Major Choice & Employability in Morocco: English Major as a Case Study

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Abstract

The present paper aims to examine the factors that impact students' choice of English Studies as their college major. Many variables are tested such as gender, age, university, degree, effect of media, employment status, etc. The study explores the employment status and the job opportunities offered to English major graduates in the Moroccan job market. To this end, the bivariate analysis was adopted to analyze quantitative data that was collected through an online survey of 444 students from different universities in Morocco. The quantitative analysis was completed by the results of a qualitative investigation, based on an inductive approach, through three semi-structured interviews. The findings suggest that students choose English as major because they enjoy the learning of the language, and because they think it offers better job opportunities. Another major finding is that the stream background does not affect students' integration in the Moroccan job market.

Keywords: (Moroccan Graduates; English Major Choice; Job Opportunities; Employability)

1. Introduction

Choosing a university major is one of the hardest decisions a student can make. This has raised the interest of many researchers around the world to investigate the factors that affect students' particular choices; as well as the impact of those choices on their future professional career. Some researchers have proved that academic major influences significantly career opportunities (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991).

English is one of the widely spoken languages in the world, and it has undoubtedly gained ground in Morocco, especially in the contexts of labor market and higher education. Based on the international Euromonitor report of 2012, English has become a popular "study language". Students choose to study English as a language because it offers better job opportunities. Another reason for such increase is due to the exposure to social media which predominantly uses English as an international medium.

Majoring in English Studies has become a popular choice among Moroccan high school graduates due to several reasons. Many studies (Astorne-Figari & Speer, 2019; Djatej, 2015; Al-Rfou, 2013; Malgwi et al., 2005) have investigated students' choice of majors, like accounting and business among others, and the different factors impacting their choices such as gender, interest in the subject, grade and potential job opportunities. Other studies and reports explored the impact of the English language on future job opportunities. In the Moroccan context, little has been done on English major choice and its horizons. Thus, the purpose of the present study is to explore the factors that affect Moroccan students and graduates' choice of English major and their employability within the Moroccan job market.

In order to achieve this goal, we position our research in the positivism framework as we intend to observe the reality of the field from the outside through the conduction of a survey. Therefore, our approach is a hypothetico-deductive quantitative one applied through direct questioning of a representative sample of the population.

This research article is divided into six sections: the first section deals with the context of the study and the research objectives. The second section sheds light on the literature review on similar research studies conducted in various contexts. The third section presents research methodology we adopted as well as the data. The fourth section presents and analyses the results The last two sections deal respectively with the research limitations and conclusions.

2. Literature Review

The theoretical foundation we rely on to explain the elements of motivation that promote an action or behavior is based on the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). The latter differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic elements of motivation. SDT tries to explain the orientations of motivations within a learner (Ryan and Deci (2000). Students often choose a certain major for future career path. There has been an interest in understanding the relationship between education and work, since the two are significantly linked. SDT seems to be relevant not only in the context of education but also in that of work in order to understand the students' motivations behind their educational choices and the future professional careers they may be considering. SDT was highly used among researchers to explain the reasons behind students' major choice.

In terms of empirical literature, different researchers sought various factors of influence on students' major choice. Malgwi et al. (2005) for instance, investigated the factors that affect students' choice of business major. The interest in the subject was considered the most influential factor regardless of gender: women are more likely to choose a field of study because of their interest in and aptitude for the subject, while men base their choice on the expected potential for career advancement and job opportunities. Potential for career advancement, the major's potential job opportunities, aptitude in the subject, pay level in the field and the college's reputation in the field are other factors determining the choice of major in Malgwi et al.'s (2005) study. Other researchers found that students' enjoyment of a course or interest in the subject is considered one of the main factors behind the students' major choice (Galotti (1999), Zafar (2013), Moore & Shulock (2011), Dietz (2010), Wiswall & Zafar (2011), Baker & Griffin, (2010), Arcidiacono et al., (2010), Wiswall & Zafar, (2011).

Montmarquette et al. (2002) showed that young people choose college majors because of their enjoyment of a coursework in addition to their willingness to gain their parents' approval. For Moore and Shulock (2011) and Dietz (2010), it is passion that affects students' choice of major through tastes (Wiswall & Zafar, 2011).

Bartolj and Polanec (2012) investigated the relationship between major-specific abilities and major choice based on the achievements of students in the first-year courses. They found significant differences in preferences between genders.

Other researchers sought other factors. For instance, Ma (2009) showed that family's socioeconomic status positively influences students' choice of humanities and arts related majors compared to technical, business or life related disciplines. Ma (2009) argued that technical, business, and life/health fields generate more job opportunities and higher economic returns than humanities and social science majors. Similarly, Quadlin (2017), Mare (1980); Shavit and Blossfeld (1993) found that family's socioeconomic status influences students' major choice especially at the higher levels of educational transitions. Astin (1993), on the other hand came upon a different result as students that come from high earning families choose business related fields.

