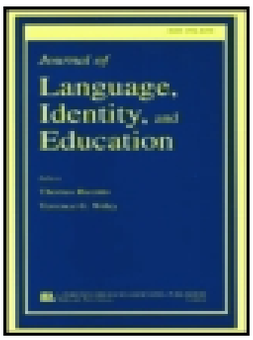

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Multiple Identities as Reflected in English-Language Education: The Turkish Perspective

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Research on language and identity have generally been conducted in predominantly English-language native speaker settings, and results have revealed the language-learning process as a complex interplay of many variables in which social roles, relationships, and identities are constantly reconstituted. This study investigates how prospective teachers of English approach the issues of foreign-language learning and changing identities in an Islamic context, namely Turkey.

Key words: identity, prospective EFL teachers, Islamic context, Western identity

Identity, in its many forms, shapes the ways human beings perceive and respond to the world they live in. People evaluate the world in all its aspects from the perspective of their personal identity. Hence, personal identity, which has cultural and religious implications, paves the way for one's understanding of the new contexts one faces. Within the domain of second- or foreign-language education, one meets new situations as well and strives to locate them in the realm of one's personal identity. This article aims to investigate the clash of multiple identities within the domain of education. Specifically, it explores the ideas of prospective teachers of English, a group of young people involved in both learning and teaching English in an Islamic context, namely Turkey.

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN TURKISH HISTORY

Given its geographical and cultural position in the international system in general, and the Middle Eastern and European subsystems in particular, some scholars have suggested that "Turkey should look simultaneously to the East and West" (Waltz, 1986). Yet throughout its modern history Turkey has identified more with the West, especially with Europe, and has established close relations with the United States while maintaining a lower profile in her relations with the Muslim Middle East from which much of its cultural heritage is derived.

The Westernization movement in Turkey goes back to the period when the Ottoman Empire started to decline in the 17th and 18th centuries. Having realized that the West's military superiority stemmed from science and technology, Ottoman statesmen tried to bring new technology

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into the country by establishing engineering, medical, military, and civil service schools with secular and positivist curricula. Even though the statesmen were trying to adopt only the material aspects of Western civilization, they could not prevent the spread of positivist ideas and cultural values of the West among the new classes created by the secular education system. In the second half of the 19th century, the impact of Westernization through reforms began to be felt both in the public domain and in the personal lives of individuals, for example, clothing, the use of money, the style of houses, and interpersonal relations all started to become European (Mardin, 1997, p. 12). Yet the reforms could not save the Empire from decline, and these unsuccessful attempts of Westernization resulted in the emergence of two political movements during the last decades of the 19th century: The Young Ottomans and the Islamists. The former group urged the state to follow the example of liberal European states in accordance with Islamic law, whereas the Islamists believed that the Ottomans started to lose their cultural identities with the reforms and thus were against the implementation of any reforms envisaged for the Westernization of the country. Abdulhamid II, who was in power at that time (1876–1909), aimed to modernize the state with Western technology but at the same time tried to prevent the spread of Western ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism, and constitutionalism, which he saw as disruptive forces.

The first organized opposition to the rule of Abdulhamid II was formed by a new generation of elite who formed a small committee called İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti (Committee of Union and Progress). The Committee of Union and Progress became the major ruling power in the Empire between 1908 and 1918, and the official ideology of modern Turkey as shaped during this period by the early Young Turks (Committee of Union and Progress members) continued "to exert its influence even today on Turkey's intellectual and political life" (Hanioğlu, 1995, p. 3). The relative freedom of discussion that marked this period as a liberating one encouraged an explosion of public debate on all kinds of political and social questions (Ünal, 1996). The political and social debates of the period were centered on three competing ideologies: Ottomanism, Islamism, and Turkish. The other ideological current, Westernization, was a constant in the middle of these ideologies, which could be differentiated by their approach to the degree of Westernization. Although Ottomanism and Islamism were not against the act of borrowing ideas and concepts that were unique to Western science and technology, the proponents of these two ideologies also wanted to formulate close relations with those in line with Islamic principles and protect the society from the harmful effects of Western culture. Their debate centered on how to "become modern while remaining oneself" (Zurcher, 1995, p. 132).

