# Emerging Intercultural Identity in the Turkish EFL Context

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*Abstract*

*The paper argues that for individuals to develop intercultural identity, they do not necessarily need to experience intercultural experiences. A questionnaire devised by the author is administered to 227 Turkish learners of English aged 19-23. The findings of self-reported responses to a 37-item questionnaire as well as the qualitative data reveal that learners feel they have a slightly different identity and that English is an asset, a passport to a world of new experiences in socialization and cross-cultural communication.  The paper concludes that it is legitimate to speak of intercultural identity in the absence of direct contact with L2 community.*
*Keywords: English, foreign language learning, Turkey, L2 culture, intercultural identity*

# İngilizcenin Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğretildiği Ortamda Ortaya Çıkan Kültürlerarası Kimlik

*Özet*

*Makale, kültürlerarası kimliğin ortaya çıkması için kişilerin illa kültürlerarası deneyimi yaşamasına gerek olmadığını savunur. Yazar tarafından geliştirilen anket İngilizce öğrenen 19-23 yaşları arasındaki 227 Türk katılımcıya uygulanmıştır. 37 maddelik anketten ve mülakatlardan elde edilen bulgular göstermektedir ki katılımcılarda kısmen farklı bir kimlik oluşmuştur ve İngilizce, sosyalleşme ve kültürlerarası iletişimde yeni deneyimlere kapı aralayan bir servet ve pasaporttur. Son olarak makale, dili öğrenilen toplumun içinde bulunmadan da kültürlerarası kimlikten söz edilebileceğini belirtir.*
*Anahtar Sözcükler: İngilizce, yabancı dil öğrenimi, Türkiye, ikinci kültür, kültürlerarası kimlik*

Issues of second/foreign language learning are increasingly being explored in regard to its effects for the learner and learner's self-conceived sense of community (Peirce,1995; Pavlenko, 2002). This is not surprising given the fact that the language learning is bound to eventually influence the learner both as an individual and as a member of one or more communities. Brown (1986), for instance, observes that learning a second language inevitably involves learning of the culture of that language. In this vein, English language learning in foreign language contexts such as those in Japan, South Korea and Turkey opens new prospects for the learner to join the global English speaking community. The type of cultural modification resulting from learning English as a foreign language (EFL) typify the notion of acculturation.Schumann (1978) coined a concept: 'acculturation': social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language group while residing in it. Schumann argued that acquiring a second language is part of the acculturation process, and the degree of language proficiency is determined by the magnitude the learner acculturates into the language majority group. The extent to which a learner acculturates is measured by his/her quantity and quality of contact with the target language group in the form of assimilating into the target language group, adapting to target language (L2) culture, sharing social environments, and having positive attitudes towards the members of the target language. While Schumann establishes an equation between level of integration and language proficiency, Lambert (1963) considers the integration component as a byproduct of language learning: "an individual successfully acquiring a second language gradually adopts various aspects of behavior which characterizes members of another linguistic-cultural group" (p. 114). This is more so if the learner has positive attitudes toward the L2 community and is oriented to learn more about the other cultural community, perhaps with a view to becoming a member of that group, especially if s/he has integrative motivation (Gardner, 1985).

Gardner & Smythe (1975) observed that one of the many outcomes of language learning is non-linguistic. Non-linguistic outcome refers to the other consequences of language learning, which may include an interest in using the language, an open appreciation of the other language community,

increased motivation to learn more, and most importantly, shifting the cultural position of the learner. The continuum between learner's L1 culture (i.e. when monolingual) and learner's L2 culture (i.e. when bilingual) can be called 'intercultural' continuum. Learners typically move from L1 culture to L2 culture as they master L2. As a result, learner's self-conceived cultural identity moves from the former to the latter. It is this domain of language learning experience that this paper addresses. In other words, it examines whether English learning brings about a change in the cultural identity of learners. If so, do they have a somewhat different, new or mixed cultural identity that results from language learning alone? Does the prospect of being a part of the English-speaking world supply motivational impetus for learners to feel closer to an imagined cultural group? The study begins by situating the literature review in the social approaches to language learning. Post-structuralism is the approach investigated next, as it provides the right framework to examine the non-linguistic causes and outcomes of additional language learning. Issues of change in the learner identity and culture as s/he becomes more proficient in English, whether this change is solely imposed by the language learning are subsequent themes to be investigated. The relationship between language learning and its broader (e.g. social) consequences has been noted (Norton, 1997; Pavlenko, 2002; Canagarajah, 2006; Kim, 2008) As a consequence, what can be called a social approach to language learning has been developed to understand social, cultural, interactional dynamics, and learner characteristics. Canagarajah (2006) believes that this approach may help us better understand "…motivation and language acquisition in terms of social participation and cultural identity construction …" (p.9). This expectation has its roots in recent history. More than two decades ago, Giles and Johnson (1987) developed ethno-linguistic identity theory for contexts in which multilingualism is prevalent. According to the theory, language is a salient marker of group membership and thus social identity. Depending on the intricate social forces that determine the use of one language over another (usually host language is preferred to L1), speakers may either use the two languages in different contexts or in the same discourse, or may stop using one of the languages to establish a positive social identity. In the case of the latter, the ethno-linguistic vitality of L1 is placed in jeopardy, likely to cause language loss or attrition.