Based on several studies, media exposure and use can also play a role in influencing the students' choice of major. For instance, the literature has already provided several instances of TV's important role in shaping people' perspectives and decision making on their job's aspirations. DeFleur and DeFleur (1987) and Wroblewski & Huston (1987) emphasized the role that television plays as an important source for incidental learning about the labor force.

Unlike the previously mentioned studies, Al-Rfou (2013) examined the influence of personal and future job factors on business major choice students. The results have shown that media has less influence on students' selection of major in comparison to future earnings, career options, occupational prestige and type of work factors.

Saleem et al. (2014) explored on the other hand three major factors that affect students' career selection. Their findings have shown that mass media and especially TV have a strong influence both directly and indirectly on the perception and decision-making of students.

In their case study, Hoag et al (2017) investigated the impact of determinants such as the effect of media exposure, technology use and both mediated and unmediated salient referents on the choice of communication related majors. The results suggest that for media influence, the more students were exposed to news, the more likely they are to major in journalism. Technology use appeared as well to be a factor in choosing journalism as a major.

Bo et al. (2018) aimed at studying the relationship between media attention and choice of major through focusing on how newspaper coverage of violence against doctors in China impacts students choosing health-care related majors in college. They found that newspapers' reports

on violence against doctors in China negatively discouraged students from choosing medicine as their college major.

In the Moroccan context, Kesbi's (2015) study aimed at examining the Moroccan educational system and the current job market in Morocco through conducting interviews with both national and international companies. His findings suggested that there is a high demand for changing the policy dealing with the foreign language, especially that of English teaching in Morocco. He maintained that people are encouraged to learn foreign languages especially for their importance to employability both nationally and internationally. He also explained that students majoring in the English language in Morocco are advantaged to study courses such as business English and public speaking, because it does not only train them linguistically but makes them competent and knowledgeable of cultures like the British or American ones. In addition to that, the proficiency in that foreign language opens doors for professional success especially in Morocco.

Based on the evidence he received from the interviews, English is used in all departments. For instance, in the sales department, it is required to use English for ship pilotage, towing and maintenance. All informants agreed upon the importance of English for several reasons among which career promotion by joining a multinational company, Kesbi's (2015) study concluded that in order to increase employability in the Moroccan job market, English is a must, especially with the recent free trade agreements signed with the USA, the European Union, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. Kesbi also stressed that a dialogue should take place between businesses and universities about the importance of foreign languages such as English. Graduates with a good level of English and other foreign languages will not only improve the employability rate in Morocco but will also help in attracting and trading with international industries and businesses.

Ramaswami et al. (2012) reported that an important increase in salary of 12 per cent between those mastering English (at least with an intermediate level) and those who have no mastery of English.

A custom report compiled by Euromonitor International for the British Council, conducted research on the benefits of the English language for individuals and societies in 2012. The report targeted the following countries Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Yemen. The overall findings suggest that there is a clear interest in the English language by the

population of the MENA region due to the important role this language plays in offering multiple job opportunities with multinational companies either within or outside these countries. For instance, the interviews with the most active private and public organizations in Morocco revealed that there is an increase in demands for English-speaking individuals in different industrial sectors.

As economy in any country keeps changing, this demands a follow-up by the graduates in order to meet the market demands.

In another report provided by the Cambridge English Language Assessment with the QS (2016), the authors found that English is the most important language for employment, especially in areas where English is not considered a native language. Over two thirds of the surveyed employers pointed out that English is important for their business. Another important finding is that the survey has shown that over 95 per cent of employers view English language skills as important in different countries of the world, especially those that do not consider it as an official language. They also found that English is significantly increasing for business in both native and non-native English-speaking countries. It is worth noting that the survey tackled employers all around the world, and received responses mainly from East Asian countries and territories.

The purpose of our research study is to explore the factors that affect students' choice of English Studies as a major; and its labor market horizons in the Moroccan context.

In addition to the main factors studied in the empirical literature, we emphasize the impact of many new variables that are related to the Moroccan context. Thus, we study the declared reasons behind the choice of English as a major as well as the impact of media. We also introduce other variables such as the stream background and period of time before finding a first job in order to understand the labor market requirements and employment statuses of English graduates.

3. Research Methodology

This study relied on both quantitative and qualitative data collection strategies. A quantitative design that addresses college students' choice of English as a major in Morocco was implemented through an online survey. The latter was carried out in order to identify and report the factors that impact students' choice of English as a major and to determine individuals' job

integration status and the opportunities offered to English graduates in the Moroccan labor market.

