

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES IN STUDYING BRITISH AND AMERICAN CIVILIZATION MODULES: CASE OF FOURTH-YEAR STUDENTS AT ENS CONSTANTINE

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Abstract: This study explores the views, motivations, and challenges faced by fourth-year pre-service teachers at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Constantine (ENSC) as they engage with the British and American civilization course. Employing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 42 participants via an online questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire addressed four main areas: familiarity with the subject matter, perceived relevance, student engagement, and the effectiveness of instructional methods. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, with descriptive statistics revealing key trends in student responses. Findings show that while participants recognize the value of civilization courses for their academic growth and future teaching careers, many face difficulties with the complexity and breadth of historical content, as well as retaining information over time. Respondents also emphasized the positive impact of interactive, student-centered teaching strategies- especially those incorporating visual elements - in enhancing understanding and sustaining interest. These results provide valuable insights for refining the design and delivery of civilization courses within EFL teacher education programs. The study highlights the importance of adopting more practical, engaging, and pedagogically innovative approaches that effectively integrate historical knowledge with language teaching.

Keywords: British and American civilization, EFL , instructional strategies , teacher education

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1. Introduction

Language education is no longer limited to mastering grammatical rules and vocabulary; it inherently involves the teaching of culture, identity, and worldview. As globalization continues to shape educational priorities, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction is increasingly expected to integrate cultural and historical elements, particularly within modules such as British and American Civilization. In Algeria, where English is gaining prominence in academic and professional settings, the development of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is both timely and necessary.

Extensive research has examined the teaching of civilization within Algerian higher education, concentrating on English departments at universities. Conversely, teacher training institutions-such as ENS Constantine-have been largely overlooked, especially concerning the lived experiences of pre-service teachers engaging with British and American Civilization modules. This review seeks to address this gap by providing a foundation for investigating the perceptions, attitudes, and challenges faced by ENS Constantine students.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Civilization and Cultural Concepts

Defining the term civilization remains a complex and contested endeavour, particularly due to its interdisciplinary usage across fields such as anthropology, education, and language studies. Scholars argue that no single definition can fully encompass its rich and multifaceted meaning. As Daim, Yahiaoui, and Ouldyyerrou (2024) explain, it is more practical to describe the term contextually rather than seek a fixed definition. Etymologically, civilization derives from the Latin *civis* (citizen), with related terms like *civitas* (city-state) and *civilitas* (citizenship), reflecting early associations with urban society and civic life (Botz-Bornstein, 2012; Wundt, 1910, as cited in Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Over time, particularly in English-speaking academic contexts, the term has often been used interchangeably with culture, following Edward Tylor's anthropological influence despite the conceptual distinctions preserved in French and German traditions (Botz-Bornstein, 2012; Schafer, 2001). Huntington (1996) succinctly captures this convergence by referring to civilization as "a culture writ large" (p. 41), a view that underscores its broad scope encompassing social, political, and historical dimensions. This ongoing ambiguity is highlighted in Botz-Bornstein's (2012) article *Two Hundred Fifty Years of Confusion*, which documents the centuries-long conceptual overlap and debate. Such complexity necessitates a nuanced understanding for educators, particularly those tasked with teaching civilization-related content in language and social science curricula.

Once the inclusion of culture in language education is theoretically justified, it becomes essential to determine which aspects of culture should be prioritized in teaching. This consideration draws attention to the distinction between "Big C" and "small c" culture, which helps educators and curriculum designers identify the most relevant cultural content for EFL learners. Chastain (1976) distinguishes between "Big C" culture (literature, art, history) and "small c" culture (daily routines, gestures, values). This distinction supports curriculum design that promotes both high culture and everyday sociocultural fluency. However, Huntington (1996) defines civilization as "culture writ large," highlighting macro-level constructs like religion, collective memory, and value systems. This perspective validates the inclusion of civilization modules in EFL instruction and not just to teach facts, but to develop critical awareness of global systems and ideologies.

In a recent study, Lasekan et al. (2024) propose a cyclic vocabulary model integrating Big C and small c elements to foster sustainable language acquisition and intercultural competence. Their work underscores that cultural learning must be dynamic, reflective, and embedded within communicative contexts. While foundational theories emphasize dual dimensions of culture, textbook-driven and lecture-based delivery still dominates Algerian classrooms potentially limiting critical engagement.