Research on successful second language acquisition has also been interested in the social variables of the learner. Poststructuralist approaches view language learning as a socialization process, (rather than simply cognitive) for which interaction is crucial (Pavlenko, 2006). They further view the outcome of L2 learning as springing from two main causes: 1) the availability of linguistic resources for L2 learners in the L2 through the subject positions such as race, ethnicity, class, and gender, and 2) the range of identities available to them in the L2 (Pavlenko, 2002: 285). The outcome of L2 learning then is determined by the desires of L2 learners a) to cross boundaries and assimilate to the new communities, b) to become members of multiple communities, and c) to construct new and mixed linguistic identities. In this paradigm of research, Peirce (1995) observes that "when learners speak English, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 18) She argues that the fact that the learner is investing in language learning can inform us of the desires and inspirations of the learner about the social world with which s/he intends to interact. In light of this statement that language learner is bound to have "a complex social identity and multiple desires" (p.17). Peirce takes the position that identity relates to desire for recognition, affiliation, security and safety. Two key issues for her in the construction of identity are learner's investment in the target language and the learner's social relationship with the members of target language.

Studies on issues of acculturation, identity construction, intercultural identity and imagined communities usually focus on context where English is used as a second language (Kramsch, 1993; Peirce, 1995; Norton, 1997; Kim (2008). Such studies are also extended to foreign language learning contexts. One such study for the Turkish context is Atay & Ece (2009). They did a study on identity construction by Turkish prospective teachers of English, who define themselves as Muslim-Turkish, under the influence of intensive English language education at a state university in Istanbul. They found that participants developed an additional identity, Western identity, due to exposure to English (and the culture associated) and possible avenues for worldwide communication as well as investment for a profession. Further, Western identity coupled with proficiency in English enabled them to transcend their cultural boundaries, to interact with other cultures and to communicate with others who do not necessarily

possess similar worldviews. Participants stated that Western identity does not necessarily clash with the Muslim and Turkish identities and that they could accommodate the new element in their identity.

Another study done in foreign language study is Vasilopoulos (2015). He addressed the issue of L2 identity construction and negotiation in the context of Korea. He examined how actual use of English in daily routine shapes self and social identity of Koreans who lived in an English-speaking country for more than four years. Vasilopoulos found that native-like English speech among Koreans is discouraged, forcing participants to conceal their L2 ability and L2 identity. They expressed wish to use English in areas other than educational settings and institutions. Even when they use their English with close friends and family members, they were regarded as showing-off.  The study concluded that participants negotiated and constructed their multiple identities within the L1 context, Korea and expressed their genuine L2 identities alongside the L1 identity.

The theoretical framework in this study is a constructivist one which views the relationship between identity and language as non-static, dynamic and continuously negotiated. Various manifestations of such an identity construction due to investment in L2 learning and use were discussed in the literature (Kramsch, 1993; Ochs, 1993; He, 1995; Peirce, 1995. For instance, Kramsch (1993) noted that sociocultural identities are not static constructs that EFL learners bring to the classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course. Rather, in actual education, identities and beliefs are co-constructed and negotiated continuously through the language being learnt (He, 1995; Peirce, 1995). For He, identity is a process of continual emerging and becoming (p.216). On a similar note, Ochs (1993: 298) states that social- constructivist orientation "captures the ebbs and tides of identity construction over interactional time, over historical time, and even over developmental time. . . . [It] allows us to examine the building of multiple, yet perfectly compatible identities-identities that are subtle and perhaps have no label, blended identities, even blurred identities". Besides, Pennycook (1994) noted that the English language teaching industry is not culturally, politically, socially, or economically neutral; rather, in the international sphere it plays a powerful role in the construction of roles, relations, and identities among teachers and students.

Kim's (2008) developed a construct of 'intercultural personhood' or 'intercultural identity' which conceptualizes social identity as a dynamic, adaptive, and transformative process. Intercultural identity is complex and ever evolving, as persons interact with other members of cultures, and is a constructive way of becoming a member of the increasingly integrated communities, both at local and global level (p.360). For Kim, the prerequisites for the emergence of intercultural identity are transportation, relocation, communication, interaction with members of other cultures, intercultural encounters, engagement in activities, learning and changing through new experiences.

