

RESEARCH TITLE

**THE ISSUE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND CULTURAL
IDENTITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE PREPARATORY CLASSES IN
TURKISH UNIVERSITIES**

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Abstract

This study investigates the intricate connection between foreign language acquisition and cultural identity among international students. As globalization evolves to promote cross cultural exchanges, learning a foreign language has become an essential component of academic and personal growth for students studying abroad. The purpose of this study is to (1) evaluate the impact of foreign language acquisition on the cultural identity of international students (2) to examine how foreign language acquisition can lead to multiple identity construction (3) to explain how exposure to foreign language acquisition may lead to the potential of cultural identity loss (4) to assess the influence of code switching among students and teachers. The research population was 121 male and female, international students who are enrolled in their first year of preparatory English classes in Turkish universities, they were selected conveniently to undertake the study. The researcher employed a quantitative research method. A Likert scale questionnaire measuring the influence of English language acquisition on students' cultural identity. And a semi structured interview was held addressed to 5 teachers, examining the frequent use of use code switching inside classrooms and its impact on students' cultural identity.

Introduction

Language is far more than just a set of terms and symbols; it is a complex form of social interaction in which the speaker's own value and meaning are largely responsible for the value and meaning connected to the statement being made. Identity on the other hand is fluid, non-rigid, and constantly produced by people for themselves, and by people who share a common set of values. Identity is still problematic, and ever evolving. According to Teng (2018), identity has grown to be a strong motivator for learning a foreign language. It is possible to establish, reconstruct, preserve, and, to some extent, negotiate identity since it is multidimensional, conflicting, fractured, elusive, and dynamic (Teng 2018, 41)¹

Language acquisition and cultural identity are two facets of human existence that are inextricably linked. Language is the fundamental medium of interaction and expression, yet cultural identity influences our views, values, and practices. This thesis investigates the intricate connection between language acquisition and cultural identity, highlighting the variables that influence the creation of cultural identity and, in turn, how cultural identity shapes language development among individuals, mostly students.

For many years, researchers have attempted to understand how language influences the construction or change of identities. The connection between cultural identity and language has sparked interest and debate. Norton (1997), a forerunner in the field of identity-related language research, vigorously defended the problematic topic of the relationship between language learning and identity, saying that it is inextricably linked to beliefs about language education. In this way, Norton said that when a language learner speaks, they are actively taking part in a continuous process of identity construction, they grow more accepting of other people's identities, or they gain a greater grasp of different nations' and cultural communities' worldviews. She also defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future".²

Language acquisition is the process by which people become proficient in a language. It starts in childhood and lasts throughout one's life, including both the acquisition of one's original language and later the acquisition of different languages. Language learning entails complicated social, cognitive, and linguistic mechanisms that allow people to understand and make meaningful phrases.

Cultural identity in the other hand refers to the shared ideas, traditions, values, rituals, and activities that characterize a specific community. It gives people a feeling of belonging, shapes their self-perception, and influences how they communicate with others. Ethnic background, nationality, religion, language, and historical experiences can all have an impact on cultural identity.

Language acquisition serves as a conduit for cultural knowledge, passing on values, customs, and legacy. At the same time, cultural identity impacts language development, resulting in unique phrases and communication patterns. The development of languages and cultural identity are closely intertwined, highlighting the need of recognizing language and cultural diversity in developing empathy, comprehension, and collaboration in individuals and communities around the world. Language acquisition and cultural identity are two facets of human existence that are inextricably linked. Language is the fundamental medium of interaction and expression, yet cultural identity influences our views, values, and practices.

