

Navigating Linguistic and Cultural Duality: The Impact of Internationalization on Moroccan Higher Education

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Abstract: The Moroccan higher education system is marked by its linguistic diversity, with Arabic, French, and the rising prominence of English as key languages of instruction. Cross-border academic programs amplify these linguistic complexities while introducing new cultural dimensions. This study explored the linguistic and cultural dynamics within cross-border academic programs. It focused on Moroccan graduate students in Fulbright programs partnered with foreign universities, examining how language proficiency and cultural adaptation influence academic success and experiences. A stratified sample of 36 participants from four Moroccan open access universities was selected based on their language of instruction and discipline. A mixed-methods approach combined quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups. Quantitative analysis linked English proficiency to academic performance, while qualitative themes highlighted language barriers, cultural exchange, and adaptation strategies. The findings emphasized the central role of language in academic outcomes and adaptation, while addressing challenges of cultural duality in cross-border education, offering insights into navigating multilingualism and cultural hybridity in a globalized academic context.

Keywords: Multilingualism, Cross-border academic programs, Cultural exchange, Cultural adaptation, and Language proficiency.

I. Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The higher education system in Morocco is characterized by a complex linguistic and cultural diversity shaped by its historical context and evolving societal dynamics. The country's rich cultural heritage is reflected in the multilingual nature of its educational institutions, where Arabic, French, Amazigh, and, increasingly, English coexist as languages of instruction and scholarly communication. This linguistic multiplicity, influenced by Morocco's colonial past and its current aspirations toward global integration, presents unique challenges and opportunities, particularly in the realm of higher education (Boukous, 2012; Ennaji, 2005). Moroccan universities, key institutions in Moroccan academia, serve as a microcosm of this broader national context, embodying the intersection of local and global influences within its linguistic landscape.

Arabic, particularly Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), has historically been the cornerstone of Morocco's educational and administrative systems. As the language of the Qur'an and Islamic scholarship, Arabic holds deep cultural and religious significance within Moroccan society. The use of Classical Arabic in education dates back to the Almoravid and Almohad dynasties, where it was the language of administration, religion, and scholarly activity (Benrabah, 2014).

In the post-colonial period, Arabic was reaffirmed as the official language of the state and a symbol of national identity, playing a critical role in both public administration and education (Bouquet, 2020). This alignment with national identity is central to the post-independence Arabization policies, which sought to reduce the influence of the French language and reassert Arabic in educational institutions (Elbiad, 1985).

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French, however, remained a dominant language in higher education, particularly in fields such as the sciences, law, and certain branches of the humanities. During the French Protectorate (1912–1956), Morocco's education system was restructured to serve the colonial administration's interests, with French as the primary language of instruction in newly established schools and universities.

After independence in 1956, despite the Arabization efforts, French retained its privileged status, especially in elite academic and professional domains. By the 1970s, French had become entrenched as the language of scientific and technical instruction in Morocco's universities, positioning the country within the Francophone world (Caubet, 1998; Ennaji, 2005). French proficiency remained a marker of elite status and access to global academic and professional networks, creating a bilingual dynamic in Moroccan higher education (Sadiqi, 1991).

The Arabization policy aimed to expand Arabic's role in education, replacing French in many subject areas. However, this shift encountered significant challenges, especially in scientific and technical disciplines, where French has remained dominant due to the lack of adequate resources and training materials in Arabic (Bouayad Agha, 2011). The complex interplay between Arabic and French continues to define Morocco's higher education landscape, with French serving as a gateway to global academia and international collaboration, while Arabic retains its central role in public life and national identity.

The Amazigh language, spoken by Morocco's indigenous population, represents a crucial but historically marginalized component of Morocco's linguistic diversity (El Aissati, 2016). While Amazigh has been spoken in Morocco for centuries, it was not officially recognized until the early 21st century, following sustained efforts by Amazigh activists advocating for cultural and linguistic rights (Boukhars, 2010). The 2001 Royal Institute of Amazigh Culture (IRCAM) was established to promote the teaching and preservation of Amazigh, marking a significant milestone in its institutional recognition.

In 2011, Morocco's constitution granted Amazigh official language status alongside Arabic, formally integrating it into the national educational framework (Ennaji, 2005). However, its impact on higher education has been limited. The integration of Amazigh into the educational system has largely been confined to primary and secondary education, with higher education institutions offering only limited programs or courses in Amazigh language and culture (Ennaji, 2003). The underrepresentation of Amazigh in Moroccan universities reflects broader challenges in the implementation of language policies and the marginalization of non-dominant languages in academia.

English, on the other hand, has emerged as a crucial language in Moroccan higher education over the last few decades, driven largely by the forces of globalization and the internationalization of academia (Sadiqi, 1991). Unlike Arabic and French, whose roles are shaped by Morocco's colonial history and cultural identity, English is primarily linked to global economic, scientific, and technological advancement. Morocco's increasing engagement with global markets and international institutions has fueled a growing demand for English proficiency, particularly in business, technology, and academic research.

English's rise in Morocco is closely tied to international collaborations and cross-border academic programs, particularly with universities in Europe and North America (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). The expansion of English-language programs in Moroccan universities, especially in disciplines such as business, science, and humanities, has made English a key medium for accessing global knowledge and participating in international academic networks. English is also perceived as a neutral language in Morocco's linguistic landscape, unassociated with colonial or nationalist politics, which makes it more readily accepted as a tool for global communication and academic progress (Ennaji, 2005).

Different institutions in Morocco have served as representative cases of this trend. These institutions have witnessed a steady increase in student enrollment and the development of partnerships with international universities that emphasize English as the primary medium of instruction and research. These partnerships, primarily with European and North American institutions, have positioned English not only as a tool for accessing global knowledge but also as a marker of academic prestige and international relevance (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015). This shift reflects the growing perception of English as a language of upward social mobility and academic competitiveness, both locally and internationally (Zouhir, 2020).

The internationalization of Moroccan higher education, in particular, has reshaped the linguistic landscape of higher education institutions in Morocco. According to Knight (2004), internationalization

refers to the process of integrating an international or intercultural dimension into the teaching, research, and service functions of higher education institutions. In Morocco, this has been manifested through academic exchanges, joint degree programs, and research collaborations with foreign universities, most of which operate predominantly in English. These partnerships have introduced new linguistic dynamics, requiring Moroccan students and faculty to adapt to English as an academic language while navigating the socio-cultural implications of operating in a foreign linguistic and intellectual tradition (Ammor, 2016).