When Ottoman officials began to implement the Westernizing reforms, they had no intention of changing the identity of the state and the people. On the contrary, the purpose of these reforms was to protect the state and its Islamic character. However, the influence of the West went beyond the intended aims and took on a cultural character, which resulted in the creation of a Western identity in addition to Islamic and Turkish identities. The emergence of fundamental identities in the country eventually turned into a struggle to capture state power. The struggle ceased with the victory of the Kemalist Westernists, named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2003).

Kemalism, the official ideology of the Turkish Republic, is more than a political social system alone. In the words of Landau, it is "giving understanding and meaning to the emergence of Turkey into modern science and development; to new technology, education, ethics, as well as to new faith and work life" (as cited in Karal, 1981, p. 28). To provide Turkish citizens with a new view of the world that would replace the one shaped by religion and religious culture to a wide extent, Atatürk embarked on a movement of cultural Westernization, which he equated

with civilization (Okyar, 1984; Oran, 1997; Rouleau, 1996). In creating a new national identity, Atatürk "had to stand against the Muslim concept of political identity which had been the legitimate basis of the policy of the Ottoman Empire" (Takeshi, 1981, p. 228).

The full association of Turkey with the West was realized through membership in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Council of Europe in 1948 and 1949, respectively and its admission to NATO in 1952. Turkey's presence as a member state in these organizations was seen as the "ultimate sign indicating the realization of Atatürk's dream of Turkey as part of Europe" (Müftüler-Bac, 1996, p. 256).

During the Cold War period, Turkey's self-created Western identity was the most important variable in its interaction with the West. The political, economic, and commercial relations with the West, along with the introduction of the parameters of the liberal economy and the opportunities provided for free enterprise, significantly encouraged and promoted Western identity in Turkey, particularly after 1980. Under the influence of these developments, Turkish people became acquainted with many aspects of popular Western culture. As a result of this process and the prospect of Turkey's facing entry into the European Union (EU), different English words were no longer unknown for the layperson, as it was possible to see them as the names of the fast-food restaurants, shops, markets, imported items, or as terminology used for newly introduced concepts (Doğançay-Aktuna, 1998; Büyükkantarcioğlu, 2004). However, in the last few decades Europe began to emphasize cultural factors in their self-definition, creating fundamental differences between Turkey and Europe in terms of basic characteristics, values, opinions, experience, and historical commonalities. This eventually led to the increasing isolation of Turkey from Europe and created another identity crisis on the part of Turkey (Kushner, 1997).

The debates concerning Turkey's admission to the EU gave rise to a new understanding of Turkish identity. People began to discuss whether Turkey will be Westernized to such a degree that the country will be a part of the Western-Christian world by overlooking her Muslim identity and crystallizing her relationships with the Eastern countries. Thus, some Turkish people reacted to any interaction with the EU countries by claiming that Turkey will lose her predominant characteristic, that is, being a part of the Muslim and Eastern civilizations, whereas others insisted on Turkey's integration with the EU on the basis of the fact that Turkey has already adopted the Western norms and paradigms in the light of Kemal Atatürk's revolutionary principles concerning every domain of public life.

Turkish people are in fact living in a culture that is neither thoroughly Eastern nor Western. Thus, the dilemma they face is not a cultural obstacle for them but a richness that enables them to synthesize their traditional norms with those of the Western world. In other words, they do not belong to one single civilization, but to a heterogeneous cultural construct that embraces Eastern and Western values.

To summarize, being a Muslim country, Turkey has faced an identity crisis throughout its history, but this crisis came to the foreground especially during the modernization project initiated by the Turkish Republic established in 1923 (Lewis, 1961). Consequently, the Turkish people have had to resolve the dilemma that stems from the adoption of a Westernized identity that is meant to replace the age-old traditional identity shaped and molded by religious and Easternized norms and paradigms (Kadıoğlu, 1996; Öğütçü, 1994; Sayari, 1992).

The adoption of the Westernized identity brought along an increasing need to keep up with the rapidly globalizing world in terms of foreign-language proficiency, and English-language education has become an integral part of national education in Turkey.