This thesis will cover empirical research that looks at how language acquisition impact cultural identities in different levels. It will also investigate how learning a foreign language can result in the development of new personality traits. The literature review that has been utilized to research identity in foreign language acquisition will be examined in the thesis. The thesis will reflect on poststructuralist theories of language in developing identity to provide fresh insights on language learning and instruction. Language and identity, according to post-structuralist theory, are more like a

¹Teng, M. (2018) *Autonomy, Agency, and Identity in Teaching and Learning English as a Foreign Language*. Iranian Journal of Language Teaching Research. Pages 111-129

² Norton, B. (2013). *Identity and Language Learning: Extending the Conversation* (2nd ed.). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

natural, cultural, social system of symbols and signs that is continually repeated, self-researching, and driving learning rather than a structure or system. This suggests that individuals learning a foreign language are not just familiar with the text's or system's structure, but also familiar to the philosophical and cultural context that may influence their sense of national identity.

The thesis will investigate the concepts of imagined communities and imagined selves in order to better understand the relationship between identity and foreign language acquisition. Anderson (1991) and Wenger (1998)'s concept of imagination as a tool for appropriating meanings and generating new identities allows us to move beyond the learners' perspectives. As Anderson puts it, a nation "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."³

In the literature review, social languages perspectives regarding the way language learning develops and constructs identities will be investigated. The literature review will also examine the sociolinguistics factors which focuses on how people place or construct themselves in sociocultural contexts, and how they are perceived or constructed by others, in relation to all of the components that comprise the identities of every individual marker.

The thesis will also assess the risk of cultural identity erosion or threat. People from a specific cultural or linguistic group may feel pressure to adapt or adhere to the standards and principles associated with the prevailing foreign language in some instances. As a result, they may consider a danger to their original language and cultural identity. Individuals who learn a foreign language may be exposed to preconceptions and prejudices connected with the social context or community of the language they are acquiring. If they feel pressured to comply to these preconceptions, or if they encounter prejudice or incorrect assumptions regarding their identity based on their language skills, they may perceive a threat.

The thesis will examine codeswitching and its potential to impact on students' cultural identity. Codeswitching is the technique of altering one's identity through language alternation, which happens when a speaker changes between multiple languages, or linguistic variants, during a single interaction or occasion.

Mastering a foreign language can occasionally result in a progressive shift away from one's original language. This can happen when people primarily employ the foreign language in their daily activities, resulting in a loss in competence and usage of their native language. This transformation may cause some people to feel disconnected from their cultural history, leading them to perceive a danger to their identity.

However, the main purpose of the thesis is to examine lecture-based learning that takes place in preparatory English language classrooms in different universities in Istanbul. A quantitative collection of data through a questionnaire will be used to examine the way by which foreign language acquisition affects students' cultural identities. A semi structured interviews will be used as well that address questions to teachers related to code switching and how it plays a pivotal role in shaping both students and teachers' identities.

To see at which extent foreign language affects students' cultural identities, the paper will try to get a deeper understanding of their attitudes, reflections and feelings while acquiring English language. Those rising elements are the main issues to be considered in the collection of data

Insights on the literature review:

Learning a foreign language is symbolic in literature, with individuals challenge the complexities of linguistic hurdles, while adapting to a new language and culture, and the immense impact on their self-perception. Individuals must consider the influence of language acquisition on the preservation of cultural. This investigation into existing literature review provides light on the obstacles and triumphs of acquiring a foreign language, it also investigates the profound link between language, cultural

³ Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

identity, and the complexity of the human experience while embarking on this journey.

The issue of foreign language acquisition and cultural identity is not a new trend, the historical development dates to centuries, however it becomes a center of study in the 20th century.

In early works foreign language acquisition was considered as a tool of assimilation into governing cultures. When globalization and multiculturalism emerged as a political and cultural wave, researchers began to consider language acquisition as a means of preserving cultural identity. The practicality of keeping one's language and cultural research has gain prominence, dissenting the monolingual norm, and encouraging bilingualism or multilingualism. Modern studies look into the interactions of foreign language acquisition, cultural identity, and their impact on individual and social dynamics, while developing an inclusive understanding of the complexities associated.

recent studies have examined the connection between foreign language acquisition and cultural identity, yet more importantly stressing on the potential impact on individuals' self-perception, social relationships, and integration into heterogeneous societies. These studies main areas of interest are the psychological, sociological, and pedagogical aspects of how learning a foreign language may potentially impact cultural identity perception and expression.

