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Identifying EFL Learners' Psychosocial Identity Orientation and its Relationship with their Interlanguage Pragmatic Achievement

ABSTRACT

Previous research has not analyzed the identity orientation of EFL (English as Foreign Language) learners based on the glocalization view of teaching English. Hence, the current study attempted to determine the identity orientation of EFL learners based on three identity orientations of global, local, and glocal. Next, it investigated the relationship between EFL learners' identity orientation and their interlanguage pragmatic achievement. Using qualitative and quantitative methods, an EFL Learner Identity Orientation Questionnaire and a Pragmatic Performance DCT (Discourse Completion Test) were handed to 120 EFL learners. The data were analyzed through the Pearson correlation test using SPSS version 26. Findings indicated that EFL learners were mostly glocally oriented in terms of social identity orientation. The second most frequent identity was local and global identity orientation had the lowest frequency. The Pearson correlation test did not show a statistically significant correlation between having a global and local identity and pragmatic performance. However, a statistically significant correlation was seen between having a glocal identity orientation ($r = .34$, $P <.01$) and pragmatic performance.

Keywords: Globalization, glocalization, identity orientation, pragmatics

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Introduction

The relationship between language learning and identity has increasingly become a central theme in contemporary applied linguistics, particularly in multilingual and multicultural societies where English functions as a globalized resource. As English has expanded beyond its geographic origins to become an international lingua franca, learners across diverse contexts continuously negotiate, renegotiate, and reconstruct their identities through engagement with the language (1). This emerging

understanding rejects fixed or essentialist notions of identity and instead conceptualizes it as dynamic, socially situated, and influenced by learners' interactions with linguistic, cultural, and ideological systems (2). Within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings—where exposure to English is largely mediated through instructional materials, digital media, and limited interactional opportunities—the identity–language relationship becomes particularly complex, shaped not only by learners' motivations but also by their sociocultural orientations, local values, and global aspirations.

Multiple scholars emphasize that identity development and language learning are mutually constitutive processes, whereby learners' sense of self influences the manner in which they engage with English, and conversely, their language practices reshape their personal, social, and cultural identities (3, 4). In many contexts, English does not remain a neutral communicative tool; instead, it becomes embedded in the construction of social identities, professional futures, and imagined communities. Learners construct affiliations with global cultural flows while simultaneously maintaining attachments to their local or national identities (5). This tension situates EFL learning as both a linguistic endeavor and a psychosocial process involving negotiation between global influences and local cultural norms.

The globalization of English has also led to the recognition that language learning cannot be separated from broader sociopolitical and cultural dynamics. English today permeates education, technology, employment, media, and international communication, which in turn shapes learners' identity trajectories (6). Yet globalizing forces do not operate in isolation. Tsou's articulation of the shift from globalization to glocalization underscores the importance of localizing global influences to align with local values, identities, and cultural expectations (7). Glocalization—combining global and local orientations—provides a framework through which EFL learners can navigate the dual pressures of global integration and cultural preservation. This hybrid orientation has grown increasingly relevant in societies negotiating traditional identities alongside rapid modernization.

The notion of identity reconstruction under conditions of linguistic and cultural contact has been widely discussed. Research in various cultural contexts has shown that English learning can reshape learners' perceptions of self, social belonging, and cultural affiliation (8, 9). For instance, exposure to English may empower learners by expanding their access to social, academic, and economic capital, yet it may also provoke tensions when newly adopted global identities conflict with pre-existing local ones. This phenomenon is especially prominent in societies with strong cultural, ethnic, or religious foundations, where language policies and social expectations shape the ways in which learners integrate English into their identity frameworks (10). These dynamics foreground the necessity of exploring how language learning contributes to identity orientation in contemporary EFL environments.

Recent scholarship has increasingly examined identity not as a singular construct but as a constellation of orientations—global, local, and glocal. A global identity orientation reflects openness to international norms, values, and cultural practices, often accompanied by aspirations for global citizenship or alignment with cosmopolitan lifestyles (11). A local identity orientation, on the other hand, emphasizes cultural preservation, commitment to local traditions, and resistance to cultural homogenization (12). A glocal identity orientation blends these two perspectives, enabling learners to embrace global opportunities while remaining grounded in local sociocultural values (13). This glocal orientation, emerging prominently in the contemporary literature, positions learners as both global participants and local custodians, thereby reducing psychological tension between global aspirations and cultural rootedness (14).