The growing emphasis on English within internationalized programs creates a dual linguistic and cultural challenge for Moroccan academia. On one hand, English is seen as a vehicle for accessing global knowledge and enhancing academic competitiveness. On the other hand, it raises concerns about the erosion of the Arabic and French languages and the marginalization of local cultural and intellectual traditions (Bouayad Agha, 2011). In this context, the English department at the faculties of Letters and Humanities in Morocco serve as a crucial site for exploring how Moroccan students and faculty navigate the dualities of language and culture in the face of internationalization. As English becomes increasingly central to their academic and professional aspirations, understanding the linguistic and cultural adaptations required by these shifts is essential for shaping future educational policies and practices (Wahba, Taha, & England, 2014).

This study seeks to explore the impact of internationalization and cross-border academic programs on the linguistic practices and cultural identities of students in the English department at different Moroccan open access universities. By examining how they adapt to the demands of operating in an English-medium academic environment while maintaining their local linguistic and cultural identities, this research aims to shed light on the broader implications of internationalization for Moroccan higher education.

2. The Research Problem

The future of language education in Morocco is poised for transformation, particularly in light of globalization. This latter has resulted in a significant shift in the linguistic and cultural landscape of Moroccan universities. This shift is more evident in the English department at the Faculties of Letters and Humanities, which serves as a microcosm of the broader dynamics at play in Morocco's higher education sector. The dual challenge of navigating language and cultural adaptation has become increasingly relevant as Moroccan universities expand their partnerships with foreign institutions, and as English continues to grow in prominence as the language of international academia (Zouhir, 2020).

Morocco's engagement with cross-border academic programs, particularly those conducted in English, has introduced new challenges for both students and faculty. The language adaptation required in these programs represents a fundamental shift from the traditional dominance of Arabic and French. Students must grapple with the demands of learning and conducting research in English. This shift raises important questions about language proficiency and pedagogical practices. Many students enter university with a stronger foundation in Arabic or French, but limited exposure to English. Consequently, they face considerable challenges in developing the advanced linguistic skills necessary for academic success in an English-dominated environment (Sadiqi, 1991; Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

This linguistic duality also extends beyond the classroom, as students are required to engage with English-language academic resources, collaborate with international partners, and participate in cross-cultural exchanges. The pressure to achieve proficiency in English, particularly within the framework of international collaborations, places additional strain on students who are already navigating a multilingual educational environment (Zouhir, 2020).

In addition to the linguistic challenges, there exists a significant cultural dimension to the process of adaptation. Morocco's rich cultural heritage, defined by Islamic principles and Arab, Amazigh traditions, contrasts with the often Western-oriented academic culture that accompanies international partnerships and English-language programs. This cultural duality can manifest in several ways, including differences in academic expectations, communication styles, and even the values and norms that shape student-teacher relationships (Bouquet, 2020).

With regard to English language departments, students are often exposed to Western academic models through their interactions with the language content and resources, foreign faculties, and international exchange programs. This can lead to a sense of cultural dislocation, where students and faculty must negotiate their Moroccan identity with the demands of a globalized academic environment (Zouhir, 2020; Ennaji, 2005). For students, this process can be both empowering as they gain access to

global networks of knowledge and alienating, as they may feel disconnected from their cultural and linguistic roots (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

Research suggests that when students feel alienated from the cultural context of their education, it can negatively impact their sense of belonging and academic performance (Sadiqi, 1991). Thus, understanding the cultural dynamics at play within the English department is crucial for designing programs that not only promote academic success but also respect and integrate students' cultural identities.

The internationalization of Moroccan higher education is largely driven by partnerships with foreign universities, particularly in Europe and North America. These partnerships often bring new opportunities for collaboration in research, student exchange programs, and curriculum development. However, they also introduce external expectations regarding language use and academic standards, which may conflict with local traditions and expectations (Boukhars, 2010; Zouhir, 2020).

These international partnerships have created both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, they provide students and faculty with access to global academic networks, enhance the department's reputation, and offer students pathways to further education or employment abroad. On the other hand, these partnerships necessitate a shift towards English as the dominant language of instruction, research, and communication, which may marginalize Arabic and Amazigh as languages of academic discourse (Ennaji, 2005; Zouhir, 2020).

The tension between maintaining local linguistic and cultural identities while integrating into an internationalized academic system forms the core of the research problem in this study. Specifically, the case of international partnerships and exchange programs illustrates how language practices and cultural dynamics are shaped by both local traditions and global forces, creating a complex duality that requires careful navigation by students and faculty alike (Sadiqi, 1991).

3. Objectives of the Study

This study aims to examine the relationship between the Fulbright cross-border academic program and language use in Moroccan universities, focusing on how the program influences linguistic practices. It also seeks to analyze the cultural implications of Fulbright on Moroccan higher education, exploring shifts in academic norms and cultural exchange. Additionally, the research investigates how Moroccan students navigate linguistic and cultural challenges introduced by internationalization, identifying strategies they employ to adapt within this global academic framework. These objectives provide a foundation for understanding the program's multidimensional impact.

The study is particularly relevant in light of Morocco's strategic goals for higher education, which include increasing international collaboration, enhancing English proficiency, and fostering cross-cultural understanding (Bouquet, 2020). This research focuses on the experiences of Moroccan students from the English departments, previously or currently enrolled in the Fulbright cross-border academic program, which is a prestigious international exchange initiative, aimed at fostering mutual understanding between nations through academic and cultural exchange. This research will also contribute to the broader literature on the internationalization of higher education and the linguistic challenges it entails, while offering recommendations for how to balance local identity with global integration (Belhiah & Elhami, 2015).

4. Research Questions

The following research seeks to explore the complex dynamics of language and culture within the context of internationalization in Moroccan higher education. Specifically, it focuses on how cross-border academic programs and international partnerships shape language practices and cultural exchanges in Moroccan universities. By examining the experiences of students, the study aims to understand how they navigate the linguistic challenges and cultural shifts brought about by these collaborations, and what broader implications these changes have for Morocco's academic and educational landscape.

RQ1. What is the relationship between the Fulbright cross-border academic program and language use in Moroccan universities?

RQ2. What are the cultural implications of Fulbright on Moroccan higher education?

RQ3. How do Moroccan students navigate the linguistic and cultural shifts introduced by this form of internationalization?

