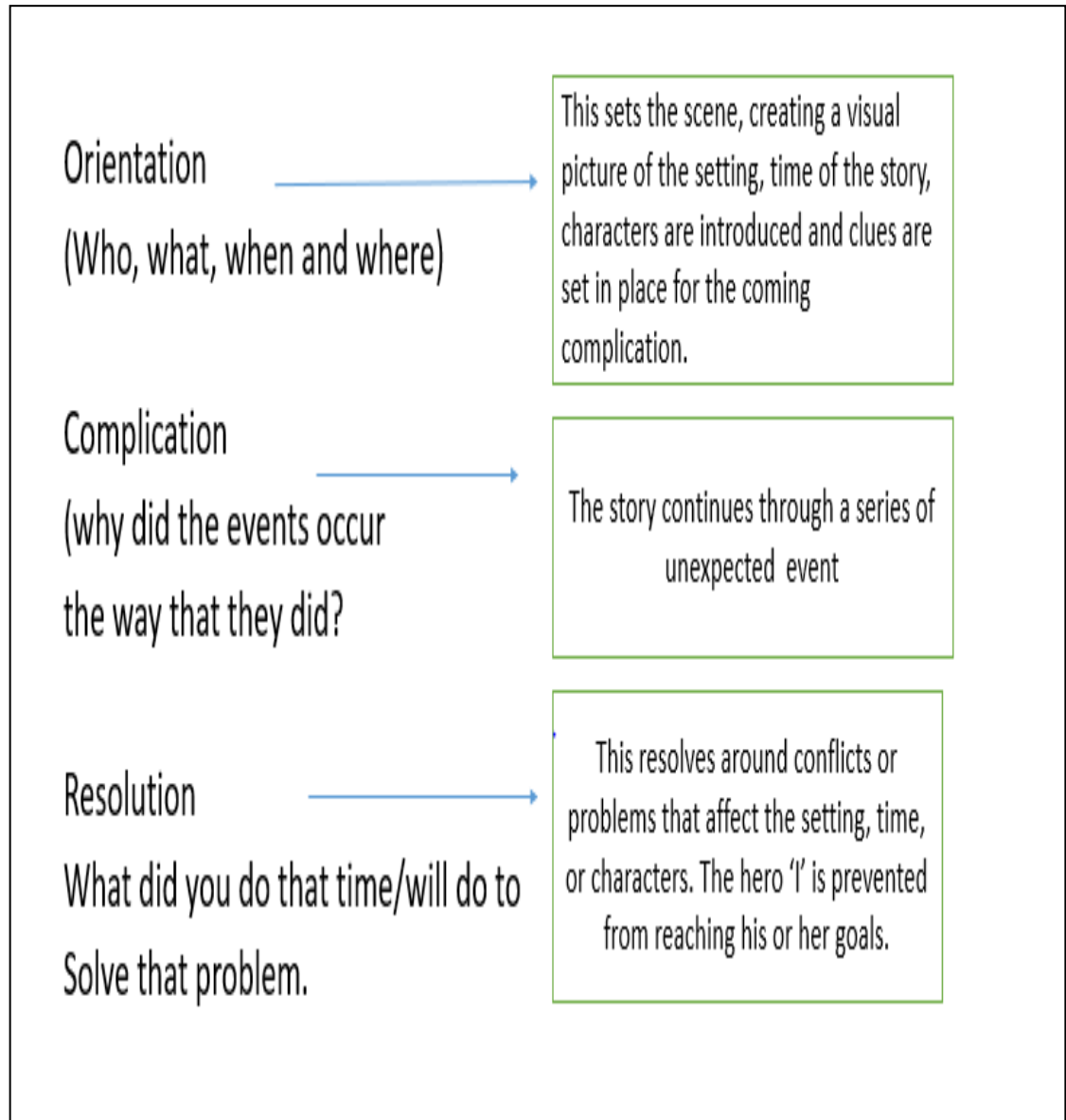
## Appendix (6): Session Five

Title	Session five Timing: 55mn	Materials/Aim/Activity/data collection
<p><b>Planning for writing about the future</b></p>	<p>15mn: Poster presentation</p> <p>10mn: explaining the second poster</p> <p>15mn: brainstorming and planning</p> <p>15mn peer-interaction</p> <p>5mn: Break</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I narrated about my learning experiences through a poster presentation.</li> <li>• The aim of sharing my personal narrative was to increase participants' motivation and create a positive sense in them so they could have an example of planning for their futures.</li> <li>• Then I showed them a model that explained the process of thinking about a goal and act to achieve it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Planning final part</b></p> <p><b>Activity: Writing topic</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project your future in ten years showing where you are now, where you will be, who will be with you, what you will be doing, and what you are planning to become.</li> <li>• Brainstorming and planning were used individually, then participants shared their writing plans in pairs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims of the Activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity aimed to enable participants develop a sense of belonging to an imagined community. Participants through this activity were encouraged to think about their needs and interests in language learning that will enable them to achieve a desired profession in the future.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data Collection</b></p> <p>This session was recorded, and I jotted notes during the participants' interaction.</p>