Also, identity development is increasingly shaped by social context, family dynamics, and broader sociocultural influences. Research demonstrates that identity formation is deeply social and influenced by the expectations, values, and linguistic practices within a learner's immediate environment (15). Family language policy, cultural heritage practices, and intergenerational transmission of norms play crucial roles in shaping linguistic identity, particularly in multilingual societies

(16). Within these contexts, English proficiency can serve as both a tool of empowerment and a marker of social differentiation, reflecting intersections of language, ethnicity, and community belonging (17).

Moreover, the expansion of English in educational institutions has increasingly intersected with teacher identity, professional development, and classroom practices (18, 19). Teachers, as cultural intermediaries, often negotiate their own identities while simultaneously shaping the identity orientations of their learners. Their professional identity construction reflects broader patterns of glocalization, cultural negotiation, and sociolinguistic positioning (13). These dynamics directly influence classroom discourses, pedagogical priorities, and learners' perceptions of English as either a global necessity, a cultural threat, or a hybrid identity resource.

Literature emerging from EFL contexts has highlighted that learners' identity orientations influence not only their motivation but also their performance and engagement patterns (20). Students who strongly identify with global values may adopt communicative behaviors aligned with global English norms, while those with strong local identities may demonstrate resistance to cultural aspects embedded in English language teaching materials. These tensions become more pronounced in educational systems that have undergone rapid reforms, experienced cultural shifts, or encountered globalization pressures (21). For example, research during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that digitalization, global crises, and changes in instructional modes significantly influenced teachers' and students' identity reconstruction processes (19).

In addition, identity should not be considered a purely individual construct but rather a reflection of broader sociocultural networks. Learners participate in identity work that spans ethnic identity, gendered identity, religious identity, and professional identity—all of which influence how they relate to English as a foreign language (13). These factors become particularly relevant in multilingual, multicultural, and multiethnic contexts where English proficiency may signal upward mobility, global participation, or cultural realignment (22). At the same time, identity transformations can enhance access to global communities while simultaneously reshaping connections to heritage culture, often leading to hybridized identities that transcend traditional boundaries (23).

Given the growing importance of identity in shaping learners' engagement, several studies have emphasized the intersection of language learning, identity, and sociocultural belonging. Research shows that learners' identity orientations significantly affect their academic participation, community integration, and overall educational experience (21). For instance, when learners perceive English as a gateway to global citizenship, they tend to integrate global cultural norms into their emerging identities. Conversely, when English learning is framed as contradictory to local cultural expectations, learners may struggle to reconcile their linguistic goals with their social identities (17). These complexities highlight the need for pedagogical approaches that acknowledge identity as a fluid, context-dependent construct.

Despite substantial theoretical and empirical developments, significant gaps remain. While many studies have examined identity reconstruction, glocalization, and sociocultural influences separately, few have directly analyzed the psychosocial identity orientations of EFL learners in relation to their interlanguage pragmatic achievement, particularly within glocalization frameworks. Pragmatics, involving learners' ability to interpret context, convey intended meanings, and interact appropriately, is deeply intertwined with identity positioning (11). Yet empirical research connecting identity orientation and pragmatic performance remains scarce. Previous work has largely described identity shifts qualitatively or explored motivation and cultural identity as isolated variables (3, 9). What remains underexplored is how distinct identity orientations—global, local, or glocal—might influence learners' pragmatic behaviors, sociolinguistic sensitivity, or communicative appropriateness in English.

Furthermore, while identity construction has been studied in relation to globalization, multiculturalism, and instructional contexts, limited attention has been paid to how learners navigate these identities simultaneously during actual language use

(2). Empirical research seldom examines how learners operationalize their identity orientations in real communicative contexts or pragmatic decision-making. This gap is particularly significant in EFL environments where pragmatic norms may differ substantially from learners' L1 cultural expectations and where identity plays a crucial role in shaping learners' linguistic choices.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the global, local, and glocal identity orientations of EFL learners and examine how these orientations relate to their interlanguage pragmatic achievement. Hence, the present study attempted to find an answer to the following research questions:

1. What is the identity orientation (global, local, or glocal) of EFL learners based on the EFL learners' identity orientation questionnaire?
2. Is there any statistically significant relationship between having a global, local, and glocal EFL language learner identity orientation and interlanguage pragmatics achievement?

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Participants

This research used a quantitative design. It had a descriptive design as the identity orientation and the interlanguage pragmatic performance of the EFL learners were determined without any treatment. The design of the second part of the study was correlational as there was no treatment and no variables were manipulated. Only, the relationship between the EFL learners' pragmatic performance achievement and identity orientation was correlated with each other.