In order to complement and explain the quantitative results, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with the directors of two recruiting agencies operating respectively in the private and public sectors in Morocco. This qualitative analysis also included a semi- structured interview with an English graduate who is a member and a representative of the Alumni Association of Ben M'sik Letters and Humanities Faculty (Hassan II university, Casablanca).

3.1. The quantitative data collection strategy

3.1.1. *Survey conduction and global characteristics of the sample*

The questionnaire was answered by a total of 444 students belonging to 11 Moroccan universities. It consisted of 25 questions divided into three main sections. The first section addressed the demographic, socioeconomic and educational factors. Age, gender, university, number of years studying English, as well as the personal reasons motivating the choice of English as a major constitute a non-exhaustive list of the variables that were gathered in this section.

The second section addressed the determinants related to media and information technology means use and exposure. The third section sought to determine the job opportunities of English major graduates in Morocco through asking questions about the latest degree obtained, stream background, current job status, job title and other variables (See appendix 1).

It is important to note that the first and second sections were addressed to both undergraduate and graduate students of English major. The third section, related to the job opportunities of English major, targeted only graduate students.

The survey was administered among three categories of students: freshmen who are majoring in English, former students who graduated as licence, master or doctorate holders and are currently in the job market, and students who have at least a bachelor degree and are currently pursuing higher studies.

The survey was conducted over a four weeks period. The sampled population belongs to 11 Moroccan universities and 444 questionnaires were answered.

3.1.2. Use of the bivariate analysis

To analyze the gathered data, we have adopted a bivariate analysis. This method consists in studying the relationship between two variables by testing the presence of a correlation (or association) between them. As an example, the following question can be asked: does gender (explanatory variable) affect the choice of English as a major (explained variable)? In other words, are females (or males) more likely to choose English as a major?

If proven, the association between these two variables (gender and English choice) would make us formulate conclusions about our sample that could be generalized to the population of students studying English as a major. In the specific case of the gender example, we might conclude that females are more likely to choose English in higher education compared to males. Such results must be tested, thus the paragraph on the validity test will shed light further on the testing strategy.

3.1.3. Test of validity: the Pearson's Chi-Square Test

The appropriate test to verify the validity of these cross-tabulations is the Pearson's chi-square test for independence, commonly symbolized as $\chi 2$, based on Gujarati (2003). As our data is categorical, which means that it has been counted and divided into categories and sub-categories (groups of those who chose English as a major vs. those who did not, groups of those who are currently working vs. those who are not, intervals of age…etc.); the $\chi 2$ test is therefore the most adequate test to verify the goodness of fit of such data. In other words, it measures how well the observed distribution of data fits with the distribution that is expected if the variables are independent**.**

3.2. The qualitative analysis: semi-structured interviews

Three semi-structured interviews were conducted with the directors of two recruiting agencies and an English graduate alumnus. Our sample was chosen purposely. The three participants were given a consent form before the conduction of any. The interviews' duration ranged between 30 and 45 minutes. Appendix 2 includes an original copy of the interview consent form. Appendix 3 retraces each interview and emphasizes the main ideas that were discussed. Thematic content analysis as an inductive approach was adopted to analyze the qualitative data. In terms of validation, information retrieved from the interviews was returned to the interviewees who were asked to validate or refute them.

These interviews helped understand the impact of certain exogenous variables when cross-tabulated with each of the explained variable during the quantitative analysis phase.

4. Findings and discussion

This part presents the cross-tabulations we elaborated in order to answer each research question in this study. Each cross-tabulation is validated by the χ2 test, discussed by analyzing the results, placing them in the Moroccan context, comparing them to other studies in the literature and complementing them with the qualitative analysis we developed in the present work.

4.1.Data analysis: results of statistical cross-tabulations

4.1.1. Determinants of English as Major Choice

Table 1: Choice Primacy of English as a Higher Education Field of Study According to Gender

	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
Gender	**Yes**	**No**	
Males	76.21	23.79	100
Females	73.27	26.73	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =0.5083   Pr=0.476

The χ2 test shows that there is no statistical association between the gender of the sampled individuals and their choice primacy of English as a major (Pr =0.476>0.10). This goes in line with the national statistics of 2016-2017 by the Ministry of Higher Education that showed that gender is not a discriminatory factor in the choice of English in higher education. In fact, the number of female students (5436) who chose English as a major is very close to that of male students (5530).

Previous studies in the literature never explored the effect of gender on the choice of English major specifically. Studies by Montmarquette et al. (2002), Malgwi et al. (2005), Zafar (2009), Bartolj et Polanec (2012) and Arcidiacono et al. (2010) investigated the effect of gender on major choice in a general framework. Thus, they only analyzed in different contexts what decisions individuals take when choosing their major in higher studies according to their

gender. Consequently, our study is the first to analyze the effect of gender on English major choice.