2.2 Theoretical Foundations of Language, Culture, Civilization and ICC

Kramsch (1993) notes, “Language is not simply a system of rules and forms; it is a social practice that is deeply intertwined with culture, identity, and power” (p. 1). This view highlights the intrinsic connection between language and culture, emphasizing that language serves not only as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for expressing and shaping cultural identities. Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory supports this by highlighting how learning is mediated through social interaction and cultural context. Byram (1997) further argues that developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) requires integrating civilizational frameworks alongside linguistic forms. He defines ICC as “the ability to interact with people from another culture in a way which is appropriate and effective, enabling participants to achieve their goals in the interaction and to maintain positive relationships” (p. 3).

Supporting this perspective, Mebarki and Chelli (2024) found that Algerian EFL learners demonstrated relatively strong affective attitudes toward intercultural engagement but lacked sufficient intercultural knowledge and behavioral competence—highlighting the need to move beyond language forms and address deeper cultural frameworks in ICC development. Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is increasingly viewed as an essential component in foreign language education. Developing this competence at the pre-service level is crucial to ensure that future teachers can integrate intercultural understanding into their classrooms. Boualli and Hamadouche (2022) argue that achieving this goal requires significant curriculum reform, as well as careful planning and methodology to effectively implement intercultural training in teacher education institutions such as the ENSC. As they note, “Integrating intercultural training at the ENSC or any other school for teachers’ training in Algeria requires curriculum reforms by policy makers in addition to adequate planning and methodologies” (p. 679).

Postcolonial perspectives (Ashcroft et al., 2007) draw attention to power dynamics and historical representation in curricula, questioning which narratives are legitimized or excluded. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) expand this by advocating for pedagogies that encourage reflection on cultural practices and historical narratives. Benrabah (2013) links these theoretical constructs to identity politics and language education reforms. While theorists widely support cultural integration in EFL, practical implementation in Algerian institutions remains inconsistent, as later sections will show.

2.3 ICC in Teacher Education Institutions, Intercultural Competence and the Role of English in Algeria

In a study done with EFL pre-service teachers at Oran, Stambouli and Sarnou (2022) found that while Algerian pre-service EFL teachers value intercultural competence, many have not received adequate training to implement it effectively in the classroom. Algerian teacher training programs continue to face critical challenges, especially in aligning innovative approaches with practical classroom needs (Hadi, 2025). The development of teacher training programs in Algeria has undergone several phases, shaped by both historical context and educational reform. Following independence in 1962, teacher recruitment was driven more by necessity than qualification, as the country faced severe teacher shortages. As

Benmati (2008, as cited in Hadi, 2025) notes, early teacher appointments often lacked formal pedagogical preparation, reflecting the urgency of rebuilding the education system. Over time, however, the Ministry of Education introduced more structured approaches, including the creation of dedicated training institutions and the integration of teacher preparation into higher education through the Écoles Normales Supérieures (ENS). These reforms were further supported by competitive selection procedures and expanded course modules covering key pedagogical, psychological, and technological competencies (Hadi, 2025). The shift from traditional to innovative programs marked a deliberate effort to balance theory with practice and respond to changing classroom demands.

English in Algeria is increasingly associated with openness, internationalization, and economic mobility (Nesba & Ghedeir (2024). Digital exposure and online interactions reinforce cultural tolerance and reshape learner identity (Babah & Boumediene, 2024). For example, Zitouni (2019) found that students at Batna 2 University showed increased assertiveness and intercultural awareness after sustained English study. Moreover, Louahala (2023) demonstrated that virtual exchanges boost students' appreciation of cultural diversity. While these findings are promising, their transferability to ENS Constantine remains underexplored, further justifying the need for this case-specific investigation.

2.4 Civilization in Teacher Education and Training Programs

ICC and Civilization in Teacher Training require a comprehensive understanding of civilization content as an essential component of pre-service teachers' profile, not only because cultural awareness constitutes a foundational element of effective pedagogy, but also because these individuals will be responsible for conveying such content to middle and high school students upon entering the teaching profession. Mastery of civilizational knowledge enables future educators to deliver instruction with confidence and accuracy, thereby effectively bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application in the classroom.

Following independence in 1962, Algeria prioritized teacher training to replace colonial personnel. Institutions like ENS (École Normale Supérieure), including ENS Constantine, adapted the French "École Normale" framework into localized models combining pedagogy and academic content (Lansari, W. C. C., & Haddam Bouabdallah, F. (2022). Despite reforms, a disconnect between theory and practice persists. Cultural instruction is still marginalized (Boulanouar & Keskes, 2020), and teachers report difficulties in linking civilization content to language instruction (Hamidi, 2025). These shortcomings are echoed by fourth-year pre-service teachers at ENS Constantine, who often express uncertainty about how to translate civilizational knowledge into classroom strategies a gap this study will address. A significant portion of civilization-related content is already embedded within secondary school English language curricula, reflecting its pedagogical relevance. Daim, Yahiaoui, and Ouldyyerrou (2024) report that civilization accounts for approximately 25% of the content in third-year textbooks used in literary and foreign language streams. Their analysis demonstrates that these materials are structured to enhance linguistic proficiency through culturally and contextually grounded content, rather than treating language acquisition as a decontextualized process. Furthermore, the study indicates that 89.18% of the cultural content represents world civilizations, in contrast to only 10.81% dedicated to the target culture, thereby supporting a transition from a monocultural model to an intercultural framework (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993). This emphasis on diverse civilizational perspectives underscores the importance of cultivating students' intercultural competence. Consequently, the presence of such content not only affirms the educational value of civilization studies but also reinforces the need for preservice teacher training and curriculum