The participants of the study included 120 EFL learners at the upper-intermediate level selected among a population of 180 EFL learners studying at the language institutes of Kermanshah, Iran. The sample was selected after running a language proficiency test among the population. They were both male and female and their ages ranged from 15 to 35.

Moreover, since cities of Kermanshah have a Kurdish ethnicity, the society was homogenous in this regard but the participants were different in terms of religion, most consisting of Shia Muslims, and some were Suni Muslims.

Instruments

To meet the objective of the study and collect reliable data, two researcher-made EFL Learner Identity Orientation Questionnaire and Pragmatic Performance DCT (Discourse Completion Test) were used. The EFL learner identity orientation questionnaire was developed based on Norton's (2000) framework and another study by Seidi et al (2018) who did a content analysis of sociocultural values embedded in imported textbook series in used Iranian language institutes. The instrument was used to determine the identity orientation of the EFL learners taking part in this study. Three kinds of identity orientations were indicated by the instrument including global, local, and glocal. It consisted of 45 close-ended items in the Likert scale. Items 1 to 15 had a global orientation, items 16 to 30 had a local orientation, and items 31 to 45 had a glocal identity orientation. To determine the questionnaire's reliability, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. The analysis showed that the Alpha coefficient was 0.85 which was reliable for the study.

Finally, a pragmatic performance DCT was used to gather data on the pragmatic performance of the EFL learners in this study. It consisted of 30 multiple-choice items, each item covering a speech act situation, followed by four options. The speech acts used in the DCT included apology, request, and refusal. Each of these three speech acts was assessed through 10 items. The EFL learners' responses were judged based on their identity orientation (glocal, global, local). The respondents were given 40 minutes to answer the DCT. To evaluate the reliability of the pragmatic competence test, it was given to 40 EFL learners in

language institutes in Kermanshah. The reliability index was 0.77 obtained through the Cronbach alpha method indicating high reliability. Also, to ensure the content validity of the test, it was given to three experts in the pragmatics domain to confirm the validity of the contents.

Procedure and Data Analysis

This study comprised both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were collected among the EFL learners. Data collection occurred in two phases: 1. Pilot Phase: Instruments were refined with 30 students to ensure clarity and reliability. 2. Main Study: Participants were given an EFL learner identity orientation questionnaire to determine their identity orientation among three categories of glocal, global, and local identity. In the next phase, a pragmatic performance strategies DCT was handed to the three groups of EFL learners to gather data on their pragmatic performance, and their pragmatic performance was correlated with their identity orientation (glocal, global, local). To answer research questions that investigated the relationship between EFL learners' pragmatic performance and identity orientation, quantitative analyses were conducted using SPSS 26.0. Correlational Analysis: Pearson's r examined relationships between identity subscales and pragmatic scores.

Findings and Results

The first question of this study was what is the identity orientation (global, local, or glocal) of EFL learners based on the EFL learners' identity orientation questionnaire? The result of descriptive statistics of the participants on EFL learners' identity orientation questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics of the participants

Statistics		Global	Local	Glocal	DCT
N	Valid	120	120	120	120
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		50.18	54.16	56.30	79.18
Median		49.50	54.00	56.00	81.50
Mode		38.00	60.00	53.00 ^a	59.00
Std. Deviation		10.89	9.85	8.97	15.71
Range		48.00	45.00	41.00	69.00
Minimum		25.00	30.00	32.00	43.00
Maximum		73.00	75.00	73.00	112.00
Percentiles	10	37.10	40.00	45.00	57.10
	20	40.20	46.00	48.00	63.40
	25	42.25	47.00	49.00	68.00
	30	44.00	48.00	51.00	72.30
	40	47.40	52.00	53.00	75.40
	50	49.50	54.00	56.00	81.50
	60	52.60	58.00	60.00	85.00
	70	56.70	60.00	62.00	88.70
	75	57.75	61.00	63.00	91.75
	80	59.00	63.00	64.80	93.00
	90	66.80	67.00	68.90	99.00

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean scores of global, local and glocal identity and DCT were 50.18, 54.16, 56.30 and 79.18 while indicating the standard deviations of 10.89, 9.85, 8.97 and 15.71, respectively. Additionally, data showed that 25 percent of the participants had scores below 42.25, 47.00, 49.00 and 68.00 in global, local and glocal identity and DCT while 50 percent had scores below 49.50, 54.00, 56.00 and 81.50 in global, local and glocal identity and DCT. However, 75 percent had scores below 57.75, 61.00, 63.00 and 91.75 in global, local and glocal identity and DCT.