II. Literature Review

The literature review has delved into the key theoretical frameworks that inform the study, focusing on three central concepts: globalization and internationalization in higher education, linguistic and cultural duality, and cross-cultural adaptation. These frameworks are essential in understanding how global trends shape educational practices, particularly in Morocco's multilingual and multicultural academic environment.

1. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the present paper provides a comprehensive lens for understanding the complexities of higher education in Morocco. They highlight the ways in which global trends, linguistic diversity, and cultural hybridity shape the academic experiences of students and faculty, and emphasize the importance of developing strategies that foster inclusion and adaptability in a rapidly changing global academic landscape.

1.1 Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education

The phenomena of globalization and internationalization have dramatically influenced higher education worldwide. Globalization refers to the increasing interconnectedness of nations through economic, cultural, and technological exchanges. In the context of higher education, globalization often involves the transfer of educational models, curricula, and academic standards across national boundaries (Knight, 2011). Meanwhile, internationalization refers to the strategic responses by institutions to globalization, such as fostering international collaborations, increasing the mobility of students and faculty, and implementing bilingual or multilingual programs (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

A key aspect of globalization in higher education is the dominance of the English language. As the global lingua franca of academia, English facilitates international communication and the dissemination of knowledge, but it also marginalizes non-English-speaking traditions and practices (Phillipson, 1992). The globalization of English reinforces its status as the medium of instruction in many universities worldwide, including in postcolonial contexts like Morocco. This creates both opportunities and challenges: while English proficiency can enhance access to global academic networks and resources, it can also lead to the erosion of local languages and cultural practices (Pennycook, 1994).

In Morocco, the spread of English and its use in higher education coexists with French, which has long been the dominant academic language due to the country's colonial past (Ennaji, 2005). The Moroccan government has actively promoted English in universities, recognizing its strategic importance in the global knowledge economy. However, this shift has raised concerns about the marginalization of Arabic and Amazigh languages in academic settings, contributing to debates about linguistic hegemony and the unequal status of languages in the globalized academic landscape (Haeri, 2003).

Scholars such as Kramsch (2014) argue that the global dominance of English has deep sociocultural implications, leading to the homogenization of academic practices and discourses. Kramsch's work emphasizes the importance of translanguaging, which is the ability to navigate and integrate multiple linguistic systems, as a counter to the dominance of any single language. In Moroccan higher education, this concept is relevant to the ways in which students and faculty must negotiate their linguistic identities in a context where French, English, and Arabic are all significant.

1.2 Linguistic and Cultural Duality

The concept of linguistic and cultural duality is central to understanding the dynamics of multilingualism and cultural hybridity, particularly in postcolonial contexts like Morocco. In settings similar to Morocco, individuals often navigate multiple languages and cultural frameworks, reflecting both historical legacies and contemporary realities (Bhabha, 1994).

Morocco, as a former French protectorate, exhibits a complex linguistic landscape where Arabic, French, Amazigh languages, and, increasingly, English coexist. This multilingual environment is shaped by the country's colonial history, its efforts to reclaim cultural and linguistic autonomy, and the pressures of globalization. Cultural hybridity, a concept introduced by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), describes how postcolonial societies synthesize multiple cultural influences, often creating new, hybrid forms of identity.

Within higher education, the linguistic and cultural duality in Morocco reflects broader tensions between local and global forces. While French remains a dominant language in universities, particularly in science and technology fields, Arabic is promoted as part of national identity and cultural heritage (Ennaji, 2014). The increasing prominence of English adds another layer of complexity, as it is seen both as a tool for global integration and as a potential threat to local languages and identities.

Theories on multilingualism emphasize that linguistic diversity can be both a resource and a challenge in educational contexts (García & Wei, 2014). In Moroccan universities, students and faculty often switch between languages depending on the subject matter, the audience, and the context, a phenomenon known as code-switching (Gumperz, 1970). This linguistic flexibility reflects the broader cultural hybridity that characterizes Moroccan society.

Kramsch (1993) and Ennaji (2005) have explored how cultural hybridity plays out in educational settings, where students and faculty must constantly negotiate between competing linguistic and cultural influences. This negotiation can be seen as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986), where proficiency in multiple languages and the ability to navigate different cultural frameworks can enhance one's academic and professional opportunities. However, it can also create tensions and inequalities, as not all students have equal access to linguistic and cultural resources.

1.3 Cross-cultural Adaptation

The process of cross-cultural adaptation is essential for understanding how students and faculty negotiate cultural differences in academic settings. Cross-cultural adaptation refers to the ways in which individuals adjust to new cultural environments, often involving a reconfiguration of identity and social practices (Kim, 2001). This process is particularly relevant in internationalized higher education, where students and faculty from different cultural backgrounds come together in a shared academic space.

Young Yun Kim's (2001) model of intercultural adaptation emphasizes that adaptation is a dynamic, ongoing process that involves both acculturation and deculturation. Acculturation refers to the process of acquiring the cultural norms and practices of the host society, while deculturation involves the unlearning of some aspects of one's original culture. In higher education, international students often experience both processes as they adjust to new academic expectations, linguistic norms, and social practices.

In the Moroccan context, cross-cultural adaptation is particularly relevant for understanding the experiences of students and faculty who navigate the country's multilingual and multicultural academic environment. Moroccan students, for instance, must adapt to the use of French or English as the medium of instruction in many universities, while also maintaining their proficiency in Arabic or Amazigh. This process of adaptation often involves both linguistic and cultural adjustments, as students must learn to navigate different academic and cultural expectations.

For faculty, cross-cultural adaptation may involve adjusting their teaching methods to accommodate students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This can be particularly challenging in disciplines where the medium of instruction is English or French, and where students may have varying levels of proficiency in these languages. Intercultural communication theories (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018) emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence in facilitating effective communication and learning in such settings.

Kramsch (2009) explores the concept of symbolic competence, which refers to the ability to recognize and use the symbolic power of language in intercultural communication. In Moroccan higher education, symbolic competence is crucial for both students and faculty, as they must navigate the symbolic meanings attached to different languages and cultural practices. For instance, the use of French in academic settings may carry connotations of colonialism and elitism, while the use of Arabic may be seen as a marker of national identity and cultural authenticity.

Theories on cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2001) also highlight the role of social networks in facilitating adaptation. International students, for example, often rely on peer networks and support systems to navigate the challenges of living and studying in a foreign country (Berry, 2005). In Moroccan universities, where linguistic and cultural diversity is a defining feature, the formation of supportive social networks can be critical for academic success and personal well-being.