design to prioritize civilization as a core component—complementing broader efforts to promote cultural awareness and globally informed language education.

2.5 Civilization Courses in Algerian EFL education: Pedagogical Approaches, Challenges and Reforming

Despite technological and curricular reforms, many civilization courses remain teacher-centered and resist interactive methodologies (Ouahmiche & Bensaad, 2016). Daim et al. (2024) criticize the disjointed treatment of language and culture, advocating instead for a unified, theme-based model. Scholars such as Ahmadi Mehdaoui (2015) and Louahala (2017) recommend problem-solving and thematic units that prompt cultural reflection and discussion—approaches aligned with ICC development. The lack of systemic implementation and training often forces ENS Constantine instructors to rely on outdated delivery models, despite student readiness for change. Historically, civilization courses were lecture-heavy and fact-based (Baghdadi et al., 2022). Ghaffour and Chehri (2024) critique this model and argue for an intercultural approach that fosters critical thinking and student engagement. Recent reforms have started to introduce intercultural components into syllabi and textbooks (Bouafi, 2024), though inconsistently across institutions. Digital tools like mobile apps and social media platforms show positive outcomes in vocabulary acquisition and cultural immersion (Benlaghrissi & Ouahidi, 2023; Wu & Marek, 2017). Touatit and Mezhoud (2025) specifically highlight that ENS Constantine must equip its pre-service teachers with hands-on digital training to make civilization instruction more interactive.

Nowadays, Problem-Based Learning (PBL) has shown promise in promoting learner autonomy and cultural awareness (Qondias et al., 2022). In the context of ENS Constantine, students report higher engagement when working on projects involving cultural comparisons or historical debates. While tech and PBL are gradually entering classrooms, they often remain optional or instructor-dependent, leaving pre-service teachers underprepared for consistent, innovative teaching.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research context

This study explores fourth-year pre-service teachers' perceptions and challenges in studying British and American civilization at ENS Constantine. By understanding their attitudes, perceived relevance, and instructional experiences, this research contributes to refining teacher education curricula to be both culturally meaningful and pedagogically effective. Therefore, it seeks to explore how fourth-year pre-service teachers at ENS Constantine perceive the British and American Civilization course, including its relevance, challenges, and impact on their linguistic and intercultural development.

The research is guided by the following questions:

RQ 01. What are the attitudes of fourth-year pre-service teachers at ENS Constantine towards studying British and American Civilization, and how do they perceive its relevance to their future teaching practices?

RQ 2. What challenges do pre-service teachers face in learning British and American Civilization, and what aspects of the course do they find most difficult?

RQ 3. How do fourth-year pre-service teachers at ENS Constantine perceive the impact of British and American Civilization modules on their linguistic development and intercultural competence?

3.2 Research design and sample population

The nature of this research necessitates a quantitative approach to examine pre-service teachers' perceptions, motivation, and challenges in studying British and American civilization at ENSC. It is widely acknowledged in social and behavioral sciences that questionnaires are carefully designed to capture participants' perspectives, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter under investigation. Hence, A structured questionnaire was employed as the primary data collection tool to provide measurable insights into students' engagement levels, perceived difficulties, and instructional preferences. By analyzing pre-service teachers' responses, the study seeks to identify key factors influencing their attitudes toward British and American civilization and to propose effective pedagogical strategies.

The target population consists of fourth-year pre-service teachers enrolled at ENSC during the 2024/2025 academic year. The total student population for this cohort is approximately 100, from which a sample of 42 students voluntarily participated in the study by responding to the online questionnaire.

The choice of a survey-based methodology is justified by its ability to quantify attitudes, perceptions, and challenges, allowing for a systematic interpretation of trends. Additionally, the study acknowledges the limitations of self-reported data and the influence of external variables that may affect students' responses. However, the structured nature of the questionnaire ensures reliability and consistency in data collection.