Can similar phenomena occur in contexts where L2 is taught and used as a foreign language? According to numerous studies (among them are Peirce, 1995; Pavlenko, 1998, 2002, 2006, Kim, 2008), learners of foreign languages are not expected to develop intercultural identity, as they lack a context in which genuine intercultural communication, international encounters, and communicative activities can take place. The observation in this study, however, is that an intercultural identity similar to that observed in ESL contexts is emerging in EFL contexts. Therefore, it is believed that the nature and extent of experiences or relationships with the foreign language have important ramifications not only for the process of language learning, but also the emerging intercultural identity. Even if EFL learners' experiences with the foreign language are limited to classroom settings, it is important to know how they tend to position themselves in regard to the language being learned and the culture associated with English as well as the speakers of English.

Students learning languages for career at tertiary institutions such as colleges, universities coupled with previous interest and investment in the mastery of languages appear to be different, notably in comparison to other career-pursuing students studying math, sociology and so forth, in the way they position themselves differently within the society in the sense that they acquire additional allegiances for a society they have never lived in (Atay & Ece, 2009). The research agenda, then, is to explore the existence of such a phenomenon, namely intercultural identity, and if so, the extent to which they have developed it. It is against this background that this study explores the emerging intercultural identity of foreign language learners in Turkey who are believed to cherish a second cultural tie for L2 community. The present study argues that intercultural identity can emerge without these factors. It attempts to apply the idea of identity construction, in particular intercultural identity, through learning an additional

language to learners of English as a foreign language in Turkey, following the constructivist framework of Pavlenko (2002) and intercultural personhood framework of Kim (2008). The study is guided by the following research questions:

a) Do participants reveal signs of developing intercultural identity?
b) What is the impact of investment in English language learning on their worldview?
c) What are their attitudes towards the impact of English language learning?

# Method

## Research Design

Mixed-method design is adopted, which includes a questionnaire and open-ended interviews. Quantitative data from the questionnaire is checked against the qualitative data for triangulation. Three participants were selected through purposeful sampling method from among those who completed the questionnaire. The three participants chosen are thought to be 'key informants in the field who can help in identifying information-rich cases' Suri, 2011: 66).

## Participants

To see the effects of English language learning on identity, it is believed that sample population need to include participants with intensive and long-term exposure to English language. As the research aimed to obtain views of hundreds of participants, it is thought that college students majoring in English related and English-medium areas of education. The students enrolled in American Culture and Literature, English Language Teacher Training, English Language and Literature, Translation and Interpretation and English Linguistics at a state university in Ankara, Turkey, appeared to be the target population. With an age range of 18 to 23, which is the typical age range for tertiary institutions across the country, these students are believed to supply the kind of construct the study attempts to capture. The number of participants is 227, with 90 sophomores, 70 juniors and 67 seniors. The number of females is 32 while males constituted 96. The English language proficiency level across the participants can be called advanced, or B2-C1 range.

## Data Collection Tools

A large sample seemed best to collect data on the issue of how English-language learners view themselves in the face of L1 and L2 cultures. Therefore, a self-reported measure appeared feasible. Search in the literature revealed that there has not been a questionnaire to serve the purpose of the study. Therefore, the topics widely discussed in the literature have been worded into a sentence in the form of propositions such as "English opens doors for socialization". The 40 item statements produced were checked by experts, who suggested the deletion of three. Remaining 37 statements, all in English, were positively worded and a five-point Likert-type scale was used (1=strongly disagree; 2=moderately disagree; 3=Neutral 4= moderately agree; 5=strongly agree). Cronbach alpha for the questionnaire is ,81. This figure is accepted as highly reliable so that statistical output, namely Factor Analysis, can safely be done.

## Procedure

Lecturers were randomly contacted in the above-mentioned departments to administer the questionnaire, asking them to only explain the purpose and voluntary participation of the questionnaire. Questionnaires were completed in students' usual classrooms and in their class time. It took about 15 minutes for the participants to complete. Some 20 incomplete and careless questionnaire sheets were discarded. As for the face-t-face interviews, students who are believed to be articulate and cognizant of the change they have been undergoing have been selected. The interviews were not structured as such. Usually, a question covered in one item statement triggered other questions. Interviews were conducted in Turkish and responses to questions were translated and collated by the author.

# Results

The findings through quantitative and qualitative means reveal that investment in English language learning helps the emergence of L2 identity beside L1, and that English learning has supplied them with

power of communication with other users of English in the world. As for the attitudes of participants towards the leaning of English, they note the debilitative aspects of the investment, with some negative consequences for L1 and L1 identity. First, quantitative data will be examined in view of the research questions posed, followed by qualitative data.