THE CURRENT STATUS OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN TURKEY

Kachru (1985) described the spread of English in terms of three concentric circles: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The expanding circle includes countries where performance varieties of English are usually used, essentially in restricted contexts. In these countries English generally plays a role as a foreign language for international communication and for specific purposes, as in the reading of scientific and technical materials. Turkey, following this definition, is one of the countries in the expanding circle. English is neither an official language nor a second language in Turkey. It is not a remnant of colonization or the legacy of missionaries either. It is not used for intergroup communication, as Turkish is often the only lingua franca for minority groups such as Jews, Armenians, and Kurds (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005). However, the political, economic, and cultural needs—along with the technological and economic changes in the world, as well as the globalization of English and the growth in international contacts—positioned Turkey to give English a special status. Thus, there are a number of Turkish domains, such as education, business, science, and technology, where the range and depth of English parallels those in outer-circle countries (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005).

Demircan's (1988) statistical survey has shown that, whereas the total number of students learning English in secondary school was around 48,000 in the 1950s, the number reached 850,000 in the early 1970s. Doğançay-Aktuna (1998) notes that the teaching of the English language spread in a planned way in Turkey until the late 1970s; this was achieved through schooling as a result of educational policy-making processes. The consideration was and has been that proficiency in English could open up opportunities for a better future. After the 1980s, the policies of Prime Minister Özal, which fostered close political, economic, and commercial relations with the West, especially with the United States, were influential in the development of the popularity of English. It was during this period that English started to become the *sine qua non* for a successful career in virtually any field.

The predominance of English can be witnessed in almost all aspects of Turkish life: in educational domains, in technological communications, in the leisure and travel industries, as well as in youth culture. For most Turkish people, high competence in English is considered a cornerstone for the long-awaited acceptance in the EU. It is the language every Turkish citizen should learn if he or she wants to communicate beyond Turkey's borders. It is generally considered to be a means for both individual and national advancement, for example, claiming higher status and gaining economic advantage.

In terms of foreign-language education, there is an increasing demand to learn English at all levels of education. Regarding the amount of quality English education, including the hours of instruction, course books, and class sizes, there is a huge difference between public and private primary and secondary schools in Turkey. One of the major reasons why parents send their children to private primary or secondary schools is the provision of better-quality English instruction. In private schools, much more time is dedicated to English in the curriculum, and the quality and range of teaching methods and materials are advertised as compatible to the ones used in the Western world.

The major criticism of Kachru's (1985; 1992) concentric circle model is its positioning of native-speaking countries. The model seems to imply that the inner circle should be viewed as the "source of models of correctness, the best teachers and English speaking goods and services consumed by those in the periphery" (Graddol, 1997, p. 10). Similarly, Modiano (1999) believes that

Kachru's inner circle "re-establishes the notion that language is the property of specific groups" (p. 24). According to Rajadurai (2005), the "tri-circle model inadvertently reinforces the concept of the native speaker as the center of reference, thus promoting a form of linguistic imperialism and language hegemony that Kachru was determined to avoid" (p. 114). Turkey seems to be a valid example to support these criticisms. In many parts of Turkey a private school may be attractive to parents just because it offers more hours of English or just because the English teachers are native speakers. The control of content in English skills classes is often relegated completely to the inner-circle "experts" or to native teachers. A study conducted by Atay (2005) revealed the dilemmas of Turkish prospective teachers of English regarding native speaker competence and the native English teacher authority. Many prospective teachers believed that the aim of ELT should be native-like competence and that learning English from a native speaker would be better in terms of having a native-like accent.

Pennycook's (1994) claim related to the profound consequences of the predominance of English in the inner circle countries in terms of international academic relations is also highly valid for Turkey. Turkish academics who do not read and understand English risk becoming marginalized; a high degree of competence in English is a prerequisite, and extensive use must be made of materials published in English.

In the elite Turkish universities, where the medium of instruction is English, there is pressure on faculty to publish internationally to receive promotion. Thus, Turkish is made the lesser language in this context, and academicians who have had education abroad naturally benefit from their extended exposure to English.