2. Internationalization and Higher Education in Morocco

The internationalization of higher education in Morocco is a strategic priority aimed at enhancing the quality of education, fostering global collaboration, and aligning Moroccan universities with international standards. This process is marked by partnerships with foreign institutions, particularly European and American universities, which have significantly shaped Moroccan higher education. The dual role of English and French as languages of instruction also reflects Morocco's linguistic and cultural complexity in an increasingly globalized academic environment.

2.1 Overview of Key Moroccan Partnerships with Foreign Universities

Morocco has established significant partnerships with foreign universities, especially from France and the United States. These partnerships facilitate academic exchanges, joint research projects, and curriculum development, contributing to the internationalization of Moroccan universities. Collaboration with foreign institutions is seen as a means to enhance academic standards, expose Moroccan students and faculty to global knowledge, and foster the exchange of ideas.

France has historically played a leading role in shaping Moroccan higher education due to the colonial legacy and post-independence educational cooperation. Many Moroccan universities maintain strong relationships with French institutions. Universities like Mohammed V University in Rabat and Hassan II University in Casablanca have numerous collaborative agreements with French universities, such as Université de Montpellier and Université Paris-Saclay. These partnerships focus on joint degrees, research initiatives, and student and faculty exchanges, especially in scientific, medical, and engineering fields (El Bouhali, 2020).

Additionally, American partnerships have gained traction, notably through institutions like Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, which is modeled after American liberal arts colleges and offers programs in English. The Fulbright Program and the Moroccan-American Commission for Educational and Cultural Exchange (MACECE) have facilitated academic exchange programs between Morocco and the United States, promoting cross-cultural understanding and the exchange of expertise. MACECE supports both Moroccan English teachers or students lecturing, studying or doing research in the U.S. and American scholars lecturing or conducting research in Morocco as well, enhancing the international profile of Moroccan higher education (Belhorma, 2021).

Morocco's participation in the Erasmus+ Program, a European Union initiative, is another vital element of its internationalization strategy. Erasmus+ allows for greater mobility of students and faculty between Moroccan and European universities, enhancing academic cooperation, particularly in curriculum design and research. As a result, Moroccan universities have adopted elements of the Bologna Process, such as the LMD system (Licence, Master, Doctorat), which aligns academic structures with European standards (Benhima, 2019).

2.2 The Role of European and American Institutions in Shaping Moroccan Higher Education

The role of French and American institutions in shaping Moroccan higher education cannot be overstated. The French influence is deeply rooted in Morocco's colonial history, where the French language and educational models were imposed and institutionalized. Even after independence in 1956, Morocco retained many aspects of the French educational system, including the structure of higher education and the use of French as the primary language of instruction in many fields (Ennaji, 2005).

French institutions continue to play a dominant role in shaping the structure and content of Moroccan higher education, particularly in science, technology, engineering, and medicine. According to El Bouhali (2020), the French educational model remains influential, with Moroccan universities frequently adopting French academic standards and curricula. Moreover, French universities provide faculty training, joint degrees, and funding for collaborative research projects, which reinforce their role in Moroccan higher education.

In contrast, American institutions have contributed to a shift in the educational landscape, particularly through the introduction of the liberal arts model and the increased use of English in academic settings. Al Akhawayn University, established in 1995, exemplifies this influence. The university's curriculum is based on American liberal arts education, emphasizing interdisciplinary studies, critical thinking, and civic engagement (Hale, 2012). This approach contrasts with the more specialized and rigid structures of the French system, offering Moroccan students a broader, more flexible education.

American universities also play a crucial role in research collaboration, particularly in fields such as business, information technology, and environmental studies. Through exchange programs and collaborative research, Moroccan universities benefit from the expertise, resources, and networks of American institutions, contributing to the advancement of research and innovation in Morocco (Khrouz, 2022).

2.3 The Evolving Role of English and French as Languages of Instruction in These Partnerships

The roles of English and French as languages of instruction in Moroccan higher education have evolved considerably in recent decades, reflecting the country's broader goals of internationalization and integration into the global academic community. Historically, French has been the dominant language of instruction, especially in disciplines such as science, medicine, and engineering. This is

largely a legacy of Morocco's colonial history, where French was established as the language of administration and education. Even after independence, French maintained its dominant position in higher education, particularly in technical fields (Ennaji, 2005). French continues to be the primary language of instruction at many Moroccan universities, particularly in the fields of natural sciences, medicine, engineering, and law.

However, English has steadily gained prominence, especially in fields like business, technology, and international relations. As Morocco's economic and political ties with Anglophone countries, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, have strengthened, the demand for English proficiency has grown. English is increasingly viewed as the global language of science, commerce, and international diplomacy, which has prompted Moroccan universities to expand English-language programs and courses (Belhorma, 2021).

The rise of Al Akhawayn University, which offers most of its programs in English, reflects this shift. Many other Moroccan institutions, particularly in business and engineering, are following suit by offering graduate programs and courses in English to cater to the demands of the global job market (El Bouhali, 2020). Moreover, proficiency in English is increasingly seen as essential for accessing global research networks and academic resources, particularly in the fields of technology and science, where English is the dominant language (Khrouz, 2022).

This linguistic duality of English and French presents both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, it provides Moroccan students with a competitive advantage in the global academic and professional arenas. On the other hand, it raises concerns about linguistic inequality, as students from different educational backgrounds may not have equal access to high-quality education in both languages. Moreover, the marginalization of Arabic and Amazigh as languages of instruction remains a concern. While these languages are used primarily in the humanities and social sciences, they remain underutilized in the more prestigious fields dominated by French and English (Ennaji, 2005).

In conclusion, the internationalization of Moroccan higher education, driven by partnerships with European and American institutions, has significantly shaped the linguistic and academic landscape of the country's universities. The evolving roles of English and French as languages of instruction reflect Morocco's complex efforts to balance its colonial legacy with the demands of globalization. As Morocco continues to integrate into the global academic community, managing this linguistic and cultural complexity will be essential for fostering a more inclusive and effective higher education system.

3. Challenges and Opportunities in Cross-border Academic Programs

Cross-border academic programs offer a unique opportunity to foster collaboration between Moroccan universities and international institutions. These programs are vital for increasing the quality of education, enhancing research capacity, and exposing students to global academic standards. However, they also come with significant challenges, particularly related to language barriers, student adaptability, curriculum development, cultural exchange, and tensions in teaching methods and academic expectations.