Table 2: Choice Primacy of English as a Higher Education According to Age

	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
Age	**Yes**	**No**	
Less than 20 YO	83.33	16.67	100
Between 20 & 30 YO	72.99	27.01	100
Over 30 YO	85.71	14.29	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =4.0358   Pr=0.133

Although the χ2 test results show that there are no significant differences between the students' age and their choice of English as a major, it seems that the oldest and the youngest among the sample are more likely to choose English as a primary higher education discipline.

To the best of our knowledge, this variable was never introduced in previous studies dealing with the choice of English as a major.

Table 3: Choice Primacy of English as a Higher Education According to the Presence of a Relative Who Studied English

Presence of a relative who studied English	**Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)**		**Total**
	Yes	**No**	
Yes	76.35	23.65	100
No	73.22	26.78	100
Total	74.66	25.34	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =0.5695   Pr=0.450

In the context of our study, the presence of a relative who studied English does not seem to statistically influence the individuals' choice of English as a major (Chi2 (1) =0.5695 and Pr

=0.450). In our qualitative analysis, however, it seems that the choice of English as a major might be explained by such variable (See Appendix 2).

As previously mentioned in the literature review, many studies proved that this factor, introduced in various forms, such as parental influence, a family member's influence, a professor or teacher's impact…etc.; determines the choice of particular majors (Astin (1993), Keillor and Bush & Bush (1995), Titus & West (1996), Calkins & Welki (2006), Farley & Staniec (2004), Zhang (2007) and Aggrawal (2008) among others.)

Table 4: Declared Reasons behind the Choice of English as a Major

Declared reasons behind the choice of English as a major	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
I love the language	77.29	22.71	100
A relative or teacher advised me/studied English	53.33	46.67	100
It offers better job opportunities	80.00	20.00	100
I want to study or work abroad	69.57	30.43	100
It is a universal language	50.00	50.00	100
It is the language of entertainment	0.00	100.00	100
I like the US or the American culture	50.00	50.00	100
For research purposes	66.67	33.33	100
I did not have another choice	75.00	25.00	100
I have not been eligible for integrating other departments	0.00	100.00	100
Other	50.00	50.00	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (10) =18.4897   Pr=0.047

The $\chi 2$ independence test shows that differences in the students' decisions of choosing English as a major differ significantly according to their declared reasons behind this choice at a 5% threshold (Pr=0.047). The highest percentages are among those who love the language

(77.29%), those who think that English Studies offer better job opportunities (80%), those who want to study or work abroad (69.57%), those who have research purposes (66.67%) and those who did not have another choice upon completing their secondary education (75%).

It is worth mentioning that the way we constructed this variable gave us the opportunity to understand the influence of specific factors on the choice of English as a major thanks to the modalities we introduced in the questionnaire. The results we obtained are largely shared in the literature. Malgwi et al. (2005), Arcidiacono et al. (2010), Dietz (2010), Baker & Griffin (2010), Wiswall& Zafar (2011), Moore &Shulock (2011), Wiswall& Zafar (2011), Zafar (2013) as well as Jaradat (2015) highlighted the impact students' enjoyment of a course or interest in the subject.

The expected job opportunities, earnings or statuses are also important factors determining English major choice, not only in our sample, but also in different studies. For instance, Cebula & Lopes (1982), Berger (1988a), Boudarbat (2008) and Jaradat (2015) found that the expected earnings as well as career advancement opportunities are important determinants of English major choice.

All these results are also confirmed by our qualitative analysis. Students appear to choose English as a major because of their love and interest in the language, the job opportunities they could get in the labor market (teaching in the public and private sectors, job opportunities in certain sectors such as in embassies, translation, journalism, interpretation positions…etc.)

The declared factors that influence students' choice of English fall into the elements of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations based on the self-determination theory. Thus, interest in the subject and love of the language are explained by the intrinsic motivations' students have towards the English language. As for future job opportunities, the willingness to study or work abroad as well as the influence of a teacher or a relative who studied English are all factors justified by the extrinsic motivations' students show towards their choice of English as a major.

4.1.2. The Effects of Media Means and IT

Most of the studies that dealt with effect of media on the choice of a major focused on the impact of exposure to television. In addition to media exposure, our study deepens the analysis of media means and IT's impact by introducing various questions about the languages used when navigating on social media or when using electronic devices, research engines as well as the time devoted to watching English programs.