There are conflicting attitudes toward the spread and learning of English. The results of an extensive study done on the attitudes and motivation of Turkish learners toward English indicated that Turkish high school students wanted to learn English because they thought that it would be useful in getting a good job and that the knowledge of two languages would make them better educated persons (Kızıltepe, 2000). Moreover, they were highly encouraged by their families to learn English and had positive feelings toward their English courses. It is a common belief that many young people in Turkey aim to live like a wealthy Westerner (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005).

On the other hand, there are many scholars (Ekmekçi 1995; Sinanoğlu, 2000) who feverishly criticize the increasing Anglicization of education. These people are not against learning English, yet they believe that the adoption of English as the medium of instruction is a major impediment to the development of Turkish. Moreover, they are against the increasing use of borrowed English words in colloquial Turkish. The prestige of the English language and increasing demands for it in various domains of Turkish society are seen as obstacles preventing the development of the corpus, especially scientific terms in Turkish, and as a threat to the maintenance of Turkish cultural norms (Doğançay-Aktuna & Kızıltepe, 2005). They emphasize that it is important for educated people to learn to use their mother tongue for creative and technological communication, especially for the internal development of the language.

IDENTITY IN SECOND- AND FOREIGN-LANGUAGE LEARNING

Identity is constructed in social, cultural, religious, and political contexts. It not only composes the individual conception of the self, but also the individual's interpretation of the social definition of

the self, both within one's inner group and larger society. Bhabha (1994) claims that one's cultural identity can be negotiated and translated only in an indeterminate third space between the world and the individual, and between various processes of identification in the social world and in the personal sphere whose contours are formulated by one's own understanding of self. Consequently, the questions related to identity tend to be never thoroughly resolved as "the understanding of the self" is a never-ending process. As a product of the social, cultural, and political mechanisms that operate in every domain of daily life, identity leads people to question and reformulate their possible ways of existence in a given society. This process of questioning never ends, as identity always presents itself as an experience of uncertainty and doubt (Mercer, 1990).

Language, language teaching, and materials are sociocultural phenomena, and they formulate important sites for the negotiation of various identities. According to Kramsch (1993), sociocultural identities are not static, deterministic constructs that EFL teachers and students bring to the classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course. Similarly, Norton (1997), from a poststructural perspective, concludes that the relationship between language and identity is complex, contradictory, and multifaceted, dynamic across time and space, coconstructed, contextualized in larger processes that can be coercive or collaborative, and linked with classroom practice.

A number of studies have examined the role of learners' social and cultural identities in learning English and the role of the English-teaching profession in reconstructing people's identities and roles. Yet most research on language and identity has been conducted with learners in ESL settings (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Goldstein, 1995; Kim, 2003; McKay & Wong, 1996; Morgan, 1997; Nero, 1997; Peirce, 1995). For example, Peirce highlighted in her study the importance of understanding adult immigrant women's personal, social-psychological investment in learning ESL and manifestations of those investments in their social interactions. In their study of four Chinese immigrants to Canada, McKay and Wong found that the second-language learner is set up by relations of power and may exercise resistance to the power relations. The language learner may even set up his or her own counterdiscourse that puts the learner in a more powerful position rather than a marginalized one. Duff and Uchida conducted an ethnographic study of two American and two Japanese EFL teachers in Japan and explored the interrelationships between language and culture, between teachers' sociocultural identities and teaching practices, and between their explicit discussions of culture and implicit modes of cultural transmission in their classes. Results revealed the complexities associated with teachers' professional, social, and political and cultural identification, and the reflections of these complexities in their classes. Finally, in a recent study, Kim (2003) explored the relation between language and sociocultural identities of ESL learners in a multicultural society in Malaysia. Data collected by means of interviews, personal narratives, and questionnaires revealed that in a multicultural postcolonial society, identity issues were far more complex and multilayered, and that the aforementioned identity shifts took place frequently in strategic and nonstrategic ways as the participants found their way in society in search of acceptance and belonging.

METHOD

This study set out to investigate the following major research question: Does learning English impact the construction of the sociocultural identities of Turkish prospective EFL teachers?

Specifically, how do the prospective teachers negotiate and translate into one another their multiple identities in the process of learning English? What are their attitudes towards the clash of multiple identities triggered by the acquisition of English?