## Appendix (7): Session Six

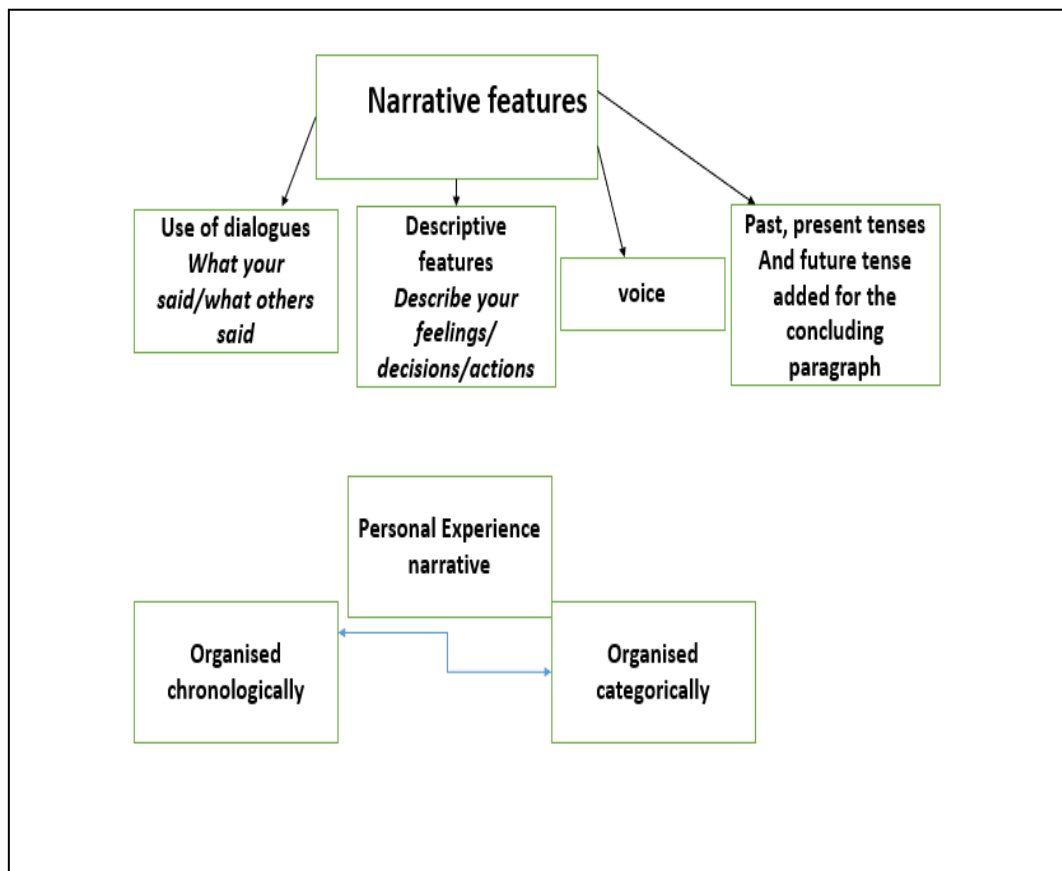
Title	Session six Timing: 45mn	Materials/aim/ Action
<b>How to give feedback</b>	<p>5mn: Providing a list of dos and don'ts.</p> <p>5mn: I explained the feedback sheet</p> <p>15mn: Peer-feedback activity</p> <p>20mn: shared their interaction with the group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In this session, I provided a list entitled the <i>Dos and the Don'ts</i>, which assisted participants in the peer-feedback activity. This also aimed to help them to reflect on their narratives in the blog.</li> <li>• They were also provided with a feedback sheet, which was based on three categories: content, form and language. This sheet was also attached in the blog so they had access to it.</li> </ul> <p><b>Activity: Peer-feedback on a narrative sample.</b></p> <p><b>Peer-feedback: Pair work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I asked the participants to begin with positive feedback, then they suggest areas in the narrative that need to be improved.</li> <li>• I also emphasised that they needed to look at the content, of the narrative.</li> </ul> <p><b>Aims of this activity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This activity aimed to support classroom peer-feedback so that they would know how to provide blog peer-feedback after they finish their first drafts.</li> <li>• Peer-feedback also aimed to enable them to negotiate their learning, their ideas and interact in a community of practice.</li> <li>• The focus was on the content, as the main aim of narrative writing in this study was the content (mentors, marks, evaluation, and imagined future). Then, participants would know what they would focus on in writing their drafts in the blog, and the feedback they provide in the blog.</li> </ul> <p><b>Data Collection</b></p> <p>This session was recorded, and I jotted notes about participants who worked in pairs</p>

## Appendix (8): Teaching Material used in Session Two Structure of Personal Narrative





## Appendix (9): Teaching Material used in Session Two



## **Appendix (10): Teaching Material in Session Three: Defining Process Writing**

Brainstorming: To generate ideas spontaneously at the same time.

Planning: to plan means to put down your primary ideas on the paper.

Drafting: it is to start putting down your planning notes into sentences that will construct paragraphs.

Revising: It is the stage when you rewrite your final draft after receiving feedback from your teacher or your peer.

Editing: It is the polishing stage when you read and correct your writing.

Publishing: It is to post your essay.

## **Appendix (11): Teaching Material: Extracts Used in Session Three**

### **Extract One**

My name is Omar, Hussein, I am twenty years old. I am a first-year student at Malcolm college, Northampton. In this autobiographic narrative, I will not count everything that happened in my life, but only some aspects of my life. I will write about my school life in the past, my present learning, and the lessons I learned from them to improve my future. My family had an immense role in my life, I will mention what they did and what they are still doing for me. I will mention in each period of my life an event that had meaning for me now.