Table 5: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used for social media

The main language used for social media	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
Arabic	72.66	27.34	100
English	75.25	24.75	100
French	84.62	15.38	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =1.0079 Pr=0.604

The variables "main language used for social media" and "the choice primacy of English as a major" do not seem to be statistically dependent (Pearson Chi2 (2) =1.0079 and Pr=0.604). In other words, there is no association between the language used in social media and the students' probability of choosing English as a major.

Table 6: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used for TV/Radio/Newspapers

The main language used for TV/Radio/Newspapers	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
Arabic	75.22	24.78	100
English	77.32	22.68	100
French	50.00	50.00	100
Other	50.00	50.00	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (3) =8.4998 Pr=0.037

The statistical association between the main language used for TV/Radio/Newspaper and the choice primacy of English as a major is significant at a 5% level with a probability of 0.037. Those who mostly use English when consulting media means are more likely to choose English as a higher education discipline (77.32%). This proportion represents 75.22% among those who use Arabic and 50% for those who use French or other languages.

Table 7: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used for Internet/Google/Research Engines

The main language used for internet/Google/research engines	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
Arabic	74.74	25.26	100
English	74.56	25.44	100
French	100.00	0.00	100
Other	0.00	100.00	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (3) =4.9967 Pr=0.172

The language used for internet/Google/research engines and the choice of English as a higher education discipline do not seem to present a significant statistical dependence. The cross-tabulation shows however that 75 % of students who use respectively Arabic and English are also those who chose English as a major.

Table 8: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used on the Mobile Phone

The main language used on the mobile phone	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
Arabic	100.00	0.00	100
English	75.91	24.09	100
French	62.75	37.25	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =6.5364 Pr=0.038

The differences between the variables "main language used on the mobile phone" and the "choice primacy of English as a major" are statistically significant at a 5% threshold with a probability of 0.038. All of those who use Arabic on their mobile phones choose English as a major upon completing secondary education. This percentage is close to 76% and 63% among those who use respectively English and French.

Table 9: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used on the Laptop

The main language used on the laptop	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	No	
Arabic	66.67	33.33	100
English	78.51	21.49	100
French	60.87	39.13	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =12.1170 Pr=0.002

Statistically speaking, the association between the main language used on the laptop and the choice primacy of English is very strong. The $\chi2$ independence test results are significant at the 1% level with a probability of 0.002.

Table 10: Choice of English According to the Main Language Used for the Email

The main language used for the email	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	No	
Arabic	100.00	0.00	100
English	76.32	23.68	100
French	64.52	35.48	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =4.6124   Pr=0.100

The main language used for the email is also statistically dependent with the choice primacy of English at the 10% level. All of those who use Arabic in their electronic correspondences choose English as a major, compared to those who use English and French representing respectively 76.32% and 64.52%.

Table 11: Choice of English and Watching Programs in English

Watching programs in English	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
Yes	74.65	25.35	100
No	78.57	21.43	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =0.1105   Pr=0.740

Watching programs in English and the choice of English as a major are statistically independent (Chi2 (2) =0.1105 and Pr=0.740).

Table 12: Choice of English According to the Time Devoted to Watching Programs in English Weekly

Time devoted to watching programs in English weekly	Choice primacy of English as a higher education discipline (in %)		Total
	Yes	**No**	
3 hours or less	81.03	18.97	100
3-6 hours	75.19	24.81	100
Over 6 hours	70.90	29.10	100
Other	70.00	30.00	100
Total	74.77	25.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =4.0475 Pr=0.256

The present cross-tabulation shows that the time devoted to watching programs in English has no association with the students' decision of choosing English as a major (Chi2

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(2) =4.0475 Pr=0.256). In addition, watching programs in English for longer hours does not mean either a higher probability of choosing English.

4.1.3. Determinants of English Graduates' Job Market Integration

Table 13: Labor Market Integration Status According to the Stream Background

Stream background	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	Not working	
Cultural studies	52.94	47.06	100
Linguistics studies	50.63	49.37	100
Other	41.07	58.93	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =1.9117   Pr=0.384

The stream background of the sampled students is not statistically associated with their labor market integration status, defined in our analysis by two modalities: working and not working. The $\chi 2$ independence test results show no dependence between both variables. The qualitative analysis showed that stream background does not affect the integration in the labor market. Moreover, the interviews we conducted with the directors of the recruiting agencies helped us understand that recruiters do not consider the educational background when hiring their candidates. In other words, mastering the language is a sufficient condition for recruiters to hire candidates in positions that require English proficiency.

Table 14: Labor Market Integration Status According to the Last Obtained Degree

Last obtained degree	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	Not working	
Bachelor degree	47.02	52.98	100
Master degree	57.14	42.86	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =1.1871   Pr=0.276

The educational level, approached by the last obtained degree (bachelor and master degrees), is also not statistically dependent with the labor market integration status. We understand that whether with a bachelor or a master degree, the educational level might not affect the sampled individuals' status in the labor market. This result is in line with the previous analysis we made for the stream background factor. In addition, according to the directors of the recruiting agencies, the degree is only required when applying for positions in the public sector.