Participants

The participants of the study were 34 Turkish students, 25 women and 9 men, enrolled at the Department of English Language Education of a public university in Istanbul. Thus, they were prospective teachers of English at the same time. They were all third-year students, and they all had studied English in primary and/or secondary school as a compulsory foreign language for 4 to 6 years before starting their undergraduate studies. Only two of the participants were from Istanbul; the rest were from different towns in Turkey and had come to Istanbul to pursue their studies. All prospective teachers were from low- and middle-income families, and in general none of their family members spoke English

They were all recruited on a voluntary basis. The researchers explained to them the aims of the research and the methodology used in the study.

Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth qualitative interviews were used as the method of data collection. The qualitative interviews were semistructured in design. The researchers conducted the interviews over 2 months. Each interview began with several opening questions, which were largely biographical, followed by those on language attitudes and perceptions toward English, cultural activities, and identity. The interviews, 30 min to 1 hr in length, were conducted with each participant, and all interviews were audiotaped. Follow-up interviews were also conducted with some participants, for clarification and elaboration. The tape-recorded data of each question were analyzed by means of pattern coding, as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). In this study, pattern coding was used to reduce the "large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units" (p. 69). Each researcher grouped the data first according to the categories and interpreted in light of the study's overall focus on identity to provide a rich description of the ideas of participating prospective teachers of English.

FINDINGS

The first research question aimed to find out how prospective teachers of English defined their identities. The analysis of this question revealed the existence of multiple identities. However, the order of these identities showed a difference. The majority of participants mentioned their Turkish and Islamic identities as their dominant identities, as illustrated in the following statements:

> I'm a Turk and I'm a Muslim too. I have a Western identity too, but my Islamic identity is more dominant.

> I would say I'm a Turk and I'm a Muslim, though I'm not a strict follower of Islamic rules, and I also belong to the Western world.

Some prospective teachers, on the other hand, mentioned their Western identity first and regarded this as the result of their English knowledge,

> My Western identity dominates. How do I understand this? Well, I feel more convenient when speaking in English. I become more talkative, I feel I can speak about every subject, even about the taboos.

> Being a learner of English for years and now being a prospective English teacher, I'm so involved with this language and with different cultures that I feel that my Western identity overweighs my Turkish and Islamic identities.

> My parents do not know any foreign language, and I think they have only one type of identity. I believe it was first through my English lessons that I started to develop a Western identity along with my Islamic and Turkish identities.

When asked to what extent their Western identities would affect their other identities, the participants in general indicated that the foundation of the culture they live in was strong enough not to be "overthrown" easily. There was one prospective teacher who discussed his multiple identities from a different perspective:

> When I'm at school, Western identity dominates. But at home with my family, I have my Turkish and Islamic identities.

Some participants believed that their dominant identity changed in time, as illustrated in the following statement:

> In secondary school, we only did grammar in our English lessons. There were some cultural issues in the course books, but the teachers generally skipped them. At that time I had no idea or interest in the Western world. I felt like adopting a Western identity when I started the department.

> My Western identity is getting irresistible and becoming superior to my Islamic identity. For instance, I don't see anything bad in crossing my legs in front of elder people anymore.

When asked whether the existence of these multiple identities had ever caused any identity crisis, one prospective teacher discussed the identity crisis she had when her secondary school English teacher, a native Briton, asked the class to organize a Halloween party. She, like her friends in class, did not know what to do and had quarrels with pupils in science classes. She felt that she had to act according to the teacher's expectations but thought she was "betraying her own culture" at the same time.

The participants indicated that their first real encounter with the Western world was through their English lessons and that learning English was a very important factor in the formation of their Western identities. Those who were satisfied with their Western identities were asked how and in which ways learning English affected their identities. The analysis yielded the subcategories discussed in the following sections.

Awareness Regarding the Differences Between Cultures

Learning English led most of the prospective teachers to acknowledge the presence of differences between their native culture and Western culture.

> Learning English has affected my identities. For example, besides my own culture and religion, I have the opportunity to be acquainted with another one. I can compare and contrast the values and norms of both.