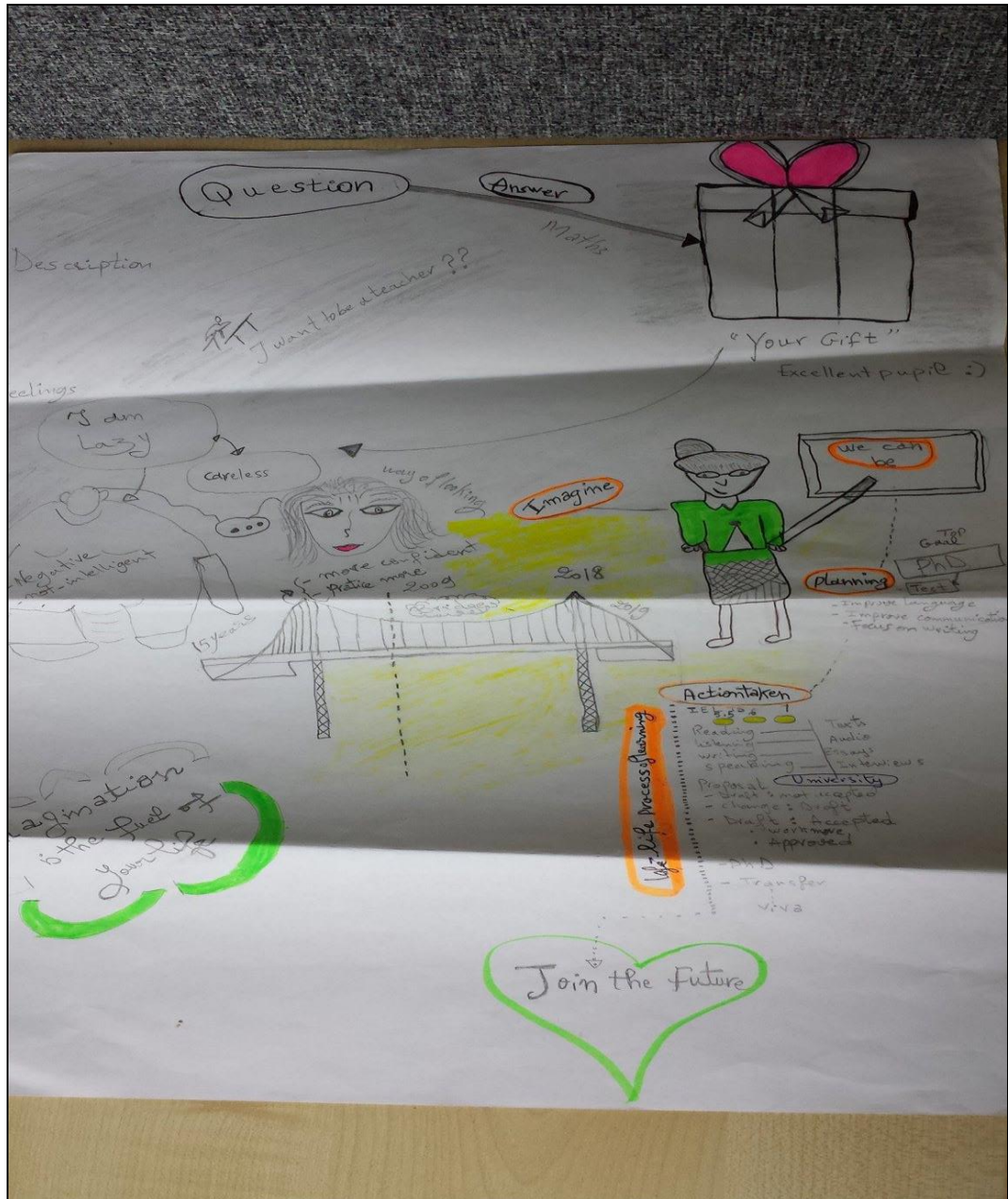
#### **Lead-in Questions:**

- Which part of the narrative this paragraph represents?
- What is the narrative feature in this paragraph?

### **Extract Two**

The third phase in my learning experience is English as a major at University. At this stage, I have developed a comprehensive knowledge about three languages, and I decided to carry on my studies in the English language. My objectives were to construct a personal learning style, and a communicative strategy for my learning aims. Concerning my communication in oral presentations, I was among the best. However, my writing skill is always taking a wide range of my time, I have difficulties in communicating my ideas in a standard form; I have a less ability to write coherently, I think I think in Spanish when I write in English. In my third year, I started to listen to people's experiences in improving their writing skills, I attended a workshop called 'Turbocharging your writing', I learned how to plan the writing of any paragraph before writing it on paper. It is essential to write and rewrite before submitting the essay or the homework.

Appendix (12): Poster Presented with the Personal Narrative



## **Appendix (13): Samples of Hana's and Chams' Reflective Answers on 'Mentors' in Session Two**

### **Hana**

My mother had a unique way of looking after me. Her intention helped me to build my self-confidence. She is not only my mentor, but also my friend, and everything she said was important. She is my home, and my map. I feel lost. I learnt that a mother's love and the lack of a mother's attention are irreplaceable, they help the person to prepare and progress in his life. I would appreciate her more, show her more how much I love her, and make her happy and proud. I would tell her how fortunate I am to have her.

### **Chams**

I cannot express my emotions. He loved me like a father, though he lives far away from me. He never said something wrong to me, he pushed me and cheered me up in all my hard times. I failed in my baccalaureate (tertiary exam), and he empower me to face my failure. I want to be a successful woman to show him that everything I do because of him.

## **Appendix (14): Samples of Participants' Writing plans: 'Mentors' in their Past learning**

### **Janah's Writing Plan of the introduction of the narrative**

Mentor: Primary school teacher.

Age: 9 years old when I passed her final exam.

Action: He pushed me to work. He sparked my interests.

I was a motivated student, excited and brilliant in the classroom.

### **Chams' Writing Plan of the introduction of the narrative**

Age: 9 years old.

Mentor one: I was influenced by my teacher.

Mentor's two: My uncle, his love, stand by me, closest person, strong person, generosity, idol (my influence)

Period: It happened in my primary school.

Feeling: I feel lucky of having him.

Doing: He helped and supported me/ proud of him

Action: I was trying to make him proud of me in everything I learned.

### **Hana's Writing Plan of both 'mentors' and 'marks', and value for the future**

Mentor: my secondary school teacher, he gave pieces of advice, when I felt alone, and he gave guidance.

Age: 12 years old

Dialogue: The teacher-initiated care.

Problem: lack of motivation

Event: before my Middle School final exam

Resolution: think more rationally about my future, my parents and mostly myself. Make more efforts in order to succeed. Stored others' experiences to convince myself.

Feelings: happy, appreciated and motivated.

## Appendix (15): Sample of a Writing Plan: Present learning

Plan your narrative Answers

- I choosed English because of my passion to English and because it is an international language.
- my aims in studying English are to have good grades and to get a scholarship to study abroad.
- No, nobody helped me.
- I think my best skills are speaking and reading.
- I think it is writing.
- ~~my~~ I would describe my level as medium right now.
- I think we always have to think about improving ourselves in everything.
- It is great, but requires a lot of skills and strategies.
- write more / learn new strategies and read more.