3.3 Description of the questionnaire sections

A 21-item questionnaire was designed to explore students' engagement with British and American civilization, their perceived difficulties, and their suggestions for improving course delivery. The questionnaire was structured into four sections:

1. Demographic Information ;Gathering data on gender, academic background, and prior knowledge of British and American civilization.
2. Attitudes Toward Studying British and American Civilization; Assessing students' interest, motivation, and perceived relevance of the subject.
3. Perceived Difficulties in Learning British and American Civilization ; Identifying specific challenges related to content complexity, information retention, and instructional methods.
4. Attitudes Toward the Current Course and Suggestions for Improvement ;Examining students' satisfaction with the course and their recommendations for more effective teaching strategies.

The questionnaire predominantly employed a five-point Likert scale, allowing for a nuanced analysis of students' attitudes and perceptions. Multiple-choice and open-ended questions were also included to provide qualitative insights into students' learning experiences.

3.4 Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was administered online to ensure accessibility and convenience for participants. A total of 42 responses were collected and subjected to detailed analysis. To systematically interpret the quantitative data, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized. SPSS enabled the computation of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, which facilitated the identification of key trends and patterns related to students' engagement, perceived difficulties, and instructional preferences.

The use of SPSS also allowed for reliable data management and ensured the accuracy of statistical computations, supporting a rigorous examination of the study's research questions. While this study primarily focuses on quantitative analysis, it acknowledges the value of triangulation and suggests that future research might integrate qualitative methods, such as interviews or focus groups, to complement and enrich the findings. By adopting this structured and systematic approach, the study aims to provide evidence-based insights to inform curriculum development and enhance the teaching of British and American civilization within the ENSC teacher education program.

4. Results

4.1. Sample distribution by gender

According to the responses, the sample consisted entirely of female participants 42 individuals, which represents 100% of the total, which aligns with broader trends of higher female representation in teaching-related fields and may shape the study's insights accordingly.

1. I was in the following stream during high school

The information provided by the students indicates that the majority of respondents (64.3%) were in the Foreign Languages stream during high school. The results indicate that most participants likely had a strong focus on language-related subjects, which may explain their interest or performance in language-related studies. 21.4% came from a Scientific Stream, representing the second-largest group. This indicates a significant presence of students with a scientific background. Only 9.5% studied Literature and Philosophy, and 4.8% were from Math Techniques, showing that these streams were much less represented in the sample.

2. I am familiar with British and American civilization prior to enrolling in this course

Concerning the degree of familiarity with British and American civilization, the majority of respondents (64.3%) reported being somewhat familiar with British and American civilization before taking the course. This indicates that while most students had some prior exposure, their knowledge was likely general or superficial. 23.8% of the participants were not familiar at all, which suggests nearly a quarter entered the course without any background knowledge. These students may require more foundational support in early lessons. Only 11.9% were VERY familiar with British and American civilization showing that only a small portion of the group had strong pre-existing knowledge, possibly from previous studies, personal interest, or independent learning.

3. Please indicate your level of interest in learning about British and American civilization

The survey results reveal that, the majority of respondents (42.9%) reported being moderately interested in learning about British and American civilization. The results show that a solid baseline of engagement, with potential for growth through relevant and engaging course content. A significant proportion (31.0%) indicated being very interested, and an additional 7.1% were extremely interested. Altogether, this means nearly 4 in 5 students (81.0%) have at least a moderate to strong interest in the topic. On the other end, only 4.8% were not interested at all, and 14.3% were only slightly interested. This indicates that disinterest is relatively rare among the group.

4. British and American civilization is important for future teachers to study

A vast majority (76.2%) of respondents (Agree or Strongly Agree) believe that British and American civilization is important for future teachers. This demonstrates broad recognition of the value of cultural and historical knowledge in language education or teaching careers. However, 16.7% of participants remained neutral, possibly reflecting uncertainty about the topic's relevance or a lack of information. Only a small minority (7.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting limited opposition to this idea.

5. The British and American civilization module is motivating and enjoyable

A majority of students (64.3%) responded positively (Agree or Strongly Agree) that the British and American civilization module is motivating and enjoyable. This suggests that the module is generally well-received and able to capture learners' interest. 16.7% of respondents were neutral, possibly reflecting a more passive or undecided experience with the module. A combined 19.1% (Strongly Disagree and Disagree) expressed negative views indicating that some students find the content, method of delivery, or evaluation aspects less engaging or irrelevant.

6. Learning about British and American civilization contributes to my understanding of the world and culture

Almost all respondents (95.2%) either agree or strongly agree that learning about British and American civilization enhances their understanding of the world and culture. This overwhelming positive response underscores the perceived global and cultural value of the module. No respondents (0%) were neutral or disagreed, indicating clear consensus and engagement with the module's broader educational goals. Only 2 students (4.8%) strongly disagreed, which may reflect individual negative experiences or disconnects with the material.