Many prospective teachers discussed how different aspects of Western lifestyle made them feel "strange" when first encountering them in their English books. For example, one says:

> When I first started learning English in secondary school, I could not give meaning to the way the boy and the girl in our course book were talking to each other. They seemed so "free." I tried to imitate them in the role-plays, but I couldn't. The more I had access to different cultures, the more I started to accept them.
>
> In our culture it is very important to show respect to the elders; it is part of our identities. But in English books we see people at different ages addressing each other by their names. At first I thought they (the Western people) don't know much about respect, but now it is clear to me that cultures have different norms.
>
> Teenagers having parties at home or going to parties was something I couldn't understand. And there was a type of cake called "muffin"; 7 or 8 years ago there was nobody in Erzincan [a city in Eastern Turkey] who knew what it was.

Cultural Enrichment

The majority of participants believed that learning English and being exposed to the lifestyles and values of Western people "broadened their worldview." This knowledge, which they regarded as "cultural enrichment," was effective in the formation of their new identities, as illustrated in the following statements:

> In every course book you can read something on Christmas. I don't celebrate Christmas, but learning cultural things makes me feel knowledgeable and closer to the Western world.
>
> Their lifestyle is so different from our lifestyles, for example, their marriages, family relations, male-female relations, eating habits. For example, an 18-year-old girl or boy is let to live on his own, but in our culture our parents look after us from birth to death. I think being knowledgeable about these things is important in today's world.

Positive Effects on Personality

Some prospective teachers discussed how having a Western identity affected their personalities:

> In all secondary schools students seem different in their English classes. They seem to have a Western identity and act accordingly. They are more relaxed, more sociable and active. Why? Is it a coincidence?

Another prospective teacher draws attention to a specific cultural difference that affected her behavior, namely, Eastern societies do not encourage people to speak up in public, whereas in Western societies expressing oneself in public is highly promoted. The following statement illustrates this point:

> My English teachers made me a self-confident person. I learned how to express myself without being afraid. When you have a Western identity, it is easier to criticize each other in a very democratic way.

Learning English and having access to the Western world seems to enhance the "status" of some prospective teachers. In particular, female students appeared to enjoy the advantage in learning a second language, as indicated in the following statement:

> My mom learned reading and writing when she was in her thirties. So did my aunts. My elder sister is university graduate too, but I'm the only one who knows a second language, and this gives me real self-confidence.

On the other hand, a few prospective teachers showed resistance to adopting a Western identity, as can be seen in their tendencies to stereotype Westerners. For example,

> Among Western people "materialist" view is highly dominant. They look kind from outside but when you get to know them, which you do easily when you learn English, you can understand their kindness is only "superficial."

> From what I have learned in the course books, I can say that people in Western countries do not know what "hospitality" is. They look "reserved."

Moreover, two prospective teachers expressed their critical views concerning Western values,

> I don't like their eating habits or lifestyles; for example, eating fast food, entering the house without taking off shoes, keeping pets. These things are both unhealthy and unnecessary.

> Young people going out at nights, eating hot dogs, or the photos of churches. Why should I adopt their culture?

These prospective teachers further indicated that young people were not "conscious" enough and were often negatively influenced by the foreign culture to which they were exposed in English courses, in the media, and through the Internet. The "glamorous" life presented in course books and media made many Turkish young people feel "alienated from their own culture," for example,

> There are young people who are negatively affected by Western cultures. For example, there are people who have piercing in their bellies. We don't have this in our culture. But there are so many factors which cause this corruption.

When asked about the role of the English teacher within this framework, many prospective teachers indicated that the English teacher played a very significant role in answering questions related to culture and clarifying the differences between cultures. Many also indicated that teachers should not attempt to impose the Western cultural values on their students' perceptions of the world. For example,

> It is the teacher's job to clarify the misunderstandings in the mind of a student. The teacher is educated so she/he is supposed to know certain things. For example, the teacher should show the child that Western culture is not superior to Islamic or Turkish culture.

> It is up to the teachers to prevent the students from relegating their native culture to a lower status.