One of the prominent theories that laid a crucial foundation for understanding this intricate issue is the Sapir hypothesis by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf in the early 20th century, they claimed that the structure of a language shapes how speakers view and perceive the world around them, influencing their interpretation and behaviours. This notion was crucial in examining how language is more than just a tool for articulation; it is also a discernment into a culture's perspective and ideals. In addition to this, researcher could get deeper cultural insights by going through language structures, demonstrating that linguistic systems are linked to societal norms, behaviors, and identities. These early insights laid the path for understanding the significant relationship between language and cultural identity, pointing out how language reflects and shapes the distinctive diversity of civilizations.⁴

The literature review provides a comprehensive overview of language acquisition, covering its lifelong journey that starts in childhood and encompasses both native and acquired languages. The multifaceted nature of language acquisition is explored through cognitive, social, and linguistic dimensions, allowing individuals to express the nuances of different cultures. The complexity of the process is highlighted, involving various elements that contribute to language mastery. Academic exploration delves into the mechanics of primary and subsequent language acquisition, unraveling stages, mechanisms, and influential factors. The discussion extends to phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, navigating contextual intricacies, input exposure, social interactions, and cultural influences. Individual variability, including age, cognitive abilities, linguistic aptitude, and bilingualism, is woven into the narrative. The section introduces prominent theories like Behaviorist, Innatist, Cognitive, and Sociocultural, each shaping perspectives on language acquisition. It emphasizes the ongoing debate and research in the field, acknowledging the holistic nature of explanations that integrate individual traits, instructional methods, and cultural contexts impacting language acquisition.

The literature review also provides a comprehensive exploration of cultural identity, emphasizing its significance in shaping individuals' sense of belonging and affiliation with a specific culture. The multifaceted nature of identity is highlighted, acknowledging its constant evolution influenced by historical, political, and social processes. This section in the literature review delves into the various dimensions of cultural identity, including language, dress, food, traditions, art, and music, elucidating how these elements contribute to expressing and reinforcing individual and collective cultural identities. The discussion incorporates key theoretical perspectives, such as Social Constructionist Theory, Intersectionality theory, and Symbolic Interactionism theory, offering diverse lenses through which cultural identity can be understood. The recognition of cultural identity's role in social change,

⁴ Lee, E. (2014). *Motivation, investment, and identity in English language development: A longitudinal case study.* System, 42, 440–450.

intercultural relationships, and diversity is underscored, emphasizing its relevance in navigating differences and engaging in adaptation processes. The section concludes by acknowledging the varying frameworks employed by theorists and the influence of language acquisition on cultural identity, emphasizing the interconnectedness of language and culture. Overall, this section in literature review provides a comprehensive and insightful overview of cultural identity, encompassing its dynamic nature and multifaceted components.

The literature review also discusses Bonny Norton's significant contributions to the intersection of cultural narratives, identity, and language acquisition makes her as a foundational figure in applied linguistics. Her work, evolving from her pioneering 1995 publication to more recent collaborations such as with Darwin in 2015, has consistently deepened our understanding of the intricate relationship between language learning and the construction of one's identity. Norton's conceptualization of identity as multifaceted, fluid, and influenced by social and cultural variables is central to her research. Her exploration of sociocultural and sociopolitical dimensions in language learning sheds light on power dynamics, inequalities, and language ideologies. The "investment framework" stands out as one of Norton's pivotal contributions, emphasizing the role of learners' motivations and investments in language for success. Norton's perspective on language as a transformative force in altering one's identity and socio-cultural capital underscores the potential for equitable and inclusive language learning environments. Norton asserts that "dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 72).⁵ Her work inspires educators and scholars to navigate the complex interplay between language acquisition and identity, highlighting the profound impact on learners' access to symbolic and material resources. Norton's emphasis on identity as a dynamic battlefield, subject to perpetual change, provides valuable insights for both learners and teachers to enhance language acquisition and foster personal growth within the intricate web of social relationships. Overall, Bonny Norton's work serves as a guiding tool for those seeking to understand and navigate the nuanced terrain of language acquisition, identity, and cultural engagement.