In the next step, the distribution of the studied variables (global, local and glocal identity and DCT scores) are provided in figures 1 to 4.

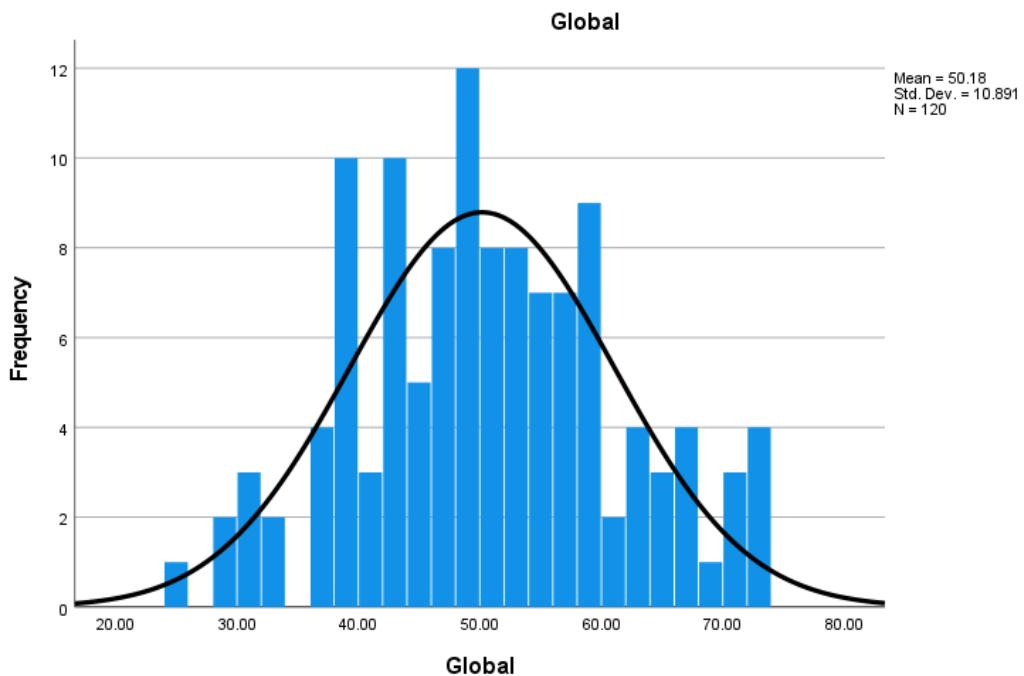


Figure 1. The distribution of global identity score participant

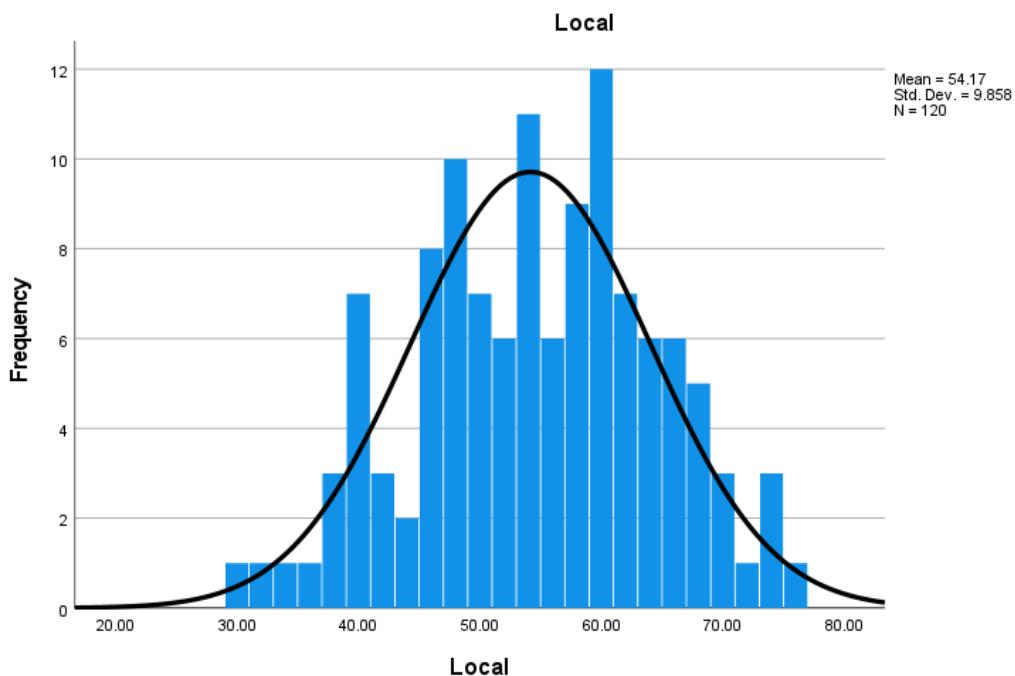


Figure 2. The descriptive statistics of students having local identity

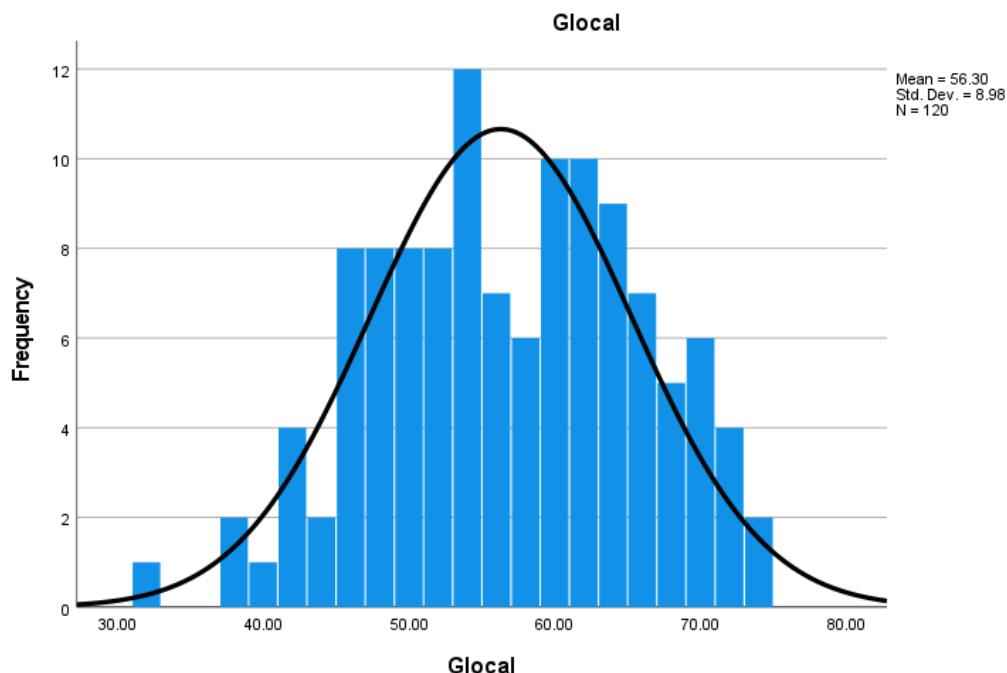


Figure 3. The descriptive statistics of students having glocal identity

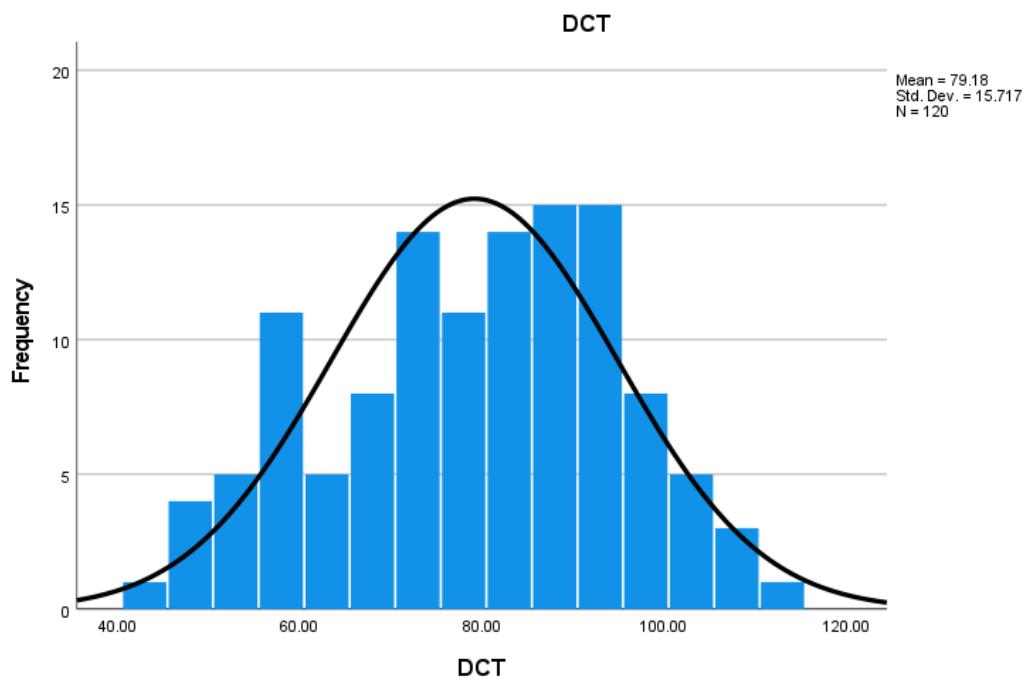


Figure 4. The descriptive statistics of students' DCT scores

The results of the four figures showed that glocal identity orientation had the highest frequency among the identity types and 45 EFL learners had a glocal identity orientation. The second frequent identity orientation was local, being chosen by 39 EFL learners. Finally, global identity orientation had the lowest frequency among the identity types that is 36 EFL learners had a global identity orientation. To test EFL learners' normality of data, One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was used.

Table 2. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for identity scores and DCT scores

One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test	Global	Local	Glocal	DCT