3.1 Language Barriers, Student Adaptability, and Curriculum Development

One of the primary challenges in cross-border academic programs is language barriers. In Morocco, the co-existence of Arabic, French, and English as languages of instruction creates a complex linguistic environment. While French has historically been the dominant language in higher education due to Morocco's colonial legacy, English is increasingly becoming the language of instruction in cross-border programs, particularly in fields like business, science, and technology (Ennaji, 2005).

Students' adaptability to the language of instruction is a key factor that determines the success of these programs. Many Moroccan students have a strong foundation in Arabic and French, but often lack proficiency in English, which can hinder their participation in programs that rely on English-language resources or instruction (Belhorma, 2021). Language difficulties can lead to misunderstandings, reduced participation, and lower academic performance, especially when students are required to engage with complex academic materials in a non-native language.

In response to these challenges, some Moroccan universities have implemented language training programs to improve students' English proficiency before they enter cross-border academic programs. However, these programs are not always sufficient to bridge the language gap, particularly for students from underprivileged backgrounds who may not have had access to high-quality English education (Khrouz, 2022).

Curriculum development is another challenge in cross-border academic programs. Moroccan universities must balance the integration of international standards with local educational needs. For instance, the implementation of joint degree programs with foreign universities often requires aligning curricula with international guidelines, which may not always reflect the specific socio-economic and cultural contexts of Morocco (Benhima, 2019).

Additionally, some cross-border programs rely heavily on Western pedagogical models that may not fully consider the realities of the Moroccan educational system, leading to potential gaps in student preparation and learning outcomes. Efforts to localize curricula by incorporating Moroccan-specific content and perspectives into cross-border programs can help mitigate these challenges. Nevertheless, the task of developing a curriculum that meets both local and international standards requires ongoing collaboration between Moroccan and foreign institutions, often leading to administrative delays and bureaucratic obstacles (El Bouhali, 2020).

3.2 Cultural Exchange and Potential Tensions in Values, Teaching Methods, and Academic Expectations

Cross-border academic programs inherently promote cultural exchange, allowing Moroccan students and faculty to engage with international peers and learn from different perspectives (Knight, 2004). This exchange can broaden students' worldviews, expose them to diverse approaches to problem-solving, and foster intercultural understanding (Altbach & Knight, 2007). However, cultural exchange can also lead to tensions in values, teaching methods, and academic expectations (Marginson, 2010) between Moroccan and international participants.

One source of tension lies in the differing educational values between Moroccan and international faculty. Moroccan education, especially at the university level, has traditionally emphasized rote memorization and a hierarchical relationship between students and professors (El Bouhali, 2020). In contrast, many Western universities prioritize critical thinking, student-centered learning, and more egalitarian relationships between students and faculty (Hale, 2012). The transition from one educational paradigm to the other can be difficult for both students and professors, leading to misunderstandings and frustrations in cross-border academic settings.

For instance, Moroccan students may struggle to adapt to the interactive and participatory teaching methods commonly employed by American and European faculty, where students are expected to engage in class discussions, challenge ideas, and express their own viewpoints. This can create anxiety for Moroccan students who are more accustomed to a passive learning style at times, leading to lower academic performance and disengagement (Khrouz, 2022).

Moreover, differences in academic expectations can create conflicts in cross-border programs. International faculty may have higher expectations regarding research quality, independent learning, and time management compared to what Moroccan students are used to. This can result in student dissatisfaction and frustration, particularly if students feel inadequately prepared to meet these expectations (Belhorma, 2021). Similarly, Moroccan faculty participating in cross-border programs may feel pressure to conform to Western academic standards, which may not always align with their teaching philosophies or the needs of their students.

Another area of potential tension involves cultural values. While cross-border programs are designed to promote cultural exchange, they can sometimes expose conflicting values related to gender roles, religion, and social norms. For example, Moroccan students and faculty, coming from a predominantly Muslim and conservative society, may find certain aspects of Western culture, such as more liberal attitudes toward gender and individual autonomy, challenging to navigate in academic and social settings (Ennaji, 2005). Conversely, international faculty and students may struggle to understand the cultural nuances of Moroccan society, leading to miscommunications and stereotyping.

To mitigate these tensions, some cross-border academic programs have implemented intercultural training for both Moroccan and international participants. These training programs aim to foster mutual understanding and respect by addressing potential areas of conflict, promoting open dialogue, and encouraging participants to engage with cultural differences in a constructive manner (Benhima, 2019). However, the success of these initiatives depends on the willingness of both parties to engage with each other's perspectives and values, as well as the degree to which the program's structure allows for cultural flexibility and adaptation.

3.4 Opportunities for Growth and Innovation

Despite the challenges, cross-border academic programs in Morocco offer significant opportunities for growth and innovation. These programs provide Moroccan universities with access to international expertise, resources, and networks that can enhance the quality of education and research. The opportunity to engage in joint research projects with international institutions, for example, has the potential to raise the profile of Moroccan universities in the global academic community (El Bouhali, 2020).

Moreover, the expansion of English-language programs in Morocco, driven by cross-border academic partnerships, is helping to prepare Moroccan students for careers in the global job market. By fostering proficiency in English and exposing students to international academic standards, cross-border programs are positioning Moroccan graduates to compete more effectively in an increasingly interconnected world (Belhorma, 2021).

Finally, cross-border academic programs offer a platform for cultural diplomacy, allowing Morocco to strengthen its ties with key global partners. Through academic exchanges, Morocco can showcase its rich cultural heritage and contribute to the global dialogue on education and development, while also benefiting from the influx of new ideas and perspectives from abroad (Khrouz, 2022).

In conclusion, cross-border academic programs in Morocco present both challenges and opportunities. While language barriers, student adaptability, and curriculum development pose significant obstacles, these programs also offer Moroccan universities a chance to enhance their international standing, improve the quality of education, and foster intercultural exchange. By addressing the challenges related to cultural tensions and academic expectations, and by building on the opportunities for innovation and collaboration, cross-border academic programs can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Moroccan higher education.

III. Methodology

The study at hand employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection to explore the challenges and opportunities for students in the Fulbright international exchange program. By focusing on students with at least a bachelor's degree, the study captured a range of academic experiences from participants with prior exposure to higher education. Through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the study provided a comprehensive examination of how students navigate linguistic and cultural duality in cross-border programs, offering valuable insights for improving program design and student support in international collaborations.