Table 15: Labor Market Integration Status According to the Gender

	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	Not working	
Males	36.26	63.74	100
Females	58.93	41.07	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =10.3227 Pr=0.001

Individuals' gender affects strongly their status in the labor market. The association between the two variables is statistically significant at the 1% level, with a χ2 probability of 0.01. The cross-tabulation shows that among male English graduates only 36.26% were working at the time of the investigation, while this percentage is of about 59% for female graduates. This shows that female English graduates are more likely to integrate the Moroccan labor market compared to their fellow male graduates.

Table 16: Labor Market Integration Status According to the Age

Age	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	Not working	
Less than 20 YO	0.00	100.00	100
Between 20 & 30 YO	47.28	52.72	100
Over 30 YO	66.67	33.33	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (2) =3.4224 Pr=0.181

Age is not statistically associated with the labor market integration status (Chi2 (2) =3.4224 Pr=0.181). However, the cross-tabulation emphasizes that those who are aged 20 years old or less do not work, which is mainly explained by the fact that they might still be in college at the moment of the investigation. 66.67% of those who are aged 30 years old or more are working,

compared to 47.28% of those whose ages are in the interval 20-30 years old. This behavior can be justified by the fact that younger individuals in the sample might still be studying in college, unemployed due to lack of experience, engaged in internships or jobs they do not consider as stable.

Table 17: Labor Market Integration Status According to the University

University	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	**Not working**	
Hassan II University	61.17	38.86	100
Other Universities	36.00	64.00	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =12.8606 Pr=0.000

The university to which the sampled individuals belong and the labor market integration status of those individuals are statistically and significantly associated at the 1% threshold, with Chi2 (1) =12.8606 and Pr=0.000. 61.17% of those who graduated from Hassan II University are working, compared to 36% of those who graduated from other Moroccan Universities.

Although we haven't introduced this variable as it was adopted in previous studies (college reputation), it seems that our highly significant results showing Hassan II University graduates are more integrated in the labor market cannot directly be linked to the reputation of the University. This can be explained by two main reasons: first, most of our observations come from Hassan II University as it has three faculties of letters and humanities, compared to other universities in the country. Second, since Hassan II University is situated in Casablanca, the economic capital of Morocco, we assume that most of its graduates will integrate the local job market easily compared to students who graduated from other universities. In fact, we might also say that students originating from other universities and with different educational backgrounds frequently move to Casablanca or other major cities in Morocco in order to find job opportunities.

Table 18: Labor Market Integration Status According to the Number of Years Studying English

Number of years studying English	Labor market integration status (in %)		Total
	Working	**Not working**	
Less than 3 years	46.15	53.85	100
Between 3 and 6 years	54.72	45.28	100
Between 7 and 8 years	47.06	52.94	100
More than 9 years	46.88	53.13	100
Total	48.77	51.23	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =1.0245 Pr =0.795

The number of years spent studying English seems to have no significant association with the Labor market integration status. The $\chi 2$ probability is 0.795, which is extremely higher than the statistically accepted error margin if 0.1. Previous studies have not introduced this variable in their analyses.

4.1.4. Determinants of Job Opportunities Offered to English Graduates in the Job Market

Table 19: Current Employment Status According to the University

University	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	**Employed in the private sector**	**Employed in the public sector**	**Other**	
Hassan II University	11.11	36.51	49.21	3.17	100
Other Universities	5.56	50.00	44.44	0.00	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (1) =3.0370 Pr=0.386

According to the results of the $\chi 2$ test (Chi2 (1) =3.0370 and Pr=0.386), English graduates' university of origin does not seem to affect the nature of the job opportunities offered to them. The decomposition of the sampled individuals based on their university and sector of

employment shows, however, that about half of the students originating from Hassan II University are employed in the public sector (49.21%), 36.51% of them work in the private sector and 11.11% are self-employed. For other universities, half of the students are employed in the private sector, 44.44% of them work in the public sector and only 5.56% are self-employed.

Table 20: Current Employment Status According to the Gender

Gender	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	Other	
Males	3.03	33.33	60.61	3.03	100
Females	12.12	45.45	40.91	1.52	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (3) =4.8284 Pr=0.185

The χ2 test shows that there is no statistical association between the gender of the sampled individuals and their current employment status (Pr=0.185>0.10). The cross- tabulation shows that English graduates in our sample, whether males or females, are mostly concentrated in the private and public sectors, with respectively 41.41% and 47.47%. Only 9.09% of them choose to create their own business.