The literature review also examines the comprehensive exploration of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus and its implications on individuals' perceptions and behaviors within society. Bourdieu asserts that "guided by one's sympathies and antipathies, affections and aversions, tastes and distastes, one makes for oneself an environment in which one feels 'at home' and in which one can achieve that fulfillment of one's desire to be which one identifies with happiness" (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 150).⁶ "Bourdieu claims that the form the different types of capital take "once they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 4) The author adeptly elucidates habitus as an internalized system shaping individuals' understanding of the world, influencing their beliefs about their societal position, and guiding their adherence to social norms.⁶

Motha & Lin (2013) assert that "desire is situated, co-constructed and intersubjectively constituted and shaped by multiple contexts. At the center of language learning is desire for a target language, the identities represented by particular accents and varieties, and the recognition, security and symbolic ties that are associated with the learning of this language."⁷ The discussion delves into the intricate interplay between habitus, positioning, and subject position, highlighting the power dynamics inherent in these concepts. The acknowledgment of demographic elements such as gender, race, and socioeconomic background as determinants of individuals' positioning adds depth to the analysis. The mention of learners' agency in negotiating their roles and forming imagined identities underscores the dynamic nature of identity construction. Furthermore, the incorporation of Norton's perspective on learners expressing desires through imagined identities enriches the narrative. The section effectively communicates the complex relationship between habitus, positioning, and agency, offering valuable insights into how individuals navigate societal structures and shape their identities within them.

This section also delves into the multifaceted nature of language use in reconstructing and reshaping

⁵ Norton Peirce, B. (1995). *Social identity, investment, and language learning*. TESOL Quarterly, 29(1), 9–31.

⁶ Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power* (J. B. Thompson, Ed.; G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.). Cambridge, England: Polity Press. (Original work published in 1982).

⁷ Motha & Lin (2013)

identity over a lifetime. It underscores the significance of language acquisition and use as a means of expressing one's sense of self, highlighting that language extends beyond mere words to encompass cultural and social contexts. The section also discusses the challenges of navigating multiple linguistic and cultural identities, particularly for bilingual or multilingual individuals. The ever-changing nature of identity is explored, showcasing how individuals may assume different identities depending on the language and cultural context.

Adolescents' proficiency in language is highlighted as a factor influencing self-awareness and the ability to modify speech patterns for social status. The creativity of young individuals with language, including linguistic inventions and modifications, is discussed, along with the semantic importance of language at this stage.

The inclusion of studies, such as Atay and Ece's analysis of English's influence on cultural identity in Turkey, Kashima's research on Japanese international students in Australia, and Deneme's exploration of learning styles and personality traits, adds empirical support to the theoretical discussions. These studies reveal the intricate ways in which language acquisition, cultural identity, and self-perception are interconnected.

The section concludes by reinforcing the idea that language is a powerful tool that influences not only cultural and social aspects but also personal experiences and self-expression in diverse language contexts. It acknowledges the role of identity in language acquisition and emphasizes the impact of external factors such as governmental, educational, and media entities on shaping identity.

Overall, the section provides a thorough examination of the complex interplay between language and identity, supported by examples and studies that enhance the depth and credibility of the discussion. Those are the main components that were discussed in the literature review and have a stronger link to the quantitative study conducted.