7. My knowledge of British and American civilization will impact my future teaching practices

Table 01 :

Impact of knowledge of British and American civilization on future teaching practices

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	3	7.1
Disagree	6	14.3
Neutral	6	14.3
Agree	22	52.4
Strongly Agree	5	11.9
Total	42	100.0

A majority of respondents (64.3%) (Agree + Strongly Agree) believe that their knowledge of British and American civilization will influence their future teaching practices. This indicates that most students recognize a practical and pedagogical relevance of the course content. 14.3% of students were neutral, possibly unsure how directly this knowledge will apply in classroom contexts or what teaching roles they will hold in the future. However, 21.4% (Strongly Disagree + Disagree) expressed doubt or disagreement, indicating that about 1 in 5 students are skeptical about the module's relevance to their teaching careers.

8. *British and American civilization is relevant to my overall teacher education program*

Half of the participants 50% of respondents (Agree + Strongly Agree) believe that British and American civilization is relevant to their overall teacher education program, indicating that half of the students see a clear connection between this module and their training as future teachers. However, a significant minority (23.8%) are neutral, possibly unsure about the module's practical utility in relation to broader teaching competencies. Moreover, 26.2% (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) feel that the module is not relevant to their teacher education program. This is the highest level of disagreement among all the items analysed so far, suggesting a notable level of disconnect for some students.

9. *I find the British and American civilization course overall difficult*

Table 02:

Difficulty of the British and American civilization course

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1	2.4
Disagree	14	33.3
Neutral	8	19.0
Agree	15	35.7
Strongly Agree	4	9.5
Total	42	100.0

Findings show that 45.2% of respondents (Agree + Strongly Agree) find the course difficult overall, indicating that nearly half of the students perceive notable challenges with the content, teaching methods, or assessment style. On the other hand, 35.7% (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) do not find it difficult, suggesting that experiences vary, potentially based on academic background, language level, or learning strategies. 19.0% of students remained neutral, which might reflect mixed experiences or uncertainty about the level of difficulty.

10. For me, the following aspects of the British and American civilization course are the most challenging? Please tick the most relevant options. (Multi responses)

Table 03 :

Most challenging aspects of the British and American civilization course

Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Memorizing large amounts of information	33	33.7%
Remembering dates and names	25	25.5%
Understanding complex concepts	7	7.1%
Lack of prior knowledge on certain topics	15	15.3%
Understanding the chronology of events	9	9.2%
Connecting historical events to modern-day issues	7	7.1%
Using critical thinking skills for essays	1	1.0%
Boring teachers with boring explanations	1	1.0%
Total	98	100%

The most commonly reported difficulty was memorizing large amounts of information (33.7%). This aligns with the nature of the course, which often requires retention of facts, names, historical events, and themes. Remembering dates and names was also a major challenge (25.5%), showing that factual detail is a significant hurdle for many students. Lack of prior knowledge (15.3%) confirms findings from Q3, where a significant portion had limited background in British and American civilization. Lesser-but still notable-challenges include: Understanding chronology (9.2%), Complex concepts and critical thinking connections (both 7.1%). Only 1% of responses mentioned teacher performance or essay writing in sophisticated language as main difficulties, suggesting these are not widespread concerns.

11. I believe the module of British and American civilization is too vast and overwhelming

A combined portion (50 %/ Agree + Strongly Agree) of students feel that the module is too vast and overwhelming, indicating that half the group finds the content heavy or extensive. 31.0% were neutral, which may reflect mixed feelings or uncertainty about the module's scope. Only 19.1% (Disagree + Strongly Disagree) disagree with the idea that the module is too vast, suggesting that relatively few students find it well-balanced or manageable as it is currently structured.

12. *I review or re-read the course materials to prepare for exams or assignments*

Table 04:

Review or re-reading of course materials

Study Frequency	Frequency	Percent
Just before the exam or assignment	19	45.2
Occasionally (once a week or less)	18	42.9
Frequently (more than once a week)	5	11.9
Total	42	100.0

Nearly half (45.2%) of the students only review course materials right before exams or assignments, indicating last-minute or reactive study habits. 42.9% review materials occasionally, suggesting they engage with the content sporadically throughout the term. Only a small minority (11.9%) report frequent and consistent study habits.