Table 21: Current Employment Status According to the Age

Age	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	Other	
Between 20 and 30 YO	9.20	37.93	50.57	2.30	100
Over 30 YO	8.33	66.67	25.00	0.00	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (3) =3.8400 Pr =0.279

Age is not statistically associated with the English graduates' current employment status (Chi2 (3) =3.8400 Pr =0.279). The table shows also that 50.57% of the age interval [20- 30] years old

are concentrated in the public sector, while 66.67% of those aged 30 years old or more are employed in the private sector.

Table 22: Current Employment Status According to the Last Degree Obtained

Last obtained degree	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	Other	
Bachelor degree	10.13	37.97	50.63	1.27	100
Master degree	5.00	55.00	35.00	5.00	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (3) =3.5016 Pr=0.321

The educational level does not appear to be statistically dependent with the current employment status of the sampled individuals. This result confirms the cross tabulations elaborated in the previous section.

Table 23: Current Employment Status According to the Period Spent Before Finding a First Job

Period spent before finding a first job	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	Other	
One month	12.90	35.48	45.16	6.45	100
Two to six months	11.36	36.36	52.27	0.00	100
Seven months or more	0.00	58.33	41.67	0.00	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (6) =9.9265 Pr=0.128

The χ2 test results show that there are no significant differences between the students' current employment status and the period of time they spent before finding their first fit.

Table 24: Current Employment Status According to the Stream Background

Stream background	Current employment status (in %)				Total
	Self-employed	Employed in the private sector	Employed in the public sector	Other	
Cultural studies	19.44	36.11	41.67	2.78	100
Linguistics studies	5.00	40.00	52.50	2.50	100
Other	0.00	52.17	47.83	0.00	100
Total	9.09	41.41	47.47	2.02	100

Pearson Chi2 (6) =9.0606 Pr=0.170

The stream background of English graduates does not seem to be statistically associated with their current employment status (Chi2 (6) =9.0606 Pr=0.170), which confirms the results obtained in the previous section.

4.2.Summary

Our findings showed that most of our sampled students chose English as their major. It was their first choice as a higher education discipline. Since 2013, enrollment in English Studies as a major has witnessed unprecedented levels, according to the higher education ministry statistics of 2016-2017. This had led us to question the reasons behind that choice.

When it comes to the factors that influence students' choice of English as a major, our quantitative findings show that the sampled individuals chose English as a major for the following reasons: *it offers better job opportunities*, *they love or are interested in the language*, *they did not have another choice*, *English to study or work abroad*, *for research purposes*, *a relative or teacher advised them or studied English*. These results go hand in hand with our qualitative data, support them, and answer the first research question which is: What are the factors that affect students' choice of English as a major?

As for the effect of media on the English major choice, the results confirmed our previous hypothesis which answers the following question: Do media affect students' choice of English as a major? The statistical results revealed that exposure to TV, radio and newspapers influence the students' choice of English as a major significantly. The statistical results also showed that

the language used (English) on the mobile phone, laptop and email affect students' choice of English major. Thus, we can conclude that media significantly influence the students' choice of English as major in Morocco.

Both the qualitative and quantitative gathered data helped us in answering the third research question which is: What are the job opportunities of English major in Morocco? The quantitative data helped in defining the positions held by our sampled individuals who fall into three major groups: working in the public sector, working in the private sector, and self-employed. As for the interviewees, they gave us an idea about the job opportunities offered in the Moroccan labor market. Examples of the job opportunities, fall into the following domains: trade & business; management; tourism; off-shoring; embassies; call-centers; airports; teaching; communication; translation & interpretation, etc.

When it comes to the graduates' integration in the job market, our statistical findings revealed that gender and university significantly affect the graduates' integration in the labor market in Morocco. On the one hand, our interviewees emphasized that gender and university, on the overall, does not really influence the graduates' integration in the labor market, except for certain specific private jobs (such as hostesses and SPA jobs). On the other hand, both qualitative and quantitative data confirmed that degree, age, the number of years studying English and the stream background play no role in the integration of the graduates into the labor market. These results, in fact decline our hypothesis for the fourth research question which suggested that stream background is a determining factor for the graduates' integration in the labor market.

4.3. Internal and external validity of the bivariate analysis' results

4.3.1. Internal Validity

Our analysis used multiple independent variables to explain the three endogenous variables we adopted in order to answer each one of the research questions in this study. Most of the results we obtained are compatible with what was found in the major choice empirical literature. Many of our cross-tabulations showed the effect of certain independent variables on the choice of English as a major: the declared reasons behind the choice of English as a major and the media means or languages used to access them have significant effect in such choice.