## Appendix (16): Sample Narrative Writing: Draft 1

My life was full of experiences which were sculptured in my brain as memories. I used to live in a small village where I went to primary school. My leadership skills were still in the first hurdle, so I could not get comfortable during confrontations, especially with my teachers. That was a real barricade which could rob my future. The teachers were very harsh with me, may be because I did not elevate to their expectations. I did not even understand the reason why I was mistreated. My innocence and shyness stopped me from being a social batter fly. These qualities made my life as a nightmare. So, I could not improve my level during this stage and I couldn't even learn in the right way. However, everything began to turn into my favor once I moved to middle school; my life was upside down. I was so glad about this change; the teacher's methods were very helpful as well as the way they treated me. This enabled me to acquire self-confidence, that I could argue and improvise in the toughest conversations and confrontations. In this way, I knew more about myself and my personality, also I learnt and improved a lot in this age. During my secondary school, i met a teacher whom was teaching French module. She was my ideal role model during my educational life. She was very wise and insightful that she gave us every day a piece of advice which was as a guide in our daily life. For me, she was the light that allowed me to see the world in his real face. In brief, all these experiences made my life as a rose which open and spread its odor when I speak about them.

Learning in the University needs courage as well as wisdom, and learning English, for me, needs love and enthusiasm. My actual learning seems to be a challenge; it is a mix of hardness and enjoyment. All these feelings push me to learn, improve and be clinging to my studies, although, I 'm facing many obstacles. Actually, I didn't choose English because I love it. I confess that it was a random choice. My first one was Spanish and there were two persons who could change my mind to choose English and I 'm grateful to them. The turning point was when I entered in this college.

Now I 'm learning English with pleasure. In my path of learning, I am setting small goals as well as big ones. But, I will keep the big goals as a secret inside me until I realize my small ones. My aims in studying English are to learn a new language, to know, read and discover a new culture as well as to communicate fluently with anyone in the world. Furthermore, to speak as a native person. At last but not least to get a respectful job and protect myself and my life. The bottom line from all these is to make my parents proud of me. Now, I move to my best skills, I have reading and speaking. On one hand, reading helps me to enrich my speech with vocabulary and decorate it with new ones that what makes me believe that reading is the best way to develop my level. In other hand, I have speaking skill and I confess that I don't speak English a lot neither in class nor out it. But, what I know is that I have the capacities to excelled in this skill. The most problematic skill for me is listening, especially, when the speaker is a native person. I can grasp some words and, unfortunately, I lose some of them while listening. So, listening is an essential skill to understand what the others mean. During these two years in the University, I noticed the changes which happened in my learning, concerning speaking, writing, pronouncing words, etc. So, my level rises step by step. And to realize more I need to improve some skills, such as listening, writing and speaking. By the way, in my opinion writing is the first thing I should give it its right. Also, it is a good way to express what is inside me that makes me a creative woman.



Concerning improving my writing skill, I think the best solution is to write everyday about a particular event which happened to me and make a combination between narration and description. In brief, my purpose from studying English is to be a perfect, famous teacher and a person who deserves estimation from all people in work, home or in the roadway. I will go in a journey outwards to discover and learn more, but I will come back to practice all what I learnt with the rosebuds of my country. I promise myself that I will work hard to excel in my life. To realize all these, at first, I will work on my skills to improve them. And whenever a chance comes to me, I will try with all my capacities to make it real in my life.

## Appendix (17): Sample Narrative Writing: Draft 2

My name is Fatima, an Algerian girl in the 21<sup>st</sup> spring. I'm an EFL University student in my second year. I love writing so much. In my narrative writing, I will talk about my educational life through the three stages and even at college and I will share with you the changes that happened in my life in this period.

My life was full of experiences which were sculptured in my brain as memories. I used to live in a small village where I went to primary school. My leadership skills were still in the first hurdle, so I could not get comfortable during confrontations, especially with my teachers. That was a real barricade that could robe my future. The teachers were very harsh with me, may be because I did not elevate to their expectations. I did not even understand the reason why I was mistreated. My innocence and shyness stopped me from being a social batter fly. These qualities made my life as a nightmare. So, I couldn't improve my level during this stage and I couldn't even learn in the right way. However, everything began to turn into my favor once I moved to middle school; my life was upside down. I was so glad about this change; the teacher's methods were very helpful as well as the way they treated me. This enabled me to acquire self-confidence, by which I could argue and improvise in toughest conversations and confrontations. In this way, I knew more about myself and my personality, also I learnt and improved a lot in this age. During my secondary school, I met a teacher whom was teaching French module. She was my ideal role model during my whole educational life. She was very wise and insightful that she gave us every day a piece of advice that guided us in our daily life. For me, she was the light that allowed me to see the real world. To end with, all these experiences made my life as a rose which open and spread its odor when I speak about them.

Learning in the University needs courage as well as wisdom, and learning English, for me, needs love and enthusiasm. My actual learning seems to be a challenge; it is a mix of hardness and enjoyment. All these feelings push me to learn, improve and be clinging to my studies, although, I 'm facing many obstacles. Actually, I didn't choose English because I love it. I confess that it was a random choice. My first one was Spanish and there were two persons who could change my mind to choose English and I 'm grateful to them. One of the two persons was my brother. So, we discussed the topic of my choice.

Brother: Why did you choose Spanish?

Me: I have chosen this language because I love it so much, it seems easier than English and French.

Brother: Don't think like that because you will regret.

Me: What?! What do you mean?

Brother: You must be intelligent and don't think just of your feelings, you have to think also about the future. I want to say that if you choose English, you will have more chances of work, and more than that, English is the language of the world. I'm sure you will not regret.

Me: Yes brother, it's all right. I will consider this to get the appropriate choice. Thank you because you clarify a lot of things for me.

The turning point was when I entered in the college. Now, I 'm learning English with pleasure. In my path of learning, I am setting small goals as well as big ones. But, I will keep the big goals as a secret inside me until I realize my small ones. So, my aim from studying English is to learn a new language, also to know, read and discover a new culture as well as to communicate fluently with anyone in the world. Furthermore, to speak as a native person. At last but not least, to get a respectful job and protect myself and my life. The bottom line from all these is to make my family proud of me. Now, I move to my best skills, I have reading and speaking. In one side, reading helps me to enrich my speech with vocabulary and decorate it with new ones that what makes me believe that reading is the best way to develop my level. In the other side, I have speaking skill and I confess that I don't speak English a lot neither in class nor out it. But, what I know is that I have the capacities to excel in this skill. The most problematic skill for me is listening, especially, when the speaker is a native person. I can grasp some words and, unfortunately, I lose some of them while listening. So, listening is an essential skill to understand what the others mean. During these two years in the University, I noticed the changes which happened in my learning, concerning speaking, writing, pronouncing words, etc. So, my level rises step by step. And to realize more I need to improve some skills, such as listening, writing and speaking. By the way, in my opinion writing is the first things first, so I should give it its right. Also, it is a good way to express what is inside me that makes me a creative woman. Concerning improving my writing skill, I think the best solution is to write everyday about a particular event which happened to me and make a combination between narration and description.