13. *I typically use the following study techniques to learn British and American civilization: (Select all that apply)*

Table 05:

Study techniques used to learn British and American civilization

Study Technique	Frequency	Percent
Taking notes during lectures	35	31.5%
Revising lecture handouts	40	36.0%
Reading books or articles	5	4.5%
Watching documentaries or videos	23	20.7%
Group study sessions	7	6.3%
Summarising and simplifying with AI	1	0.9%
Total	111	100.0%

The most commonly used techniques are Revising lecture handouts (36.0%) as well as Taking notes during lectures (31.5%). These results suggest that students rely heavily on instructor-provided materials and classroom content. Watching documentaries or videos (20.7%) ranks third, indicating some students seek multimedia sources to support understanding, possibly to simplify complex content or add context. Group study sessions (6.3%) and reading academic sources (4.5%) are less common, suggesting limited peer collaboration or independent, in-depth exploration beyond the syllabus. Only 1 student (0.9%) reported using AI tools to summarize or simplify the course, showing that this method is almost absent among current study habits.

14. The following materials or resources are currently used in the British and American civilization course: (Select all that apply)

Table06:

<i>Materials or resources currently used in the British and American civilization course</i>		
Resource	Frequency	Percent
Documentaries and films	13	10.7%
Handouts	42	34.4%
Articles and book chapters	42	34.4%
PowerPoint presentations	10	8.2%
Pictures and photographs	14	11.5%
Models and historical artefacts	1	0.8%
Total	122	100.0%

The most frequently used resources are handouts and articles/book chapters, both making up 34.4% of total responses. This suggests the course is largely text-based and lecture-driven, relying on reading materials and summaries provided by instructors. Visual aids like pictures/photographs (11.5%) and documentaries/films (10.7%) are used moderately, which adds a multimedia dimension to the course, but not extensively. PowerPoint presentations (8.2%) are less common, indicating lectures may be more traditional or lacking in structured slide-based support. Only 1 response (0.8%) mentioned models or historical artefacts, showing an almost complete absence of tangible or interactive resources.

15. I believe the following methods are most effective for learning British and American civilization: (Please tick the most relevant options)

Table07:

<i>Most effective methods for learning British and American civilization</i>		
Method	Frequency	Percent
Storytelling and narrative	1	2.1%
Use of visual aids (documentaries, images, maps)	27	57.4%
Project-based learning (presentations, re-enactments)	18	38.3%
Translation / chat GPT summaries	1	2.1%
Total	47	100.0%

According to students, Visual aids are clearly seen as the most effective learning method, with 57.4% of respondents selecting this option. This supports earlier findings (Q14–Q15) where students showed strong preference for multimedia tools and visual resources to make historical content more engaging and easier to understand. Project-based learning is the second most preferred method (38.3%), showing that many students value interactive, student-centred approaches like: Presentations, Role plays or re-enactments, Hands-on tasks. Only 2.1% each selected storytelling/narrative and translation/AI summaries, suggesting these methods are either underutilized or less trusted by students in this specific course context.

16. To what extent do you believe the English language and British and American history are connected?

Table08:

Belief in the connection between the English language and British and American history

Extent of Connection	Frequency	Percent
To a Small Extent	1	2.4%
To Some Extent	18	42.9%
To a Great Extent	17	40.5%
Highly Interconnected	6	14.3%
Total	42	100.0%

A very strong majority of respondents (97.6%) believe there is at least some level of connection between the English language and British and American history, 42.9% believe they are connected to some extent, 40.5% say to a great extent, 14.3% believe they are highly interconnected. Only one respondent (2.4%) believes the connection is minimal, suggesting that the link between language and history is widely acknowledged by students.

16. I believe the following materials or resources should be used in the British and American civilization course: (Select all that apply)"

Table 09:

Preferred materials or resources for the British and American civilization course

Preferred Resource	Frequency	Percent
Documentaries and films	34	42.0%
Interactive websites and online resources	21	25.9%
Pictures and photographs	19	23.5%
Models and historical artefacts	6	7.4%
Historical plays to learn new vocab	1	1.2%
Total	81	100.0%

According to participants responses, the most preferred resource is documentaries and films (42.0%), reaffirming students' consistent interest in visual, real-life, and narrative-based content (as seen in Q14, Q15, and Q16). Interactive websites and online resources (25.9%) come second, suggesting students want more digital and engaging tools, such as virtual museums, historical simulations, and online timelines. Pictures and photographs (23.5%) are also popular, reinforcing the importance of visual representation in understanding historical events and figures. Only 7.4% selected models and artefacts, and 1.2% favoured historical plays, indicating that tangible or performance-based learning tools are less in demand, though this may also reflect unfamiliarity rather than disinterest.