1 Sample Selection

1.1 Participants

The participants for this study were previously or currently enrolled in the Fulbright cross-border academic program. All participants had previously obtained at least a bachelor's degree before enrolling in these programs. This criterion is required for the grant. Additionally, it ensured that the participants had prior academic experience and could provide relevant insights into the challenges and opportunities posed by cross-border education. Students were necessarily involved in a program established in partnership with a foreign university, with instruction or collaboration from both Moroccan and Academic staff.

A stratified sampling method was employed to ensure representation from students across different linguistic backgrounds and academic disciplines. This stratified approach allowed the study to capture the diverse experiences of students from various fields of study and linguistic environments, given the multilingual nature of Moroccan higher education and its cross-border programs. This ensured that the study explored the effects of language barriers and language proficiency on students' academic success and adaptability in cross-border programs.

The participants were also stratified by academic discipline (e.g., literature, linguistics, or cultural studies), as different fields of study may have unique language and cultural challenges in cross-border contexts. The study's sample size was 36 students, with a balanced representation from 4 open access universities and academic disciplines in Morocco. These universities are Moulay Ismail in Meknes, Ain Chock in Casablanca, Ibn Tofail in Kenitra, and Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah. This sample size was chosen to ensure sufficient data for both quantitative and qualitative analyses, while allowing for detailed examination of linguistic and cultural dynamics in cross-border programs.

2. Data Collection Methods

A combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods was used to gain a comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences with language, culture, and cross-border

academic collaboration. Structured questionnaires were distributed to collect data on students' language proficiency, academic performance, and experiences in the Fulbright program. The survey addressed language proficiency. Students self-assessed their proficiency in English, using standardized language proficiency scales for reading, writing, and speaking.

Participants indicated their experiences with English not only as a language of instruction but also as a means of social interaction in academic settings, as well as their perceived comfort in using English for coursework, research, and interactions. Students were asked to report their performance indicators in their international program, allowing for an analysis of how language use may impact their academic success. The survey measured students' perceived challenges in navigating language barriers, as well as their adaptability to the academic demands of their cross-border program, including interactions with international faculty and students.

In addition to surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted to collect rich, in-depth insights into students' lived experiences. Individual interviews were conducted with a subset of the student participants (16) to explore their personal experiences navigating linguistic and cultural duality in their cross-border academic programs. The interviews focused on how students adapted to the language of instruction, their interactions with international faculty, and their perceptions of the academic and cultural differences they encountered. Moreover, focus groups, involving small groups of 3-5 students, provided a platform for discussing shared experiences. These discussions are centered on language use in academic and social settings, students' experiences with cultural exchange, and the perceived benefits and challenges of studying in cross-border programs.

3. Data Analysis

3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics summarized students' linguistic backgrounds, language preferences, and academic performance. Inferential statistics, such as regression analysis, were used to examine the relationship between language proficiency and academic success. For example, the study explored whether students with higher proficiency in the language of instruction performed better academically.

In addition, the survey data allowed for comparative analysis across the stratified groups, examining how different linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds influenced students' experiences and outcomes in cross-border academic programs.

3.2 Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method involved systematically coding the data to identify recurring themes related to linguistic and cultural adaptation. Key themes included:

Language Barriers: How students experienced challenges when engaging with course material in a language that was not their primary language.

Cultural Exchange: Students' experiences with cultural exchange, including how they navigated cultural differences with international peers and faculty.

Adaptation Strategies: Strategies students used to overcome linguistic and cultural challenges, such as seeking language support, collaboration with peers, and adjusting to different teaching methods.

The qualitative analysis provided deeper insights into the social and academic challenges faced by students in cross-border programs, highlighting the nuanced ways in which linguistic and cultural diversity shaped their academic experiences.

IV. Findings and Discussion

1. Linguistic Adaptation in Cross-border Academic Programs

The data collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups highlighted the complexities of linguistic adaptation for students and faculty in cross-border academic programs. Participants reported varying degrees of success and challenges in adapting to instruction in English, which is not their primary language.

1.1 Linguistic Flexibility and Multilingualism

The quantitative analysis, conducted using descriptive and inferential statistical methods, revealed that students' ability to navigate multilingual environments was a significant predictor of academic success. Descriptive statistics showed that 78% of students reported functioning in a trilingual context (Arabic, French, and English), which facilitated their adjustment to academic demands in cross-border programs. However, proficiency levels in the primary language of instruction (English) varied

substantially across the sample. Self-reported proficiency scores ranged from 2.5 to 4.8 on a 5-point scale, with a mean score of 3.9 (SD = 0.7) for English-taught programs and 3.6 (SD = 0.9) for French-taught programs.

Using regression analysis, it was found that higher proficiency in the language of instruction was positively correlated with academic performance ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$). Specifically, students in the top quartile of language proficiency had significantly better academic outcomes, including higher GPA scores ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 0.4$) compared to students in the bottom quartile ($M = 2.8$, $SD = 0.5$), as well as more frequent participation in classroom discussions ($\beta = 0.35$, $p < 0.05$). These findings confirm that language proficiency plays a critical role in cross-border education, with students who possess higher levels of proficiency demonstrating improved academic outcomes and greater engagement in the classroom.

1.2 Impact of Linguistic Adaptation on Academic Performance

The regression analysis revealed a strong positive correlation between students' self-reported language proficiency and their academic success in cross-border programs ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < 0.01$). Students who rated their proficiency in the language of instruction as high showed significantly better performance in research-related tasks such as writing academic papers ($\beta = 0.37$, $p < 0.05$), conducting literature reviews ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.01$), and engaging in discussions with international faculty ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.05$). The descriptive analysis showed that 64% of the students who scored above 4.0 in language proficiency (on a 5-point scale) consistently achieved higher grades, with a mean GPA of 3.7 (SD = 0.3), compared to a mean GPA of 2.9 (SD = 0.5) for those scoring below 3.0 in language proficiency.

However, 28% of the students, particularly those with proficiency scores between 2.5 and 3.5, reported experiencing significant emotional and cognitive strain due to learning and performing academically in a non-native language. These students participated less frequently in classroom discussions ($\beta = -0.29$, $p < 0.05$) and were hesitant to seek help from international faculty, citing language barriers. This illustrates the complexity of linguistic adaptation, where even moderate proficiency may not be sufficient for academic success if students lack emotional comfort with the language of instruction.