In brief, my purpose from studying English is to be a perfect, famous teacher and a person who deserves estimation from all people in work, home or in the roadway. I will go in a journey outwards to discover and learn more, but I will come back to practice what I learnt with the rosebuds of my country. I promise myself that I will work hard to excel in my life. To realize all these, I will work on my skills to improve them. And whenever a chance comes to me, I will try with all my capacities to make it real in my life.

## Appendix (18): Participants' Blog Feedback

### **Bahia commented on Fatima's narrative:**

Content feedback "It would be better if you mention a dialogue with one of your mentors".

Clarification feedback: "I like it but how innocence and shyness made your life a nightmare, can you tell us more about that? and which event of your life shaped you as you're now".

### **Fatima replied on Bahia's comment:**

"You have good questions. About the first question, during the period of my primary school, I was innocent as well as shy pupil. So, it was a combination which led my life to a nightmare. i.e. I was innocent, I couldn't understand the world well and I couldn't grasp the scrofulous environment around me. I was shy, I couldn't speak fluently to others, or express myself".

"For the second question, the event that shaped me and stay sculptured in my mind was the turning point from my primary school to middle". "Here is the reply, but I prefer to not include it in my narrative".

### **Esma commented on Fatima's narrative:**

Positive feedback: "The stages of your academic learning were obviously shown, and I felt the successive events that marked you".

Grammar feedback: "You missed the right use of prepositions such 'at' University instead of 'in'".

### **Esma commented on Bahia's narrative:**

Punctuation feedback: "Use colons for the listing needs, and replace commas by transition words to save the slight movement between actions"

Suggestion feedback: [your introduction was vague it was better if you mentioned the steps there so that you can start directly on the details after".

### **Bahia commented on Esma's narrative:**

"I will take them into consideration my sister".

### **Djamila commented on Bahia's narrative:**

Confirmation feedback: "I felt the realization of your first plan in class, and it is a crucial point that I did not respect on my draft, so it was a plus for you".

Form feedback: [you mentioned the ways that can help you to improve your skills in the final paragraph, by listening to native speakers, trying to imitate them, reading books and writing as much as possible, normally they should be included by the end of your third paragraph as we planned for it together in the last class session"

### **Djamila commented on Janah's narrative:**

Language feedback: "Can you rewrite the sentence of (I am a second LMD student),

Content feedback: “Don’t you think that u gave more details about your mentor, you could have left this for your next paragraphs”.

**Djamila commented on Isra’s narrative:**

Content feedback: “You should not state that the conversation with your friend will be bad, it should come swiftly in the narrative. The conversation needs to be longer and with more details”.

## **Appendix (19): Gibb's (1988) Reflective Model Adapted for Focus Group Discussions**

### **Description**

What happened? Simply describe.

### **Feelings**

What were your reactions and feelings?

### **Evaluation**

What was good or bad about experiences?

### **Analysis**

What sense can you make of the situation? Bring in ideas from outside the experience to help you.

### **Conclusions**

What can be concluded about your own specific, unique, personal; situation or way of thinking?

### **Personal Action Plans**

What are you going to do differently in this type of situation next time? What steps are you going to take on the basis of what you have learnt.

## **Appendix (20): Focus Group Questions**

**Title of the project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

### **Describing (reflection on their past learning)**

- 1- How is your learning going?
- 2- What was not good about your learning in the past?
- 3- If you could back in time, what would you change in learning?

### **Feelings (past/present) about their event**

- 1- How can you describe your feeling in that event?
- 2- How did your feelings affect your actions?
- 3- Have your feelings about your experience in the past changed?

### **Evaluation**

- 1- My experience has a positive outcome because...
- 2- My experience has a negative effect on me...

### **Analysis**

- 1- How do you think you will be after 10 years?
- 2- How do you think your feelings can support you to improve your action in the future?
- 3- How are you going to behave in the future if you experienced your event of the past?

### **Conclusion**

- 1- What have you learned from your experience of the past?

### **Action (plan for future learning)**

- 1- What are you thinking to become in the future?
- 2- What can you do differently from now to become a teacher?
- 3- What skills do you need to develop in your language learning?
- 4- Why do you think this skill is more important?
- 5- What steps will you take first?

6- What are your values of developing your language skills?

7- Can you restate your future plans?



## Appendix (21): Sample Focus Group Transcript

In 08 /03/2017, I met with five participants who agreed to take part in the first focus group discussion: Djamila, Chams, Gazala, Isra, and Janah. I explained that the discussion will be expanded on their written narratives.

### Describing (reflection on their present learning)

#### 1- How is your learning going?

**Gazala:** it is getting very well and developed over time in my learning skills,

**Djamila:** it's going fairly well but we know that we need to work more in the future to improve ourselves in English

**Isra:** is going too slow am not doing any effort to improve it

**Djamila:** not that bad, I don't make effort but it's going well

**Janah:** when it comes to homework and efforts are hard, but I am not making huge progress.

#### 2- What was not good about your learning in the past?

**Djamila:** I did not take things seriously I underestimate modules when I get good grades, I say to myself even if I hate this module, I should make efforts.

**Isra:** I am the opposite of Janah, I make lot of efforts in my previous stages of learning when I arrived at university, I am so tired I lost my determination and inspiration to work

**Gazala:** "I was most of the time playing hockey". Do you know what does it mean? She replied playing the hockey means when you make many absences. I made many absences plus I was so shy, and I did not have that confidence that I have now.