17. The following activities would help me better understand the material in the British and American civilization course: (Select all that apply)

Table10:

Activities that help students better understand course material

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Museum visits and tours	17	22.1%
Expert guest lectures or conferences	20	26.0%
Drama-based activities (role-playing, re-enactments)	16	20.8%
Collaborative research projects	24	31.2%
Total	77	100.0%

Students' most preferred activity is collaborative research projects (31.2%), indicating that students value active, team-based, and investigative learning experiences that allow deeper exploration of topics. Expert guest lecturers or academic conferences (26.0%) are also highly valued, showing interest in hearing from specialists and gaining real-world insights beyond textbook content. Museum visits and tours (22.1%) and drama-based activities (20.8%) are both appreciated as experiential learning methods, offering students a more engaging, immersive way to understand history and culture.

19. During my experience studying British and American civilization in my teacher preparation program, I am:

A strong majority of students (81.0%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with their experience studying British and American civilization. 14.3% are dissatisfied, and a small group (4.8%) are very dissatisfied, suggesting that about 1 in 5 students did not have a fully positive experience. However, the dominant sentiment is positive, which reflects well on the overall delivery of the course within the teacher preparation program.

20. Please provide any additional comments or suggestions about your experience with the British and American civilization course

Analysis of Students' Open-Ended Responses

Theme	Description	Representative Excerpt
Content overload	Students perceived the module as overly detailed and demanding, with some information considered irrelevant to teaching practice.	"The module was very overwhelming... there are a lot of details that are not necessary."
Teaching methods	Students emphasized that interest and understanding depend largely on instructional strategies and teacher competence.	"It depends on the teacher and his way of explaining the course."
Multimedia and technology use	Learners valued the use of documentaries, films, and AI tools to enhance comprehension and engagement.	"Using AI helped me better understand the lecture."
Cultural and linguistic enrichment	Many students recognized the role of the course in broadening cultural awareness and supporting language learning.	"It enriched my cultural knowledge and helped me be open to other cultures."
Learner attitudes and preferences	Students expressed varied personal interests, influencing their motivation toward the course.	"I prefer African civilization and I am more interested in didactic modules."

Analysis of the students' open-ended responses reveals that the prominent concern was **content overload**. Many considered the module as being excessively detailed and sometimes disconnected from teaching practice, which negatively affected engagement and comprehension. They also emphasized that their interest in the course largely depended on **teaching methods and instructor competence**. Interactive approaches, such as discussions, debates, research tasks, and multimedia use, were perceived positively, whereas less interactive methods were associated with reduced motivation.

Students further highlighted the value of **multimedia and technological tools**, including documentaries, films, and AI-based resources, which were seen as enhancing understanding and enjoyment. Attitudes toward the course varied, with some students questioning its relevance to the teaching career, while others reported high satisfaction and cultural enrichment. Students' feedback imply that there is a preference for authentic materials which reflect real life and context and can be motivating and engaging in the learning process. Overall, the findings suggest that optimizing course content and adopting interactive, student-centered teaching strategies are key to improving both learning outcomes and student satisfaction.

5. Discussion

5.1. Overall Satisfaction and Relevance

A large majority of students (81%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the course (Q20). Most students (76.2%) agreed that studying British and American civilization is important for future teachers (Q5), and 64.3% believe it will have a direct impact on their teaching practices (Q8). However, only 50% felt the module is strongly connected to their overall teacher training (Q9), with a notable 26.2% disagreeing, pointing to a perceived disconnect between the course content and practical teacher preparation.

5.2. Interest, Motivation, and Perceived Value

Students expressed strong interest in the subject: 81% reported being moderately to extremely interested in learning about British and American civilization (Q4). An overwhelming 95.2% agreed that the module contributes to their understanding of world culture (Q7), showing high perceived academic and cultural value. Despite its value, only 64.3% found the course motivating and enjoyable (Q6), indicating room to improve engagement and delivery methods.

5.3. Difficulties and Challenges

45.2% of students find the course overall difficult (Q10), with 50% describing it as vast and overwhelming (Q12). The biggest challenges (Q11) include:

Memorizing large amounts of information (33.7%)

Remembering dates and names (25.5%)

Lack of prior knowledge (15.3%)

These issues align with the fact that most students (88.1%) only review materials occasionally or just before exams (Q13), reflecting reactive rather than consistent study habits.

5.4. Teaching Materials and Study Techniques

Students mostly rely on handouts (34.4%) and articles/book chapters (34.4%) (Q15). The most common study techniques are revising handouts (36%) and taking notes (31.5%), with only 4.5% reading external books or articles and even fewer using AI tools (Q14). This indicates a text-heavy and teacher-dependent approach, which may limit engagement and critical thinking.