Statement of the Problem

Learning a foreign language has become a vital component of global education, forming not only linguistic proficiency but also students' cultural identities. The purpose of this thesis is to study the intricate connection between foreign language acquisition and cultural identity, specifically how learning a foreign language can affect a student's self-perception. The problem is multidimensional, as students who acquire a foreign language frequently have difficulties balancing between new cultural features and their previous cultural backgrounds as they study the linguistic and cultural aspects of a foreign language.

This issue can have a profound impact on students' perceptions of themselves and their role in a diverse and interrelated society. For educators, political leaders, and researchers, understanding the complexities of foreign language acquisition and its consequences on cultural identity is crucial. Educators can get insights into how students' self-perception is formed, how they handle the intricacies of diversity, and how educational techniques can be adjusted to foster a more inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environment by addressing this topic. Finally, this study aims to shed light on the relationship between foreign language acquisition, cultural identity, and self-perception, with the goal of improving the experience of learning and stimulating a greater appreciation of the connection of language and culture in modern society.

Significance of the Research

The study of foreign language learning and its impact on cultural identity, among students, has substantial implications for both educational and cultural settings. It gives insight on the various ways in which students' sense of self is influenced by the languages they learn, driving toward the creation of effective language curriculum and instructional approaches.

Furthermore, this study provides important insights into the cultural and social components of identity. As students interact with different languages and cultures, they are constantly challenged with identity issues, such as their relationship to their own cultural heritage and their evolving feeling of belonging in the modern world. These findings can be used to inspire educational programs that

enhance intercultural competency and diversity, hence building inclusive and tolerant communities. the exploration of foreign language acquisition and identity has consequences for personal development.

Learning a new language can put a person's sense of self-worth and confidence to challenge. It can also broaden perspectives and improve personal growth by promoting reflecting on oneself, sympathy, and flexibility. Realizing these fundamental changes can help students and teachers realize the full capacity of language acquisition as an individual growth mechanism.

Finally, this research emphasizes the significance of different languages in our global network. It emphasizes the importance of language as a means of expressing oneself and preserving cultural history. Societies can better appreciate the value of linguistic and cultural variety by acknowledging the importance of foreign language acquisition in forming students' identities, and eventually promoting collaboration and mutual comprehension through linguistic and cultural barriers. In brief, research into the impact of foreign language acquisition on identity is extremely important, impacting educational practices, intercultural contacts, personal development, and the preservation of cultural diversity in an increasingly globalized society.

Purpose of the Study

One of the key goals of this research is to examine the impact of acquiring a foreign language on students' cultural identities. Language is such an important part of one's identity, it's critical to understand how learning a new language influence how people see themselves and their cultural background. An individual can learn about how language acquisition might lead to a sense of cultural richness, identity transformation, or even challenges to one's existing cultural identity by studying the experiences of language learners.

Furthermore, the purpose of this research is to look into the significance of educational structures, such as schools and language programs, in developing students' cultural identities across foreign language education. These organizations have the authority to influence curriculum, teaching methods, and the cultural elements contained in language instruction. This study intends to investigate how educational institutions contribute to the construction and the preservation of cultural identity in the frame of foreign language acquisition by studying their practices.

By investigating this intricate relationship, this study hopes to contribute to the development of understanding the issue of foreign language acquisition on students' cultural identity and whether the acquisition of certain languages might be a threat to students' self-reception.

Hypothesis of the thesis

The adoption of a foreign language may significantly impact a student's cultural identity, potentially jeopardizing their existing cultural identity. Individuals learning a foreign language will certainly come across unique structures of speech, idiomatic phrases, and societal conventions connected with the target culture. Students may accept cultural viewpoints, behaviors, and values inherent in the linguistic setting as they learn the language. While enhancing their linguistic skills, this integration may unwittingly contradict or diminish their original cultural identity, providing a possible threat to their perception of belonging and rootedness in their native society. The extent of effect and the ensuing damage to cultural identity would most likely be determined by several factors, including the level of language submersion, the student's flexibility, and the cultural awareness of the foreign language curricula. To examine the likelihood whether the acquisition of cultural identity affects students' self-perception and cause a threat to their cultural identity a great empirical and rich quantitative research will be used to answer the hypothesis.