## Analysis of Quantitative Data
### Factor Analysis

Upon the application of the factor analysis, four item statements failed to load onto any of the factors so they were deleted. These are related to 1) preference of spending holidays in English-speaking countries, 2) Turkish being an important tool to maintain national identity, 3) the need to spend time in an English-speaking country to master English, and 4) the confusion in the use of body language. Following the deletion, the factor analysis was repeated, which produced three components. A scree plot also showed a three-component division, with the first factor explaining most of the items (Table 1).

**Table 1:** *Factor Analysis with Principal Component Analysis for Intercultural Identity*

| | Components | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Item Statements | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 06 With knowledge of English, I am part of the world. | .642 | | |
| 13 With English, I am truly a world citizen. | .613 | | |
| 12 Feeling of being part of the English-speaking world makes me more proficient. | .604 | | |
| 27 After studying English, my relationship with my family has changed positively. | .593 | | |
| 14 English influences my personality to some degree. | .552 | | |
| 19 With English, I have a slightly new identity. | .535 | | |
| 10 English opens doors for socialization. | .513 | | |
| 21 In an English class, I get the feeling that I am expected to behave differently. | .510 | | |
| 23 In English classes, I am a different person. | .509 | | |
| 02 I wish I could be involved in activities in L2 culture to practice English. | .509 | | |
| 32 Sometimes I feel that I belong to The English-speaking culture. | .473 | | |
| 16 I have a right to say that English is mine too. | .468 | | |
| 04 As a bilingual, I have more things to offer the society than monolinguals. | .467 | | |
| 18 If a learner spends extra time in English, s/he is trying to integrate with L2 culture. | .465 | | |
| 11 There is a correlation between knowledge about L2 culture and L2 proficiency. | .448 | | |
| 07 I wish our classes were more like a small community of English speakers. | .417 | | |
| 01 It is much better to be bilingual. | .391 | | |
| 28 It is helpful if English and Turkish are used side by side in Turkey | .377 | | |
| 26 I find all English-speaking people friendly. | .375 | | |
| 05 If a learner is familiar with L2 culture, his/her English is likely to be better. | .353 | | |
| 29 It is OK if English becomes the second official language in Turkey. | .338 | | |
| 09 I wish to find out about the agenda of the countries where L2 is used. | .309 | | |
| 20 Our classrooms are more like a small community of English speakers. | .306 | | |
| 30 When I learn, or speak in English, I feel I am cut off from my Turkish background. | | .704 | |
| 33 Getting to know L2 has worsened my relations with people in Turkey. | | .581 | |
| 31 I'm a victim of two cultures. | | .549 | |
| 24 If we keep on learning English, Turkish may disappear in 50 years' time. | | .476 | |
| 22 My culture is ignored in English classes. | | .463 | |
| 08 It is easy for me to survive in an English-speaking country. | | .432 | |
| 17 I know enough about the English-speaking culture. | | | .657 |
| 25 I know both Turkish and the English-speaking cultures almost equally well. | | | .574 |
| 15 It is much better to be bicultural. | | | .455 |
| 03 While learning English, I have had the opportunity to get to know the English-speaking culture. | | | .408 |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. a. 3 components extracted

23 items were loaded to the first factor. Items overall emphasize the role of English in the lives of participants regarding their position in relation to English-speaking peoples. The highest loaded items (06, 13, and 12) emphasize the integration of the learner with the English-speaking world. Issues such as the following can easily be noticed: positive impact of English learning, having a slightly new identity, personality and behavior, ownership of English language, slight integration into the culture associated with English, relationship between learning English and acculturation, efficacy of using two languages, and interest in the English-speaking culture and countries. Therefore, the construct embodying the elements can be referred to as 'intercultural identity'.

The second component consists of 6 item statements. This component can be appropriately called "negative effects of English language learning", as it involves items that suggest unconstructive aspects of the learning process. Item 30 received the highest loading, which suggests that learning English is instrumental in being cut off from one's native background. The next item (33) supports the previous report in that learning can worsen one's relations with other people in Turkey. In the succeeding items, ideas such as the potential to be a victim of two cultures, the possibility that Turkish may disappear as more people learn English, and the ignoring of Turkish culture in English classes are expressed. The last item (08), however, indicates the pivotal role of English in surviving in other countries.

The third and the last component is comprised of four items. They all are related to knowledge, efficacy and learning of English-speaking culture. Therefore, this component can be called 'familiarity with the English-speaking culture'. Items 17 and 25 are about how well the participants know the English-speaking culture while 15 notes the efficacy of being bicultural for one's personal preferences. Finally, item 03 states that participants had access to the English-speaking culture during learning.