To summarize, the participants seemed to be well aware of the presence of their multiple identities, but they all privileged their Turkish and Muslim identities over the Western way of existence presented during English-language courses. Many of them stated openly that learning English helped them to realize the basic differences between their native culture and the Western

way of life. Consequently, the awareness of these differences led them to formulate a broader approach to cultural issues, including the reconsideration of the characteristics of their personalities, along with the recognition of the positive interactions between different cultures. They also emphasized the crucial role played by English teachers in shaping and directing the students' responses to the cultural differences between their native culture and Western culture.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the identity clash within the domain of English language education, a crucial issue throughout the history of the Turkish Republic. Being born in a Muslim country, students in general are raised in accordance with Islamic values, and throughout their education they develop a Turkish national identity as well. English, as the predominant foreign language and an integral part of the national education program, makes the students adopt an additional identity, as they are exposed to a number of Western cultural contexts and issues in their English lessons.

In this study the participants were asked to critically reflect on their multiple identities. Unlike learners in ESL settings, the participants in this study did not regard Western identity as a threat to their existing identities, as they had learned English in their native country. They were by no means asked to adopt a Western identity to pursue their studies or to have a particular status in society.

This study revealed that all participants seemed content with the effects of learning English. They were aware that English, as an international language, provided them with more than one specific culture, as well as broadening their worldview. That is, being proficient in English enabled them to interact with more than one culture, to transcend their cultural boundaries, and to access the worldviews and ways of thinking of others.

According to Fantini (1995), most people take their own language and culture for granted; however, "the culturally literate person understands that his or her native tongue is not neutral, but a specific medium directly influencing one's entire life" (p. 39). Turkish prospective teachers of English seem to have acquired a degree of what is called "cultural literacy," an awareness that one's language or culture is not the sole way of looking at the world and that other paradigms exist.

The findings of this study support the findings of McMahill (1997), who conducted a study with 12 women learning English as a foreign language in Japan, who were attending an English conversation class on feminism. The participants reported that by being able to contrast their situations and beliefs by drawing on the experiences of others in their classes, they were able to "reflect more critically on their own gender socialization" (p. 613). In this study, some participants similarly expressed that encountering different Western norms and practices made them reflect on their own personalities and behaviors. They also stated that these reflections encouraged them "to express their views openly in public" and "to be more flexible while judging others."

Although home and classroom/textbook cultures were at odds with the values of their native culture at certain times of their education, Turkish prospective EFL teachers did not consider this fact a threat to their identities. However, the comments of some participants on Westerners and their way of life displayed how clichés concerning the approach to "the others" operate as unconscious mechanisms. The notion of stereotyping others in the process of the construction of sociocultural identity is also found in Holliday (1996), who cited problematic, overly simplistic

depictions of Japanese language learners and of a homogeneous Japanese culture by non-Japanese TOEFL professionals. In general, all of the participants felt the need to underline the crucial role played by English-language teachers with regard to the transmission of Western values to students. They argued that it was the teacher's duty to introduce and comment on Western culture without letting the students formulate a negative attitude toward their native culture. As mentioned by several researchers (Alptekin & Alptekin, 1984; Oxford, 1994; Shade, 1989), cultural awareness and understanding are essential for language teachers, although they are working with a relatively homogeneous population in Turkey.

Norton (1997) in her study uses the term *investment* to "signal the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (p. 411). Her construct of investment recognizes the language learner as having a complex history and multiple desires, and that investing in the target language is an investment in the learner's social identity, which changes across time and space. If learners invest their time and effort in learning the target language, they do so with the expectation that they will be rewarded with a "wide range of symbolic resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (Peirce, 1995, p. 17). It is observed that the participants in this research also regarded the acquisition of English as an asset both in their careers and in their private lives, as they referred frequently to the necessity of speaking English in today's globalized world.

The results obtained from this research revealed that Turkish prospective English teachers were conscious of their multiple identities and preferred to regard their Turkish and Muslim identities as the primary ones. They also considered the acquisition of English as a means to help them gain an awareness concerning the differences between cultures and to change some personal traits, for example, being a more flexible and tolerant person. As prospective English teachers, they expressed their views concerning the crucial role of teachers in transmitting Western values to the students and underlined teachers' responsibilities for the accurate presentation of the foreign culture during language courses.

This study has provided a general overview of the experiences of Turkish prospective teachers as language learners. Further studies can be conducted to explore how their ideas regarding their perceived multifaceted identities and their beliefs regarding the crucial role of the language teachers in transmitting cultural values would affect and shape their own teaching practices.

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