**Chams:** Even if we make efforts the teacher gave marks, they gave grades to the person who they want to give.

**Janah:** I like to add that now we are all responsible for our own works or learning, me personally I do not think I am making efforts and I was in a scientific field we did not take everything seriously in learning the English learning.

**Chams:** Sometimes even if you make the efforts and you feel teachers are cheating

**Djamila:** and it is devastating

**Isra:** Yes. We make efforts and we get nothing.

**Janah:** Especially for writing we cannot find a teacher who sparks our intention, she accuses our writing all the time, and she does not like change.

## **Feelings (past/present) about their events**

### **1- How can you describe your feeling in that event?**

**Chams:** last semester I used medical information, the teacher said I don't understand it

When she does not understand she say she did not like it

**Djamila:** when you are a teacher you are also a learner. You have to search what students propose to you and thank you to give new information.

**Gazala** asked **Isra** to tell about her mark.

**Isra:** We never looked into his eyes, no one can look to him not because of fear but it was showing respect.

### **2- How did your feelings affect your actions?**

**Chams:** I said that no one can do that to anyone he (my uncle) said do not worry, he was my idol in that moment.

**Gazala:** said he was your idol from the beginning. 3 replied, yes, he was and still.

**Djamila:** Since I was the youngest girl, I was selfish, and I changed my personality, and it affect my inside.

**Gazala:** for my teacher I hated him but after that happened he supported me, he gave me pieces of advice, he made me improve my skills in history subject. I changed the ways I was behaving. I passed my exam and started to change classes with him.

**Isra:** my teacher did not expect me to mix the Qur'anic verses, I felt I deceived him, he was so angry. I cried.

**Djamila:** I cry when I fail too

**Janah:** I do too

**Gazala:** I cannot cry it stops inside me.

**Djamila:** I cannot help myself, I cry too

### **3- Have your feelings about your experience in the past changed?**

**Chams:** when we face problems now we will much mature and confident

**Gazala:** I am more confident.

## **Evaluation**

### **1- My experience has a positive outcome because...**

**Isra:** I get confidence at that time

**Djamila:** I became courageous and open to people

**Gazala:** I became confident

**Janah:** I became motivated.

**Chams:** Learn how to take initiative, never look back and be mature.

## **2- My experience has a negative effect on me...**

**Janah:** I knew how weak I was I did not face the situation in that moment

**Djamila:** Since I was a child I was terrified because when you are a child, family members are all the people you talk to. When you go to the world it is terrifying and scary.

**Chams:** Being a child does not make you take good decisions, even my brother did an accident I did not care about him, I thought of the exam and I wanted to be the first in primary school. I was selfish.

**Gazala:** said you were not selfish you were a child.

**Djamila:** she was not conscious, but now I changed completely my mind.

**Janah:** I was bit selfish I did not expect criticism think was perfect

**Gazala:** I was naïve, and anyone can fool me, I was so stupid I believed everything they told me.

## **Analysis**

### **1- How do you think you will be after 10 years?**

**Janah:** we will have more mentors and marks

**Djamila:** We will be wiser

**Gazala:** We will be more mature

**Isra:** I think when we grow up, we have new perspective, we can see things and we can understand more.

### **2- How do you think your feelings can support you to improve your action in the future?**

**Janah:** if we want to improve.

**Djamila:** hope so, I wish sometimes I feel I want to die when I think that I cannot solve my problems.

**Chams:** You must be optimistic

**Gazala:** I will not suicide

**Djamila:** I write when I face this situation, I said I write lot to overcome my sadness

**Chams:** I was really upset, but it does not deserve

**Gazala:** I am not going to die.

### **3- How are you going to behave in the future if you experienced your event of the past?**

**Gazala:** I can think better than I was, I have a new perspective.

**Djamila:** now it does not look important for me now.

**Isra:** I will be stronger that's all what I need.

**Djamila:** I plan to find the best solution without being angry because it will not work if we face the problem in anger, there is nothing that deserve to be angry about.

## **Conclusion**

### **1- What have you learned from your experience of the past?**

**Janah:** since I talked about motivation in primary school, I learned that motivation can help lot can bring the best of you, makes you move fast, I could not work or study without a motivator, I said if you do not find that person to motivate you.

**Janah:** It can be a topic, like I said a subject that sparks my intention.

**Chams:** To take responsibility, to share time with family.

**Isra:** you learn that there is part of your life that you are not yourself and it is ok. It is not the end of the world. I learned to be social and people are not cruel,

**Gazala:** I think she is silent in the beginning, but when I get used to her, I can see her real character

**Gazala:** For me I do believe that if you have a person who stands beside you and support you this the main thing that happen in your life, and you have to do something in life, you will be good in it.

**Djamila:** when you talk about your issues you get out of the shell

**Janah:** especially we are from the same class we know about our learning

**Isra:** it is interesting

## **Action (plan for your future learning)**

### **1- What are you thinking to become in the future?**

**Djamila:** I have different things in my mind now, I want to become a flight attendant, they all laughed, **Gazala** said like a permanent flower.

**Isra:** my plans totally changed, I do not know.

**Chams:** I do not have a teacher or a researcher, if I will be a teacher or a researcher, I would like to be that teacher who stands by her students, not just a teacher with a name

**Chams:** If I have the opportunity to travel to a foreign country I will be a teacher at university or a housewife and make cookies, they all laughed I am trying to escape from this

**Janah:** I want to teach people of young age, I think if you learn language from the beginning, you will love the language forever, some teachers that you do not like, you cannot love the language.

**Isra:** **Janah** gave me an idea that children with that innocence you can grow them, we still see a teacher like a prophet, all agree, and you can use this weapon to grow.

**Janah:** look at us we still remember our primary school teachers.

**Djamila:** they draw it for us

**Chams:** I love children, I cannot teach pupils of primary school, they are not educated.

They asked here all what she is saying this, she replied because children are not educated, I asked her.

**Chams:** the parents do not ask children to respect the teacher

**Djamila:** then parents complain if you treat them in a different way, my niece does not afraid her father.

**Djamila:** my niece told her father that her teacher told her that she is a princess, and she asked her father to construct for her a princess house.