As this is an exploratory study trying to identify the cultural shifts of English language learners, it was thought that it could be illuminative to present basic endorsement rates through descriptive statistics first. Tables below list all the item statements in descending order of endorsement, that is, with the highest endorsed item being at the top of the list with the least endorsed item at the bottom. For each item mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) are supplied in the right-hand columns. Higher SD figures indicate higher levels of disagreement on an item among the participants.

### Descriptive Statistics

Data are presented and examined in three sections: 1) endorsed items (with a range from 3.50 to 5.00 on the Likert scale), 2) undecided items (from 2.50 to 3.50), and 3.00) unendorsed items (1.00 to 2.50). Table 1 presents the first category, involving 16 items.

**Table 2:** *Descriptive Statistics of Endorsed Items for Intercultural Identity (Alpha = 0.81 for 34 items)*

| Item Statements | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| 1 It is much better to be bilingual. | 4.51 | .64 |
| 2 I wish I could be involved in activities about the English-speaking culture to practice English. | 4.31 | .83 |
| 3 While learning English, I have had the opportunity to get to know L2 culture. | 4.11 | .90 |
| 4 As a bilingual, I have more things to offer the society than monolinguals. | 4.07 | .92 |
| 5 If a learner is familiar with the English-speaking culture, his/her English is likely to be better. | 3.84 | .89 |
| 6 With knowledge of English, I am part of the world. | 3.79 | 1.00 |
| 7 I wish our classes were more like a small community of English speakers. | 3.76 | 1.19 |
| 8 It is easy for me to survive in an English-speaking country. | 3.69 | .92 |
| 9 I wish to find out about the agenda of the countries where L2 is used. | 3.68 | 1.04 |
| 10 English opens doors for socialization. | 3.66 | 1.01 |
| 11 Correlation exists between knowledge about L2 culture and proficiency in English. | 3.62 | 1.03 |
| 12 Feeling of being part of the English-speaking world makes me more proficient in English. | 3.56 | 1.03 |
| 13 With English, I am truly a world citizen. | 3.52 | 1.15 |

Of the 33 items, 13 were endorsed. The highest endorsed item includes the strong preference for the efficacy of being a bilingual. Bilingualism is a lot more favored (M=4.51) than bi-culturalism (M=3.45) (cf. item 15 in Table 3). The next item states the desire of the participants to be involved in activities about the English-speaking culture. Participants believe learning English requires participation in cultural activities, pointing out the link between awareness of culture and language learning. In the next

statement item (3), they have had the opportunity to get to know the English-speaking culture. Clearly, though, the access provided to them is not sufficient, given the endorsement given to item 2.

On the efficacy of being a bilingual (item 4), participants report an endorsement level that supports their previous conviction that it is much better to be bilingual: bilinguals have more things to offer the society than monolinguals do. Clearly, learning an additional language does not only provide another means to communicate but also a means beyond language (i.e. sociological). The desire to get involved in cultural activities is echoed in the next item (5): familiarity with the culture associated with English will be supportive of proficiency and communicative competence in English. So, culture is somehow a gateway to learning English according to the participants. Knowledge of and competence in English make someone part of the world. This item can be taken to support the efficacy of being bilingual: one has more to offer one's monolingual society by being part of the world (item 6).

Item 7 shows a high endorsement of the wish to have classrooms more like a small community of English speakers. This items slightly contrasts with Item 20 (see Table 3), which implies that this is not the case. Clearly there is a need for teachers to create an atmosphere which makes learners feel they are accepted as members of a closely-knit group. Item 8 reveals that participants are equipped with the necessary communicative competence to survive in English speaking countries. People usually would not have a sense of belonging to a community if they are unable to function properly in that society. This shows that there are English speaking countries where the participants feel comfortable to be in. The next item (9) supports their previous claim: they care about the problems of these countries as they think that they are likely to face these problems. Item 10 involves what else English can do for them: a means to socialize. It is obvious that socialization is another component of entry to the world of English speaking countries. Item 11 accepts the relationship between knowledge of the English-speaking culture and proficiency in English. Higher levels of proficiency are tied to a contextualization of language. Item 12 points out strikingly that if someone associates himself/herself with the English-speaking world, the likely effect would be gaining more proficiency, probably because belongingness brings about certain rules. The last item (13) demonstrates that they can be truly world citizens with their English.