N	120	120	120	120
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	Mean	50.18	54.16	79.18
	Std. Deviation	10.89	9.85	15.71
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.04	.06	.07
	Positive	.04	.04	.06
	Negative	-.03	-.068	-.07
Test Statistic	.04	.06	.07	.07
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) ^c	.20 ^d	.20 ^d	.08	.06

The result of the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test shows that the data are normally distributed for the two sets of scores ($Sig > .05$). Therefore, the parametric Pearson correlation test was used to assess whether there was any statistically significant relationship between having a global, local, or glocal EFL language learner identity orientation and interlanguage pragmatics achievement. The result of the correlation test is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The result of the Pearson correlation test

Correlations		Global	Local	Glocal	DCT
Global	Pearson Correlation	1	-.02	.10	-.04
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.75	.25	.66
Local	Pearson Correlation		1	.07	-.10
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.39	.23
Glocal	Pearson Correlation			1	.34 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)				.00
DCT	Pearson Correlation				1
	Sig. (2-tailed)				

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson Correlation was run to determine the relationship between students' global identity scores and their DCT. There was a negative correlation between these two variables, but it was not statistically significant ($r = -.04, P = .66$). Also, the Pearson Correlation showed there was a negative correlation between students' local identity scores and their DCT score, but it was not statistically significant ($r = -.10, P = .23$). Finally, the Pearson Correlation was run to determine the relationship between students' glocalized identity scores and their DCT. There was a positive correlation between these two variables, which was also statistically significant ($r = .34, P = .00$). Figure 5 shows scatterplot of the result of the correlation between having a glocal identity orientation and interlanguage pragmatic achievement.

Figure 5 showed that learners' glocal identity orientation significantly correlated with their ability to produce and interpret contextually appropriate pragmatic behaviors. Specifically, learners with a stronger glocal identity orientation demonstrated higher pragmatic competence.