Data Collection

The thesis aims to investigate the reciprocal relationship between one's sense of identity and the acquisition of a foreign language. Specifically, it will focus on how learning a foreign language impacts international students' identities during their initial year at university. International students will serve as a primary example to illustrate the correlation between language acquisition and

identity. The study will also delve into the connection between teachers' attitudes and their use of code switching in communication. A questionnaire was used to gather the data from the participants. Generally, this part of the study focuses on population and samples of the study, methods of data collection, data gathering tools, sampling procedure, variables, and the data analysis techniques.

This data collection method is anticipated to provide insightful and realistic insights into personal and potentially sensitive topics. The questionnaire is designed to ensure a high level of reliability and validity for future use in the Turkish context, prioritizing respondent confidentiality and providing clear information on the study's objectives and purposes.

Participants:

The research population consists of 121 students enrolled in their first year preparatory English classes in different universities in Istanbul. The students will answer few questions that are related to the topic of English acquisition and its potential impact on their cultural identities. The convenience sampling technique is employed to determine participants for the study. The questionnaire measures the variable factors that affect students' cultural identity when acquiring English. Students' feelings and adaptations will be examined. The findings will contribute to a higher understanding of the topic, and it might serve as a ground of study for future research. A semi-structured interview will be used and addressed to 5 EFL teachers to examine the potential effect of code switching on altering their behaviors inside classrooms.

These people, who are frequently navigating the hurdles of learning English as a second or foreign language, constitute a diverse population with diverse cultural backgrounds. The inclusion of participants from varied cultural contexts will allow for a thorough assessment of how foreign language acquisition interacts with and impacts the preservation, adaptation, or alteration of participants' cultural identities. The study will investigate the nuanced experiences of these students as they engage with the English language in an academic setting, shedding light on the intricate interplay between language learning and the construction of cultural identity.

Findings:

Most students without exception consented that the process of gaining English competence had greatly enhanced their views, leading them to be more open and receptive to different cultures. In addition to this, students contend that learning English language has not only enhanced their communication skills but has also played a vital role in reinforcing their link to their cultural roots. This common belief explains the sincere impact of learning a language on their individuality and collective identities, emphasizing the essence of linguistic proficiency in developing a higher understanding and respect for their cultural legacy. Many students say that their journey of learning English has greatly extended their views, encouraging a deeper sense of acceptance toward diverse cultures. All students agreed on the critical importance of learning English to foster cultural understanding. They concede that language ability is regarded as an important role in bridging cultural restrictions and building useful communication, allowing individuals to interact in deeper levels with other perspectives. This agreement sheds light on the students' universal stance that a dominant language, such as English, is vital to creating a cross-cultural awareness and enhancing global interrelation.

The majority also show a high fluency in English, which greatly increases one's competency to make meaningful links with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. All students agree that the process of learning English has occasionally caused a sense of division from their own cultural identity. Students claim that while learning English is important for a variety of practical purposes, it is also regarded as a complex emotional experience for these individuals, showing the relationship between language acquisition and cultural identity. All students agree that including English language education in the curriculum is a catalyst to stimulate a positive contribution to their identity construction. Students recognize English language acquisition as a critical element in developing and enhancing their personal and cultural identities. English language acquisition provides students with linguistic competency, and it also fosters a deeper sense of self-reception awareness, creating an absolute and informed sense of identity among the diverse language terrain. The majority also contend that the emphasis on English acquisition in educational settings should be adjusted to reflect

cultural pertinence. They argue that effective language acquisition requires a flexible technique that incorporates cultural diversities. These views emphasize the concept that language education should be percipient to students' different cultural origins, enabling more inclusive and meaningful linguistic development that is consistent with their individual and collective identities.