The item statements that received an endorsement mean between 2.50 and 3.50 on the Likert scale of 1 to 5 can be suitably labeled 'undecided items'. There are ten of them (Table 3). Though these items are not endorsed, what is important for us here is that these statements are not rejected. Absence of rejection can inform us of the potential development of learners toward affiliation with the English-speaking culture. For instance, item 14 reveals that participants do not reject the partial effect English language has exercised on their personality. Further, biculturalism is not dismissed as a viable cultural phenomenon. Ownership of English, that is, not yielding to the normative rules of English language use as accepted by native speakers, is owned up partially. This seems to represent a crucial standing. Another notable piece of information (item 19) is the recognition that English may modify learner identity. This statement is supported by items 20, 21, and 23. In a small community of English speakers, the participants are expected to behave differently, because of which they feel like a different person. To sum up, these findings offer new insights about the changes learners have experienced.

**Table 3:** *Descriptive Statistics of Undecided Items for Cultural Positioning*

| Items | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| 14 English influences my personality to some degree. | 3.49 | .98 |
| 15 It is much better to be bicultural. | 3.45 | 1.30 |
| 16 I have a right to say that English is mine too. | 3.22 | 1.04 |
| 17 I know enough about the English-speaking culture. | 3.07 | .94 |
| 18 If learner spends extra time in English, s/he is trying to integrate with L2 culture. | 2.97 | 1.14 |
| 19 With English, I have a slightly new identity. | 2.93 | 1.08 |
| 20 Our classrooms are more like a small community of English speakers. | 2.88 | 1.15 |
| 21 In English class, I get the feeling that I am expected to behave differently. | 2.76 | 1.11 |
| 22 My culture is ignored in English classes. | 2.56 | 1.09 |
| 23 In English classes, I am a different person. | 2.55 | 1.10 |

Unendorsed items include ten statements (Table 4). An examination of the item statements in table (4) discloses the following. Learning English does not have detrimental consequences for Turkish, L1 of the participants. Not all English-speaking people are friendly. Studying English has bettered their

relationships with their family members. English and Turkish should not be used side by side, say in correspondence with university departments, business cards, and so forth. The idea that English could be the second official language in Turkey is rejected. Learning English does not necessarily mean that learners are being cut off from their cultural backgrounds. They are not victims of two cultures, and they do not feel that they belong to the English-speaking culture.

**Table 4 :** *Descriptive Statistics of Unendorsed Items for Cultural Positioning*

| Items | M | SD |
|---|---|---|
| 24 If we keep on learning English, Turkish may disappear in 50 years' time. | 2.40 | 1.16 |
| 25 I know both Turkish and the English-speaking cultures almost equally well. | 2.40 | 1.03 |
| 26 I find all English-speaking people friendly. | 2.28 | .96 |
| 27 After studying English, my relationship with my family members has changed positively. | 2.24 | 1.01 |
| 28 It is helpful if English and Turkish are used side by side in Turkey. | 2.21 | 1.22 |
| 29 It is OK if English becomes the second official language in Turkey. | 2.10 | 1.31 |
| 30 When I learn, or speak in English, I feel I am cut off from my Turkish background. | 1.92 | .90 |
| 31 I'm a victim of two cultures. | 1.83 | .98 |
| 32 Sometimes I feel that I belong to the English-speaking culture. | 1.80 | .96 |

What is presented above is based on the reported views of participants on a set of propositions. The following sections present the qualitative data obtained from the three participants who agreed to talk about the impact of English.

## Analysis of Qualitative Data

To explore the first research question, the questions "Do you think, feel and act differently after learning English?" and "Has your identity changed?" are directed to all three participants. Emine's response was cautious but positive (names are changed for the sake of anonymity).

> "I don't think learning English affects my personality at all. I have my own identity, Turkish. But I accept that I have become more open-minded during English language learning. … I don't think learning English intensively can wipe out Turkish language and Turkish culture at all neither in the short term nor in the long."

Feriha's response was more accepting: she feels some changes have taken place in her identity but unable to describe it. Probably she has not reflected upon it up until now. She accepts that learning a language is more than simply acquiring linguistic competence.

> "I think it is a privilege to be able to speak English because with English I am part of the world, where almost everybody speaks English. Throughout my experience of learning English, it seems to me, I have developed a new slightly identity. It is hard to elaborate but yes. You see English learning does not consist of learning grammar and vocabulary alone."

Şenay's answer is a lot more elaborate as she appears to have pondered over the issue in her own time. She is well cognizant of the impact of English.

> "I feel I have a slightly different identity, somewhere in the subconscious. While speaking, writing English, this can be observed in your mimics, actions, and manners. Yes, I act differently in the English language classroom. All this tells me that I'm a different person. If I were talking in English to a person, say a Chinese professor in a plane, I wouldn't use his title (i.e. professor such and such) during the conversation. I would be more comfortable, and I would call him by his forename."

As for the second research question, "Has your worldview changed?" and "Has your relationship with others altered?" were asked. Feriha's response is very interesting in that she can realize how others see her.