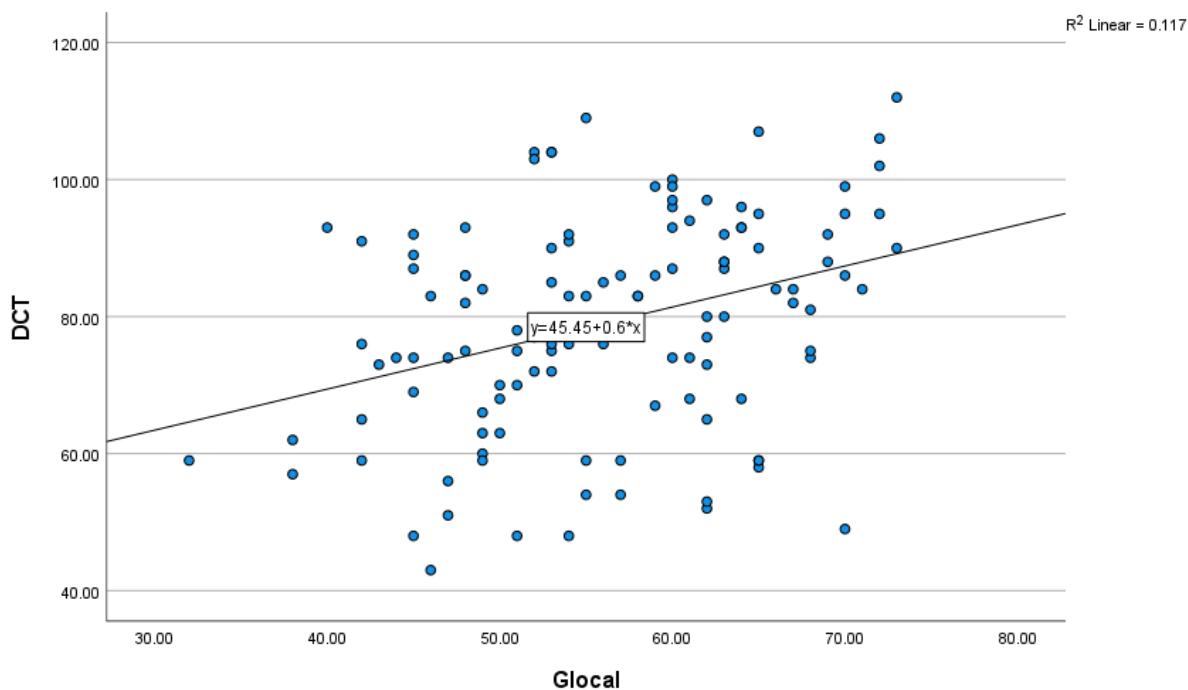


Figure 5. The scatter plot of glocal identity orientation and interlanguage pragmatic achievement.

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the identity orientation of EFL learners—categorized as global, local, and glocal—and to investigate how these orientations relate to their interlanguage pragmatic achievement. The analysis demonstrated that glocal identity orientation had the highest frequency among learners, followed by local and global orientations, and that only glocal identity showed a statistically significant positive relationship with pragmatic performance. These findings highlight the emerging centrality of hybridized identity positions in shaping EFL learners' linguistic behavior and pragmatic competence. The results further align with a growing body of research acknowledging that identity in language learning is not fixed but is fluid, context-dependent, and mediated by broader sociocultural forces (1, 2).

The predominance of glocal identity among learners reflects a broader social trend wherein learners simultaneously engage with global cultural flows while maintaining attachment to local sociocultural values. This pattern is consistent with the globalization framework, which posits that individuals increasingly negotiate between global influences and local expectations rather than adopting either orientation exclusively (7). In contexts where English is a foreign language but strongly present in education, media, and digital communication, learners naturally develop hybrid identity dimensions that incorporate both global aspirations and local belonging. Research in Iranian and Asian EFL environments similarly reveals that learners frequently adopt identity positions that allow them to integrate global competencies without undermining cultural or national identity (9, 12). The current findings further support the claim that EFL learners do not experience identity as a binary between global and local but, rather, as an ongoing negotiation resulting in blended identity expressions.

The significant association between glocal identity orientation and interlanguage pragmatic achievement suggests that learners who balance global and local values may develop greater sociolinguistic flexibility. Pragmatic competence requires the ability to interpret contextual cues, manage social relationships, and adopt culturally appropriate communicative strategies. Learners with glocal identity orientations likely draw on a broader range of cultural scripts, enabling them to respond more appropriately in English pragmatic situations while still maintaining an awareness of local relational norms. This interpretation

aligns with the notion that language learners' investment in English is shaped by how they position themselves socially and culturally (3). When learners perceive English both as a global resource and as a tool compatible with their local identity, they may be more motivated to refine the nuanced communicative skills associated with pragmatic competence.

Furthermore, empirical studies emphasize that identity orientations influence learner engagement, motivation, and willingness to communicate. Students who negotiate English in ways that preserve their cultural authenticity tend to demonstrate more sustainable motivation and confidence in communicative tasks (5). This could explain why glocal identity—instead of purely global identity—was most strongly associated with pragmatic performance in the study. The finding also resonates with work showing that learners who construct identities that allow for alignment with both global norms and local social expectations tend to display stronger agency and more adaptive language practices (16, 17). In contrast, learners with strongly global or strongly local identities may experience internal contradictions between desired linguistic practices and cultural expectations, reducing their pragmatic responsiveness.

The finding that neither global nor local identity orientations significantly predicted pragmatic achievement is also meaningful. Students with global identity orientations may emphasize international norms and global cultural values, but such orientations do not necessarily translate into pragmatic accuracy. Pragmatics is deeply contextual and often culture-specific, and depending solely on global perspectives may lead learners to overlook subtle sociocultural cues embedded within the English language. The literature suggests that global identification alone may not promote the sociopragmatic sensitivity required for effective communication, as learners may prioritize imagined global communities rather than actual pragmatic conventions (6). Additionally, global identity orientations may promote alignment with Western cultural norms, but this alignment does not automatically ensure competence in speech acts such as refusals, requests, or apologies, which require context-driven interpretation (11).