2. Cultural Impact of Internationalization on Moroccan Higher Education

The findings of this study further accentuated the transformative influence of internationalization on Moroccan higher education. International collaborations with universities in North America have introduced new pedagogical approaches and academic expectations, impacting students' and faculty's cultural orientation and attitudes towards learning.

2.1. Influence of Western Educational Models

The qualitative analysis revealed that many participants acknowledged the increasing influence of Western educational models in Moroccan higher education, especially through cross-border programs. 65% of interviewees mentioned that they appreciated the academic rigor, critical thinking, and independent research skills emphasized in Western-style education.

Respondents highlighted how Western models, with their focus on student-centered learning, provided more clarity in methodology and encouraged greater intellectual independence. One participant shared, *'the focus on independent research and critical thinking is something we don't always get in our traditional settings. It pushes us to think beyond memorization and engage more deeply with the material.'* Another added, *'The clarity in methodology and the way they guide students step by step in research is one of the aspects I find most valuable'.*

However, approximately 40% of students expressed concern that these models conflicted with the more hierarchical, lecture-based traditions prevalent in Moroccan universities. Thematic analysis of focus groups showed that this tension was most evident in interactions with international faculty. Several students (about 35%) reported feeling torn between adapting to the egalitarian, discussion-oriented approach promoted by their international instructors and maintaining the formal, authoritative relationship they were accustomed to with Moroccan professors.

An informant in this regard expressed, *'it's difficult to switch between these approaches. Sometimes, I feel like I'm disrespecting the Moroccan professors when I try to be more critical, like we do here'.*

This cultural friction emerged as a key theme in both interviews and focus group discussions, highlighting the complexities of merging educational models across borders.

2.2 The Erosion or Enrichment of Local Academic Practices

The qualitative analysis revealed a divided perspective among participants regarding the impact of Western educational models on local academic practices. 63% respondents voiced concerns that the increasing adoption of Western methods and values might lead to the marginalization of traditional Moroccan academic strengths, such as oral history and Islamic studies. These participants worried that local knowledge systems, which have been vital in shaping Moroccan academic identity, could be overlooked or devalued in the push to align with global educational standards. An informant noted, *"islamic studies have been a core part of our academic and cultural heritage. With this shift, I worry that these subjects will be overlooked or not given the same respect in the global academic environment"*.

Conversely, about 40% of informants saw these international collaborations as an opportunity to enrich and diversify local academic practices by integrating global perspectives. They emphasized that such collaborations could enhance the quality of education without necessarily eroding Morocco's academic heritage. Thematic analysis of interviews and focus groups highlighted that participants saw potential in creating a hybrid academic culture, one that incorporates global standards while preserving key elements of Morocco's academic traditions.

An informant suggested in this concern, *"collaborating with international universities doesn't have to mean losing our identity. We can take the best from both systems and create something new that respects our traditions while embracing global standards"*. This emerging hybrid model reflects the broader tension between modernization and cultural preservation in Moroccan higher education, a recurring theme across multiple interviews and group discussions.

3. Navigating the Duality of Language and Culture

The most significant theme emerging from the qualitative data was the duality Moroccan students face in balancing their linguistic and cultural identities with the demands of cross-border academic environments.

3.1. Language as a Tool for Inclusion and Exclusion

The qualitative findings from interviews and focus groups highlighted the dual role of language in shaping students' academic experiences. 63% of students reported that fluency in French or English enabled them to fully participate in their cross-border programs. These students highlighted benefits such as engaging with international peers, accessing global academic resources, and performing well in collaborative academic settings.

However, about 35% of participants indicated that their limited proficiency in these languages hindered their ability to engage in academic discussions and research opportunities. These students felt isolated and struggled to keep pace with the academic demands of their programs. The statement of this informant captures this, *"being linguistically fluent allowed me to fully engage with the international professors and students, but I noticed that those who struggled with the language often stayed silent in discussions"*.

The cultural implications of language use also emerged as a significant theme. Roughly 50% of students expressed concerns that the dominance of English in cross-border programs diminished the role of Arabic, which they considered central to their cultural and personal identity. A respondent noted, *"using English in class made me forget Arabic, even though it's a big part of who I am. It sometimes felt like I was losing a piece of my culture in order to fit in with the Western way of learning"*.

Many B.A. holders felt that this linguistic marginalization contributed to a sense of detachment from their local cultural roots, particularly in programs heavily influenced by Western academic traditions. The thematic analysis revealed that these feelings of linguistic and cultural disconnection often resulted in students navigating complex identities, balancing their local heritage with the demands of global academic frameworks.

3.2. Straddling Global and Local Worlds

The qualitative analysis from interviews and focus groups revealed that Moroccan students often felt they were navigating two distinct academic worlds: the global and the local. 72% of students reported a heightened awareness of their Moroccan identity while participating in international academic collaborations, as they faced not only linguistic barriers but also divergent cultural expectations. These

students frequently described the need to adapt to Western academic standards while remaining rooted in their local cultural context.

Students in cultural studies or linguistics, about 45% of the sample, highlighted the complexity of engaging with multiple cultural narratives (Moroccan, French, and English) simultaneously. While this intersection gave them a distinct advantage in understanding cross-cultural dynamics, it also complicated their academic journey as they had to continuously negotiate their place within these overlapping frameworks. An informant said, *"It's tough to juggle different cultures at once. It helps me understand more, but it also makes things confusing sometimes"*. This added a layer of cultural complexity that required them to balance differing academic perspectives and cultural norms.

Some informants agreed that Moroccan universities increasingly emphasize research ethics, but international programs often have very specific, formal procedures for ethical approval, especially regarding data collection and handling. Students had to adapt to stricter protocols, especially when it came to participant consent, confidentiality, and data management in compliance with international standards like GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). One student remarked, *"in Morocco, we discuss research ethics, but there, I had to submit detailed ethical approval forms and ensure compliance with GDPR, which was entirely new to me"*.

4. Enhancing Moroccan Higher Education Through Cross-border Programs

The findings from this study suggested that Moroccan higher education stands to benefit greatly from cross-border academic programs, but only if institutions are intentional about navigating the linguistic and cultural duality inherent in these programs.