## **2- What can you do differently to become a future teacher?**

**Janah:** Developing our vocabulary, improve our writing

**Isra:** she completed Janah's sentence saying so we can answer questions and provide information to students.

**Janah** continues participating in clubs, communities and plays, **Isra** stopped her I hate plays,

**Janah** continues because you do your job in front of students.

**Gazala:** it is the same because it is clear that what we need to be teachers.

## **3- What skills do you need to develop in your language learning?**

**Isra:** speaking

**Gazala:** listening

**Chams:** reading

**Janah:** writing

**Djamila:** writing

#### **4- Why do you think this skill is more important?**

**Gazala:** I like to improve listening because when I try to listen to a video the first time or even when I repeat it I do not understand and particularly the British accent.

**Chams:** I think I need to improve reading because when I read loudly I will search the difficult words.

**Isra:** I said speaking because I think more than I speak and when I try to speak in English I do not find words in my mind

**Janah:** everything in language is based in writing like grammar mistakes, punctuation, when you fail in writing you cannot develop your skills

**Chams:** I agree with Ikram writing is very important especially grammar rules if you are a teacher you need to do no mistakes

**Janah:** We can speak even with small vocabulary, but writing is our problem.

#### **5- Which steps will you take first?**

**Janah:** I do free writing, but I do not check the dictionary it is about me and my style.

**Gazala:** for me I need to bring a native speaker to listen with me.

**Djamila:** you have to listen more

**Isra:** I will do like **Djamila**, because reading help in speaking and writing, **Janah** said to **Isra** you have a good vocabulary, but you do not like to speak.

#### **6- What are your values of developing your language skills?**

**Janah:** we met some bad teachers and we want to be better

**Djamila:** the teacher must share the message he received,

**Isra** the teacher conveys a Nobel message to others, he can gain tribute

**Gazala:** one of my aims is to teach and I want to accomplish that dream.

#### **7- Can you restate your future plans?**

**Janah:** I want to be a teacher, I want to teach children. To improve myself I will write more, I will correct the things I did wrong, I want to change the fact that some teachers are really bad teachers.

**Isra:** as Ikram said some teachers we want to change the view of teachers, there is lot of hatred to teachers in the society

**Gazala:** we are insulting teachers and our mothers are teachers, they all agreed saying yes.

**Isra:** my mother is a teacher and she makes a lot of efforts

**Janah:** my brothers are teachers and they make efforts too.

**Your cooperation is highly appreciated.**

**Thank you!**

## Appendix (22): Certificate of Ethical Research Approval



The Graduate School  
Park Campus  
Boughton Green Road  
Northampton  
NN2 7AL

23 January 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

I can confirm that Wafa Zekri (date of birth: 09/07/1991) is currently a full time student of this university registered for a Higher Degree by Research leading to PhD.

Wafa is travelling to Algeria to conduct her fieldwork between 3rd of February and 5th of April 2017. The fieldwork forms part of Wafa's approved research programme. Her research project has the approval of the University of Northampton's Research Degrees Committee.

If I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



David Watson  
Postgraduate Research Manager



## **Appendix (23): Permission Letter to the Head of Department**

**Title of the project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

From November 2015 to November 2019

Head of English Department

University of Tlemcen, Algeria

Dear Dr Souhila,

I am writing to you to seek approval for accessing the English section of Tlemcen University. I am doing my PhD in the University of Northampton UK. I would like to invite ten to twelve female students in second year bachelor level as participants for my research.

The mini-module concerns students' narrative writing and students' engagement in classroom interaction. I will be using participant observation, students' narratives, and focus group discussions. The aim of this research is to encourage students to reflect on their learning process, and to develop a future academic identity. This research aims to develop an understanding of EFL women's learning experiences and their identity reconstruction along the different periods of their learning

I would like to have access to an empty classroom, which will be needed for one hour per week for a period of eight weeks. Students will be provided with consent forms and information sheets to sign.

The project will require me to use an audio recorder during the classroom sessions and a data projector. This will not involve any harm or discomfort to the participants or the University. The results of this research will remain confidential and anonymous. No costs will be incurred by either your department or the participants.

This project was granted ethical approval by the University of Northampton Ethics Committee. The participants will be invited to voluntarily participate in this research.

Your approval for this research to take place in our department is highly appreciated.

If you agree, kindly sign below and return one copy to me, and retain the second copy  
Yours sincerely,

Wafa Zekri

Email: [wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk)

Head of studies: Sonya Andermahar [Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk)

Research Supervisor: Dave Burnapp [Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix (24): Teacher's Information Sheet

The Faculty of Education and Humanities, The University of Northampton  
Avenue Campus, St George's Avenue, Northampton  
NN2 6JD

### **Title of the project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

From November 2015 to November 2019

Dear Teacher,

I wish to inform you that I am undertaking a PhD in the University of Northampton. My research aims to develop an understanding on EFL women's learning experiences and their identity reconstruction along the different periods of their learning. I am conducting a mini-module which requires only female participants.

I kindly ask you to observe two of your second-year bachelor classes. During the sessions, I will be observing the students, and taking notes on the number of female and male students and their engagement in the activities. Attending your classes will give me access to the students. At the end of your sessions, I will invite the students to volunteer as participants in my mini-module. The data I collect from both sessions will not be analysed; and if the researcher needs to use the data, names of the teacher and the students will be kept anonymous, and they will be stored in a password-protected laptop. My observation will not cause harm to the students nor to yourself.

This study is approved by Research Degree Committee.

If you want to ask me further questions about the project and your participation, please contact find my contact details below!

Yours Sincerely,

Wafa Zekri

Email: [wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk)

Head of studies: Sonya Andermahar [Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk)

Research Supervisor: Dave Burnapp [Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix (25): Teacher's Consent Form

The Faculty of Education and Humanities, The University of Northampton  
Avenue Campus, St George's Avenue, Northampton  
NN2 6JD

### **Title of the project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

From November 2015 to November 2019

I, the undersigned, confirm that:

Please initial the boxes you agree with

I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the participant information sheet. Yes  No

I have been given the opportunity to ask further questions about the project and my participation. Yes  No

I agree to give the researcher access to both of my classes. Yes  No

The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained to me (e.g. anonymity of the teacher and the students observed). Yes  No

I, along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form. Yes  No

Name of teacher.....Date.....Signature.....