The same conclusions can be drawn concerning the labor market integration of English graduates. Two independent variables proved to be significant in explaining each of the endogenous variables, namely gender and university of origin. These results do not conclude that the other explanatory variables have no effect on the explained variable. In fact, the qualitative analysis we conducted proved that their non significance is due to some specific aspects of the labor market in Morocco, as it is commonly explained by the interviewees that stream background for example has no significant effect on graduates' integration status (working or not working) in the labor market. This justification is also valid when examining the results of the cross-tabulations related to the third endogenous variable "employment status".

Thus, our results are internally valid and give insight on the English major choice, labor market integration and job opportunities offered to English graduates' phenomena. This research is the first of its kind to assess such behavior in the Moroccan context. However, other factors that were not included in this research might have given more insight into the choice of English as a major, the labor market integration and status in the Moroccan context.

Consequently, further research in this field in Morocco should include other socio-economic variables such as household revenues, parents' educational level, residence area…etc.

4.3.2. External Validity

Since our results are obtained from a large dataset that covers all the Moroccan public universities, we can conclude that our results can be generalized to the whole population of freshmen who are majoring in English, former students who graduated as licence, master or doctorate holders and are currently in the job market, and students who have at least a licence degree and are currently pursuing higher studies.

5. Research limitations

Two limitations characterize our research study. The first limitation we consider is the lack of previous studies on the choice of English as a major and its horizons, not only in the context of Morocco but also worldwide. However, the importance and prospects of English as a language have been extensively explored both nationally and internationally. To the best of our knowledge, our research is the first of its kind to study the English major choice in Morocco. We believe that our work would give insight for future generations to further investigate not

only the prospects of this major, but also research it in view of making it better suited for the job market, especially in the context of Morocco.

Second, although our study introduced new variables that have not been explored by the aforementioned case studies on different major choices, we believe that other variables such as socioeconomic factors and educational background of the parents as well as the university environment would have given more insight to our work by analyzing students' choice of English as a major had there been investigated in this research.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

English Studies as a major has become a popular choice among Moroccan students. Both English graduates and undergraduates have shown high awareness of the importance of English in the Moroccan job market. They, however, are not aware that English as an academic degree may not be sufficient for their integration in the job market. As highlighted earlier, the two interviewed recruiting directors emphasized the value of the mastery of English as a language for any kind of job, students have to acquire other skills and degrees that comply with the need of the Moroccan job market. In addition to the English language, a good mastery of the French language too, as well as skills in IT, business, management or accounting are highly demanded in the job market.

A degree in English Studies is considered only "a passport without a visa", as one of our interviewees highlighted. It only qualifies for certain jobs such as teaching and translation. Students reach university in order to find a job and not to learn academic knowledge which should not be the case. English undergraduates should develop other skills as they are preparing for their degree so they can easily integrate the job market, as there is always a high demand for people mastering the English language.

Beside the fact that English facilitates communication and mobility, its mastery as a foreign language has become a must for employability in Morocco, especially in the context of a globalized world. The great number of international partners in Morocco creates endless job opportunities for both learners and students of English in the job market.

Our findings, in addition to the statistics provided by the higher education ministry, have shown that there is a growing number of students choosing English as their academic career. This in turn has helped us in answering the following questions:

The growing interest of choosing English as a major among Moroccan students has led us to raise the following questions: *What are the factors that affect students' choice of English as a major? Do media influence students' choice of English as a major? What are the job opportunities of English graduates in Morocco? Is stream background a determining factor for students' integration in the job market?*

Our results, first, helped us in defining the factors that affect students' choice of English as a major such as: the job opportunities English offers, the students' interest in the language, the lack of a better choice, or the choice of English in order to study or work abroad, or English for research. Second, results also have also revealed that the exposure to certain media means such as TV and radio as well as the language used for some media devices, the mobile phone and laptop, influence students' choice of English as a major. Several studies investigated different major choices worldwide, but English as a major choice was not the subject of any of those studies, especially in the Moroccan context, to the best of our knowledge. Third, the results give an idea about the importance of English in the job market and provide valuable information about the requirements needed for graduates in order to integrate it. These results not only add to the amount of research done on this particular area of study (major choice), but also give insight to future baccalaureate students willing to pursue English as a university major, its importance and job opportunities.

From a methodological point of view, our study is the first of its kind to apply both quantitative and qualitative strategies design in order to assess the English major choice behavior in the Moroccan context. The sample we exploited was characterized by its representativeness as all Moroccan public universities offering English Studies are included. Thus, our results can be generalized to the whole population of students studying English in Morocco.

The statistical bivariate analysis we adopted has given us insight about the most important factors impacting the choice of English as a major, the labor market integration of English graduates and their employment status. Such results might orient public policy makers to the most appropriate measures to undertake in order to promote employment for this category as young workers in the Moroccan labor market.

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