> "I have been exposed to lots of cultural elements in the films we watched, books we studied, etc. The grammar I saw in the films was different from that in the books. Use of English was a lot more informal. This has influenced my picture of English. Instead of 'yes', I know I can now say 'Yeah'. I have also

become familiar with interjections like 'oops'. I realize there is a gap between me and others who don't use 'oops' in Turkey. I notice that English language learners like me are somewhat different from other sections of the community. For instance, my neighbors back at home place me in a different category. I guess this is due to my English."

Şenay appears to have realized the impact of English language learning on herself and her family members as well as monolinguals in general in terms of relationships and worldview. Her last statement in the excerpt below alerts us to a new phenomenon: she now possesses an L2 outlook on life.

"English places some barriers between me and my parents and high school friends who preferred to study other subjects at the university. … I feel there is something that separates me from this (i.e. monolingual) section of the community, but I can't describe it. If they had known English, they wouldn't have talked the way they do now; they would've known the world."

The question "What do you think of the impact English had on you, your career, your L1?" received the following responses:

Emine:

"English is very important to me, not because I will earn a living by teaching it, but because, I don't know, it is something I value very much. Yes, English is mine too, at least to a certain degree. I accept the positive relationship between knowledge of the English-speaking culture and the desire to improve English proficiency. Success is partly due the familiarity with life and other things associated with English language, and I consider myself a successful learner. … Bilingualism and biculturalism are favorable to me. I don't see any conflict between the two cultures as far as I'm concerned. Turkish and English can live side by side in harmony."

Feriha:

"As English is a passport to the rest of the world, it opens opportunities for me to socialize with other English-speaking people. Cultural activities are important for me, as it is a means to truly get to know the native speakers."

Şenay:

"With a new language, I learnt a new culture. During my English learning, I watched movies, listened to English music, got to know Hollywood stars. Since watching the Oscars on video in the classroom, I have always checked on who won what in this competition. And I have shared this with my friends. …Thanks to English, I feel that I can adapt to any social environment. English pushed me to become more social. You communicate with the world via English. I regularly read the Turkish Daily News, by means of which I catch up with what is going on in the rest of the world. I learnt 'Speak your mind'. Before, I haven't usually expressed my thoughts as freely."

From these excerpts, it is seen that for participants English is an important and valuable asset, more importantly a passport to a world different experiences in communication, socialization and cultural sphere. They seem to be convinced that investment in English language learning has given its dividends in the form of articulating ideas, being open-minded, following the developments in the world.

## Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative data reveals that Turkish learners of English as a foreign language have undergone certain changes regarding their identity, personality, membership in L1 and L2 communities, worldviews, feelings and actions. In this sense, the first research question has been answered positively: there are strong signs that in the context of Turkey, intercultural identity has emerged due to English language learning. If identity is taken as a sense of self in relation to others, there is a legitimate position to say that participants in this study see themselves different in relation others, which include both people in the L1 cultural community and in the L2 community, given the endorsement rates for various parts of the survey items. One can be right in speculating that these learners could experience a similar, perhaps much stronger, feeling of being different from other users of English if they interacted with them in an intercultural setting. Taken tighter, the evidence presented supports the view that cultural identity is never fixed; on the contrary, it is evolutionary in response to factors that have a prolonged

effect on the individual, (Tajfel, 1974; Kim, 2008; Kramsch, 1993; Norton, 1997; Pavlenko, 2002). Similar to the way a cultural identity serves as a psychological connection between an individual and a specific social community (L1), an intercultural identity can be viewed as a connection between an individual and more than one community (L2). The meaning of intercultural identity includes a vital component of an emotional identification of oneself that is not limited to one's own social group but to other cultures as well, thus projecting a viewpoint that is not narrowed to group membership but, instead, one in which one sees and identifies with others' perspectives.

The Factor Analysis produced a construct called 'intercultural identity' for the research participants (N=227). They state that they are a different person, a world citizen, a bilingual and bicultural. Further, they have slightly new personality and identity. They do follow the developments not only in the English-speaking countries but also in the world. They are interested in their agenda, and have a desire to integrate into the L1 community and they think they can survive in that environment.

The present findings echo and support the views of Fishman (1995: 51): 'Languages are not merely innocent means of communication. They stand for or symbolize people, i.e. ethnocultures …' The deeper we appreciate language, the more value we attribute to the people who speak it as well as the culture represented by that language. Language being learnt gives a sense of social identity to the person speaking it. Language supplies a collective identity to those who use it. These views are echoed in the endorsed items referring to being part of the world through English, importance of the English-speaking culture not only in improving proficiency but also appreciating the culture, and interest in the problems of the English-speaking world.