Similarly, local identity orientation did not show a significant positive relationship with pragmatic performance. Learners who maintain strong local identities may retain communicative patterns, sociocultural norms, and politeness expectations that differ from those of English-speaking environments. This tendency may lead to pragmatic transfer, where learners apply L1-based conventions to L2 contexts, sometimes resulting in pragmatic failure (24). Studies indicate that when learners are strongly oriented toward preserving local values without integrating global communicative norms, they may resist adopting pragmatic features associated with English due to concerns over cultural displacement or identity conflict (10). As a result, purely local orientation may not support learners in adopting the sociopragmatic norms embedded in English speech acts.

The strong performance of learners with glocal identities also aligns with the literature on teacher and student identity transformation in multilingual environments. Research shows that individuals who adopt intersectional or hybrid identity positions tend to navigate educational spaces with greater adaptability, particularly in multilingual classrooms (13, 18). Teachers and learners who occupy glocal identities often integrate multiple cultural frameworks, enabling them to negotiate language norms more flexibly. This dynamic sense of identity may also facilitate the development of pragmatic awareness, which requires responsiveness to both local expectations and global communicative standards. Similar patterns emerge in studies examining teacher identity transformations during rapid sociocultural changes, where hybrid identities enable more adaptive pedagogical and communicative practices (19).

In addition, the study's findings resonate with scholarship that positions language learning as a process of negotiating multiple identity dimensions, including ethnic identity, professional identity, and broader sociocultural affiliations. Research suggests that learners who perceive English as a tool for expanding social participation—while still maintaining cultural rootedness—tend to show more positive language-learning behaviors and communicative confidence (15, 20). The predominance of glocal identity in the present sample may thus reflect learners' awareness that English offers access to global

opportunities without necessarily undermining their cultural identity. This perspective aligns with research from multicultural contexts demonstrating that identity hybridity can function as a protective mechanism, reducing linguistic anxiety and increasing cultural adaptability (21).

The connection between glocal identity orientation and pragmatic performance also echoes findings in identity-reconstruction literature. For instance, research on learners' identity transformations in multilingual and transnational settings suggests that negotiating between global and local expectations allows individuals to engage in richer, more reflective identity work, which may enhance metalinguistic and metapragmatic awareness (8, 22). Learners who embrace both global and local cultural influences may develop more complex communicative repertoires, drawing on both the sociopragmatic norms of their L1 and the pragmatic expectations of English. This interplay can lead to more flexible and context-sensitive pragmatic decision-making.

Taken together, the findings of this study contribute to an enhanced understanding of the sociocultural and psychological dimensions of EFL learning. The results illustrate that identity is not merely an abstract construct but a meaningful psychological force shaping learners' pragmatic actions. They also highlight the pedagogical importance of recognizing identity orientations within the EFL classroom. As English becomes increasingly globalized, learners must negotiate complex cultural landscapes, and supporting glocal identity orientations may offer a pathway to more effective pragmatic development. The results also align with contemporary perspectives emphasizing that identity is central to learner motivation, agency, and communicative behavior (6, 23). In sum, glocal identity orientation appears to support a more balanced and contextually informed approach to pragmatic competence, whereas purely global or purely local orientations may not equip learners with the flexibility needed to navigate complex communicative environments.

This study was limited by its sample size and geographic concentration, as all participants were drawn from a single region, potentially limiting generalizability. The reliance on self-report measures for identity orientation may also introduce subjective bias. Additionally, the DCT format, while widely used, cannot fully replicate authentic communicative interactions. The cross-sectional design prevents examination of identity changes over time, and future studies may benefit from longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to capture dynamic identity shifts.

Future research should investigate identity orientation in more diverse sociocultural settings and compare patterns across different linguistic communities. Longitudinal studies could explore how glocal identity develops over time and how it interacts with evolving pragmatic competence. Further work might also examine identity orientations through qualitative methods such as interviews or narrative analysis to capture richer identity-construction processes. Cross-cultural comparisons could shed light on how varying sociopolitical contexts shape the identity-pragmatics relationship.

Educators should design curricula that acknowledge and support hybrid identity orientations, encouraging learners to integrate global communicative skills with local cultural values. Classroom activities should promote cultural reflection, identity exploration, and pragmatic awareness. Teacher training programs can incorporate modules on identity-sensitive pedagogy, helping instructors recognize learners' diverse identity orientations and adapt instruction accordingly. Creating learning environments that validate cultural hybridity may enhance learner motivation, engagement, and pragmatic competence.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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