Name of the person taking consent.....Date..... Signature .....

## **Appendix (26): Participants' Information Sheet**

The Faculty of Education and Humanities, The University of Northampton  
Avenue Campus, St George's Avenue, Northampton  
NN2 6JD

### **Title of project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

From November 2015 to November 2019

My name is Wafa Zekri, I am a research student at the University of Northampton. You are invited to participate in my PhD research which will take place at the University of Tlemcen, English section. The research will use a mini-module which will be preceded by classroom discussions and writing in a private blog 'WordPress'; this mini-module will last eight weeks. This project is funded by the Algerian Ministry of Higher Education.

The project aims to provide an understanding about how English as foreign language learners develop their learning identities. This research involves: participant observation, classroom interaction, blog writing, voice recordings, note-taking and focus group discussions. All the data collected will be stored securely on a password-protected computer. The data collected from the classroom and the blog will be analysed thematically, and the analysis will not cause harm to you. The data will be anonymised, as alternative names will be given so that you will not be identifiable. Also, the data collected from focus group discussions will be anonymised, as alternative names will be used. The data will be examined anonymously by other researchers after the PhD is published, as the results of the research will be shared for research purposes only such as conferences and research papers.

If you choose to take part, your voices will be recorded in the classroom sessions and in the focus group discussions. The classroom sessions will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Your participation is voluntarily; you are free to withdraw from this work any time you wish. You are also free to withdraw your data from the blog after three months after the end of the mini-module. If you refuse to participate or withdraw after you started because you are not able to finish, you will not be penalized. Unfortunately, if you wish to withdraw, your data will not be analysed.

If you choose to participate, you should sign the consent forms and return them to the researcher.

Head of studies: Sonya Andermahr [Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Sonya.Andermahr@northampton.ac.uk)

First supervisor: Dave.burnapp [Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Dave.burnapp@northampton.ac.uk)

If you need to ask me further questions about the project and your participation, find my contact details below!

Email: [wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:wafa.zekri@northampton.ac.uk)

## Appendix (27): Participants' Consent Form

The Faculty of Education and Humanities, The University of Northampton  
Avenue Campus, St George's Avenue, Northampton  
NN2 6JD

### **Title of Project: Developing a Learning Identity: A Narrative Study of Algerian Women EFL Students**

From November 2015 to November 2019

(Please initial the boxes you agree with)

I, the undersigned, confirm that that I understand:

The aims of this research. Yes  No

The confidentiality of this work. Yes  No

I read the participant information statement and I understand what it involves. Yes  No

I understand that I will not be personally identified when the data gathered from this research will be published. Yes  No

I have read and understood the project information sheet: Yes  No

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. Yes  No

I agree to take part in the project. Yes  No

I agree to post my narrative on the blog. Yes  No

I agree to participate in the focus group discussions. Yes  No

Taking part in the project will include being observed and audio-recorded. Yes  No

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. Yes  No

I understand that if I withdraw from the project in the beginning, my data will not be analysed or shared in the thesis. Yes  No

Use of the information I provide for this project only I understand my personal details such as phone number and email will not be revealed to people outside the project. Yes  No

I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to the data. Yes  No

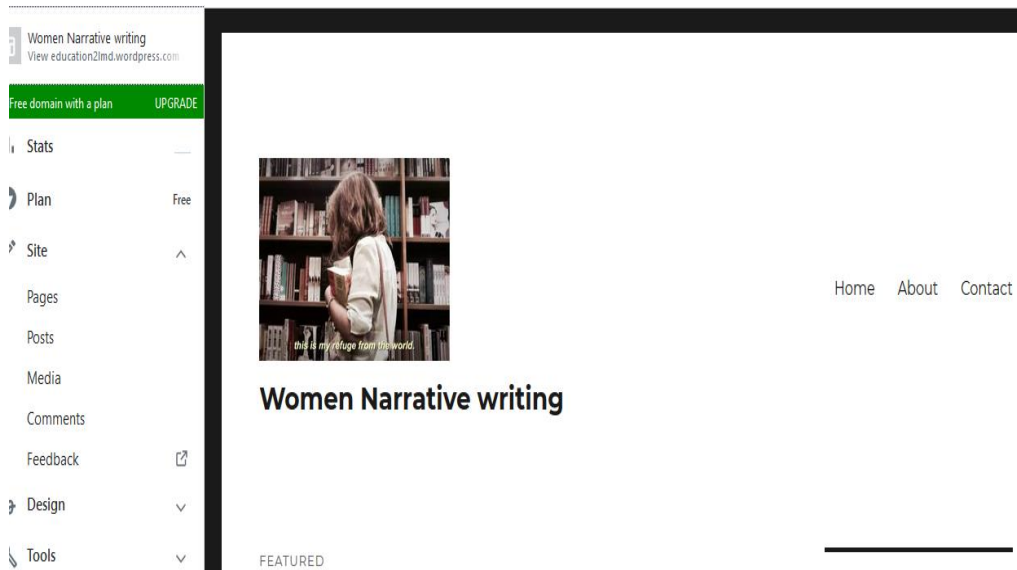
I understand that the same researcher may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if I agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. Yes  No

I along with the researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form. Yes  No

Name of participant.....Date.....Signature:

Name of the person taking consent.....Date..... Signature .....

## Appendix (28): Blog Photos



The screenshot shows a WordPress blog page. On the left is a sidebar menu with items: Stats, Plan (Free), Site, Pages, Posts, Media, Comments, Feedback, Design, and Tools. At the top of the sidebar, it says 'Women Narrative writing' and 'View education2lmd.wordpress.com'. Below that is a green bar with 'Free domain with a plan' and 'UPGRADE'. The main content area has a header with 'Home About Contact' on the right. Below the header is a featured image of a woman in a library with the text 'this is my refuge from the world'. The title 'Women Narrative writing' is displayed below the image. At the bottom of the featured image area, it says 'FEATURED'.

## Welcome participants

This is the post excerpt.



educationlmd2  
January 16, 2017

I am Wafaa Zekri, a PhD student, I welcome my participants to post in this blog their essays.