These findings are seconded by the data obtained in the interviews, especially by that from Feriha and Şenay. The concept of acculturation seems to have taken root in their experience. They feel that they are members of a world community who use English for communication, and they are ready to interact in intercultural communication settings. All three interviewees accept slight changes in their cultural transformation. They were exposed to cultural information and activities during the learning experience, this had effect on their personality. They recognize that they were local-minded before but they now have a more social attitude on life and are global-minded: they are not indifferent to issues influencing people globally. Very similar statements are voiced in Atay & Ece (2009). They found that their participants broadened their world view due to intensive and long-term English language learning. Proficiency for these participants "enabled them to interact with more than one culture, transcend cultural boundaries, and access the worldviews and ways of thinking of the others" (p. 31).

The participants in this study show features similar to those of Vasilopoulos (2015), who constructed their L2 identities alongside the L1. As has been attested in the interviews, two identities need not clash: they can live in harmony side by side, producing multiple compatible identities. However, the situation may not be as clear as that. As noted by Burke (1974, cited in Kim, 2008) in the motto "No construction without destruction", construction of the new mixed identity requires the replacement of certain features of L1 culture with those of L2 culture. As construction develops, deconstruction takes its toll. This is well exemplified by Şenay's statement: "If they had known English, they wouldn't have talked the way they do now", which is clearly a sign that demarcates Şenay from the monolingual members of the Turkish culture. Her identity development includes a case of subtraction from L1 culture and addition of L2 culture. Further, Turkish cultural identity that (has) existed before the intensive study of English was added another cultural identity: L2 culture. Both the participants in the survey and interviewees in the case studies regard themselves as different from monolinguals. This is clearly a construction of identity and culture, as they see themselves different in relation to others. These findings confirm those of Ece & Ata (2009) who found that their participants acquired a third identity – 'Western identity' - beside Turkish and Muslim. In other words, Lambert's (1963) early prediction has materialized in the context of Turkey: successful acquisition of second language gradually adopts certain aspects of behavior of the L2 community.

The findings and discussion so far reported seem to attest that foreign language learners can develop an 'intercultural identity', in a similar fashion to the well-established phenomenon called 'interlanguage' in second language acquisition studies (Selinker, 1972). Interlanguage can be described as the learner's developing (and thus temporary) knowledge and performance in L2. Interlanguage can be conceptualized as a continuum from L1 to L2, which progresses toward the L2 system with every learning stage. There are various stages which pave the way to near native-like proficiency in L2. This

metaphor can perhaps best explain the concept of intercultural identity discussed here. Interlanguage identity of learners begin to be shaped with the first attempts to learn, and is in flux as long as learning continues. Thus, intercultural identity is open, flexible and ever-changing, and is constructed with the learning of L2.

As for the education implications, higher levels of proficiency and involvement in L2 learning brings about acculturation, which may, through integrative motivation, foster higher levels of learning. Higher rating of (M=4,20) "If a learner is familiar with L2 culture, his/her English is likely to be better" reveals that the more affinity with the L2 culture will result in more grounded learning. Further, information obtained through the interviews reveals that there is positive relationship between knowledge of the English-speaking culture and the desire to improve English proficiency. Therefore, teachers may involve culture specific activities or information sessions to increase the attainment levels in English proficiency.

## Conclusion

One point that has been emphasized in this study is that investment in the learning of a foreign language is starkly different from other kinds of career-oriented investments, especially when this language (i.e. English) has assumed the role of lingua franca. Thorough the language comes the culture. Repercussions of language and culture learning notable and noteworthy. The study set out to explore the extent which foreign language learners have acquired L2 culture with little or no contact with the speakers of L2. Findings reveal that issues of acculturation, construction of identity and culture researched in L2 contexts are also relevant to EFL contexts (e.g. Turkey, Korea), and they form a legitimate area for the investigation of social identity shifts through additional language learning. It has found fresh evidence that learners' identity and culture do not remain static after a prolonged period of L2 study. Either through the culture-laden materials or in their absence, learners do develop a unique cultural identity, which is identical neither to L1 culture nor L2 culture. Learners can now no longer relate to their acquaintances as comfortable as they used to. On the other hand, they have a good knowledge of how to relate to users of English, but whether this will work or not remains to be seen when they are in contact. Though these learners have never been in intercultural contact with users of English language (be they native speakers or non-native speakers), they have developed a sense of identity imbued by English, a sense of identity that places them somewhere in a continuum from the L1 culture to the L2 culture. This can be appropriately called 'foreign language intercultural identity'.

This study has explored the shifts in the cultural orientation of advanced learners of English in Turkey. A further study could explore the phenomena in different age groups, professions as well as participants' projections not only for the future of their careers but also self-perceived identities.

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