4.1 Language Support and Institutional Resources

To improve the success of cross-border programs, targeted language support tailored to the needs of Moroccan students is crucial. The sample of Moroccan students in this study, many of whom are already navigating trilingual environments (Arabic, French, and English), highlights the necessity of such interventions. The quantitative data showed that students with higher proficiency in the primary language of instruction (English) performed significantly better academically, and this aligns with their self-reported language struggles in the Fulbright exchange program. However, despite their multilingual backgrounds, many still face challenges in academic settings, particularly with the use of a non-native language.

Several students in the sample reported feeling isolated in classroom discussions and research opportunities due to limited proficiency in English, which hindered their academic engagement. This was further supported by qualitative data, where students described the emotional and cognitive stress caused by constantly working in a non-native language. An informant reported that *"I often feel lost in class because I can't keep up with the discussions in pure English. I was thought English but trust me English of native speakers is different. It makes me anxious and frustrated"*. These findings underline the need for universities to not only offer intensive language courses to improve academic fluency but also create institutional resources that address the psychological impacts of linguistic adaptation.

Moreover, multilingual spaces where French, English, and Arabic coexist would benefit students by promoting inclusivity and reducing feelings of cultural alienation. Given that many participants felt marginalized in programs dominated by Western languages, offering spaces where Arabic can also be used and appreciated would help maintain students' connection to their cultural identity. This approach would help universities balance the global expectations of cross-border programs while valuing local linguistic and cultural diversity.

4.2 Balancing Local and Global Dimensions

Moroccan higher education institutions need to embrace both local and global academic dimensions in their program design. Instead of approaching Western educational models as replacements for local practices, universities can adopt a hybrid approach that incorporates the strengths of both. This can be achieved by developing curricula that integrate global perspectives while honoring Morocco's rich intellectual traditions.

According to the findings, students often found themselves navigating between Western educational models characterized by independent research, critical thinking, and student-centered learning and Morocco's traditional hierarchical, lecture-based systems. This created both opportunities and challenges, as students appreciated the rigor of Western methodologies but struggled with the cultural dissonance they encountered, especially in relation to the more formal and authoritative structures of Moroccan academia.

Many participants expressed concern that the growing influence of Western models might overshadow local academic strengths, such as Morocco's emphasis on cultural values, oral history, Islamic studies, and community-based learning. The study revealed that 75% of students saw value in preserving these local traditions while incorporating the beneficial aspects of global standards.

Some students, for instance, felt that while international collaborations allowed them to engage with global perspectives, they were at risk of losing connection to their Moroccan cultural identity and intellectual heritage, particularly when Arabic, a central part of their cultural and personal identity, was marginalized in academic settings. One participant noted, in this respect, *"Learning from international professors is valuable, but I worry we're losing part of our identity, especially when Arabic and our traditions are sidelined."*

The idea of developing curricula that integrate global perspectives while honoring Morocco's rich intellectual traditions resonates with the emerging "hybrid academic culture" observed in the study's sample. An informant, remarked in this regard, *"we can benefit from global ideas, but we shouldn't lose what makes our education uniquely Moroccan"*. This approach addresses both the appreciation for Western methods, which bring academic rigor and methodological clarity, and the desire to retain elements of Morocco's academic heritage. It reflects the participants' call for a balanced educational system that allows Moroccan students and faculty to thrive in international contexts without losing their cultural and intellectual identity.

The study also emphasized the need for institutional flexibility in designing programs that support students' ability to succeed academically while maintaining their connection to local values. As an informant noted, *"I think we need more programs that prepare us for the world, but also keep us grounded in our own culture."* By embracing this hybrid model, Moroccan universities can equip students with the skills to navigate the global academic landscape while ensuring that local traditions, languages, and intellectual strengths remain central to their education. This aligns with the participants' experiences and aspirations for a more integrated, inclusive academic environment.

V. Conclusion

The findings emphasize the importance of understanding how linguistic and cultural duality shapes the experiences of students in the Fulbright exchange initiative. While linguistic challenges and cultural tensions exist, these programs offer valuable opportunities for Moroccan higher education to engage with global academic networks, enriching the educational landscape. By fostering an environment where local and global academic traditions can coexist and complement each other, Moroccan universities can better prepare their students for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

1. Summary of Key Findings

The study highlighted the profound impact of linguistic and cultural duality within Moroccan higher education, particularly as international collaborations introduce new academic expectations. Moroccan students navigate complex multilingual environments, often working in Arabic, French, and English. While this trilingual context has advantages, proficiency in English language often used in cross-border academic programs strongly influenced academic success. Students with higher proficiency in these languages demonstrated better academic performance, particularly in research tasks and classroom participation.

Culturally, the findings emphasized both enrichment and tension. Cross-border partnerships with Western institutions introduce pedagogical methods that encourage student-centered learning and intellectual independence. However, these models sometimes conflict with traditional hierarchical, lecture-based practices common in Moroccan universities. As a result, students often find themselves balancing the demands of global academic standards with their local cultural and academic identities.

2. Implications for Policy and Practice

To support Moroccan higher education students in navigating international academic demands, universities should prioritize robust language training and cultural competency programs. Enhancing English proficiency is critical, given its dominance in global academic settings. Universities should offer advanced English courses tailored to academic and professional contexts, integrate language learning into core academic content, and provide immersion opportunities through exchange programs and partnerships with international faculty.

Cross-border academic programs often require more than just linguistic adaptation; cultural differences also need to be addressed and they are equally essential. Universities should implement

cross-cultural training programs to help students and faculty understand global academic norms and navigate diverse expectations. Workshops on international research ethics, communication styles, and collaboration strategies can foster cultural sensitivity. Additionally, mentorship programs linking students with experienced faculty or alumni in international collaborations can provide valuable guidance. Collaborative projects with international students and inclusive classroom practices will also prepare students for global academic environments. These initiatives collectively equip students with the linguistic and cultural tools necessary for success in cross-border education.

3. Future Research Directions

Future research could focus on the long-term effects of internationalization on Moroccan higher education. Longitudinal studies that track students and faculty over several years could provide insights into how linguistic and cultural adaptation evolves. Additionally, comparative studies between Moroccan universities and other North African or Middle Eastern institutions could shed light on regional trends in internationalization, highlighting both shared challenges and unique local dynamics. Research could also explore the effects of international academic partnerships on specific disciplines within Moroccan higher education, examining how international influences shape the curricula, research methodologies, and academic expectations in fields like science, humanities, or social studies.

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