4.5. Preferred Learning Methods and Suggestions

Students strongly favour visual aids (57.4%) and project-based learning (38.3%) as the most effective methods for studying civilization (Q16). They want more use of documentaries and films (42%), interactive websites (25.9%), and pictures (23.5%) (Q18). Suggested activities that would enhance learning include:

Collaborative research projects (31.2%)

Guest lectures (26%)

Museum visits (22.1%) (Q19)

These responses show a clear preference for multimedia, experiential, and participatory learning over purely lecture-based instruction.

4.6. Language and Cultural Awareness

Nearly 97.6% of students acknowledged a connection between the English language and British and American history (Q17), which reinforces the legitimacy of including cultural and historical content in language teacher education programs.

4.7. Alignment with Prior Research and Theory

The findings of this study largely align with existing research both within Algeria and internationally. Consistent with the work of Ouahmiche and Bensaad (2016) and Louahala (2017), this study highlights how teacher-centred instructional approaches and an overwhelming content load contribute to student disengagement and difficulties in mastering civilization topics. Moreover, students' preference for interactive and multimodal teaching strategies supports pedagogical recommendations from Toulgui (2014), Elaggoune (2015), and Elban (2017), emphasizing the importance of more engaging, student-centred learning environments.

However, the findings also reveal some differences. Specifically, participants perceive a clear gap between the civilization course content and its practical relevance to their teacher training an issue that has received limited attention in prior Algerian research. The relatively limited use of external resources and AI tools among students contrasts with trends observed in some international studies, where digital literacy is more widely integrated into the learning process (Grever et al., 2011).

The findings also offer valuable theoretical insights. They support sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) by underscoring the critical role of interactive, socially mediated learning experiences in fostering student understanding and motivation. The recognition of culture as an essential component of language education aligns with Kramsch's (1993) perspective on the inseparability of language and culture. At the same time, challenges related to content overload and rote memorization highlight limitations of traditional "Big C" culture-focused curricula, echoing Huntington's (1996) call for more nuanced and inclusive approaches to cultural instruction.

In summary, the findings both confirm established theories and pedagogical insights while drawing attention to specific contextual factors within the ENS Constantine environment. These nuances point to the need for tailored instructional reforms to better meet the needs of pre-service teachers.

6. Recommendations

Based on students' feedback and the challenges identified, several recommendations were proposed to improve the teaching and learning of British and American civilization. To enhance students' engagement and understanding, participants suggested diversifying teaching materials by incorporating more documentaries, timelines, interactive maps, and digital tools to complement traditional handouts and articles. In order to promote active learning, the participants were in favour of incorporating role-playing, group projects, historical re-enactments, and problem-solving tasks to boost motivation. Enhancing practical integration is also essential to explicitly link civilization content to teaching practice—e.g., designing classroom activities that incorporate historical or cultural themes. Pedagogical implications should support study strategies which encourage ongoing study habits, provide summaries, visual overviews, and train students to use AI or digital resources effectively.

However, reducing the course overload is required; the content should be broken down into clearer thematic units in order to emphasize understanding over memorization.

7. Conclusion

This study has provided important insights into how fourth-year pre-service teachers at ENS Constantine perceive and engage with the British and American civilization course. While students acknowledge the academic and cultural value of the module—particularly its role in enhancing their understanding of global cultures and informing their future teaching practices—significant challenges remain. Chief among these are the overwhelming volume of content, difficulties with memorization, and a perceived disconnect between theoretical knowledge and practical application in teacher training.

Findings indicate a strong student preference for interactive, visual, and student-centred instructional strategies over traditional lecture-based methods. Participants expressed a clear need for a more engaging and relevant learning experience, supported by multimedia tools, collaborative projects, and experiential learning opportunities. These preferences align with sociocultural learning theories and contemporary pedagogical recommendations advocating for active, contextualized learning environments.

To enhance the effectiveness of civilization courses, it is essential to redesign the curriculum with greater thematic clarity, reduce content overload, and strengthen the connection between cultural knowledge and language teaching practice. Promoting ongoing study habits, digital literacy, and the strategic use of AI tools can also support deeper learning and critical engagement. Ultimately, tailoring instructional methods to better suit students' needs and learning contexts will help ensure that civilization courses remain a meaningful and integral part of EFL teacher education programs.

In summary, this article examined the evolution of civilization instruction in Algerian EFL education, reviewed key pedagogical theories and local studies, and presented empirical findings from a quantitative study at ENS Constantine. Through analysis of students' attitudes, challenges, and instructional preferences, the study highlighted the urgent need for pedagogical reform. It also proposed actionable recommendations to improve content delivery, enhance intercultural competence, and align the course with pre-service teachers' future professional needs.

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