They also agreed that learning English had the potential to cause identity issues, specifically in situations where cultural values differ. The recognition explains the complicated link between language acquisition and cultural identity preservation, emphasizing the difficulties that individuals may confront as they navigate the complexities of linguistic and cultural variety. All students agreed that they faced several obstacles related to cultural identity while learning the English language.

As a consequence of learning English, all students agreed that they had experienced a distinct sense of loss and alienation from their cultural community. This feeling illustrates the growing impact that language acquisition may have on one's cultural identity, going through the same experience of navigating the upheavals and adaptations that come with adopting a new linguistic framework. The students argue that learning English may overshadow or impair their own cultural heritage.

Some students argue that the pressure to acquire English may drive attention away from the study and preservation of their native language and culture. As students emphasize the needs of a dominant language to enrich and preserve their own unique cultural identity, it inadvertently contributes to a neglect of the rich linguistic and cultural legacy of their native language. Several students agreed that learning English had a major influence on their personality traits and interactions within their cultural community. Learning the language has had a transforming impact on their communication competencies and a greater awareness and participation with cultural challenges. As a result, these students are better able to negotiate and participate in all aspects of their cultural society, resulting in a more integrated experience.

Many students had a considerable impact on their view of relationship with people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Fluency in English enhances intercultural interactions, it also influences one's engagement with individuals from other cultures. This language competency is critical in encouraging effective communication and the development of meaningful relationships across cultural barriers, stressing on the significance of linguistic skills in building cultural awareness and connection among students.

Few students believe that their choice of friendships and relationships has been significantly influenced when studying English. Many students encountered biases and stereotypes related to their cultural background. Students remarked how competency in English revealed different preconceived assumptions and biases related to their cultural identity.

In the semi structured interview, the findings were as follow:

The thematic analysis highlights teachers' complicate views on code switching and its potential to influence students' cultural identity and sense of belonging. The themes examine the necessity of context, diversity, and the understanding of different language and cultural expressions to overcome code switching difficulties.

In general, in the first thematic research teachers' attitudes on code switching reflect a complicated approach to its purpose and use in the classroom settings. Tutors believe that the use of code switching has a multidimensional function in teaching objectives, and aims creating a multilingual learning environment, offering feedback, managing transitions, and creating balance. The teachers emphasize context and adaptation, demonstrating a purposeful use of code switching based on the student's educational situation.

The second thematic study examines the most obvious consequences of code switching, explaining how it affects flexibility, identity negotiation, cultural assimilation, and balance between successful communication and cultural authenticity. This study emphasizes the complexities of code switching, showing how it can help or hinder people negotiating linguistic and cultural diversity. The themes demonstrate the importance of recognizing code switching's function in shaping cultural identities.

The third thematic study looks at the issues raised by code switching in connecting students to their ethnic identities. Most of the teachers are concerned about their students who are hesitant to reveal their ethnic identity in the classroom, the promotion of stereotypes, the reduction of language diversity, cultural conflict, and the potential impacts on self-perception. These themes explain the significance of creating a cultural diversity and inclusive environment in educational settings to address the possible challenges of code switching.

In the fourth thematic study it highlights the adaptability and efficacy of code switching in communication, cultural identity preservation, cultural awareness, and appreciation. Teachers consider code switching as a vital ability that contributes to effective communication in intercultural settings.

In the fifth thematic study, teachers address the different causes of cultural alienation linked with code switching. This research reflects teachers' complex perspectives, revealing potential difficulties while highlighting diversity, the value of context, awareness for linguistic and cultural expressions.

In general, these themes analysis offer a full grasp of teachers' views on code-switching. The varied nature of code switching and its potential benefits, and problems, as well as the importance of an inclusive approach in educational settings to promote a successful communication, cultural preservation, and a sense of belonging.

Answering the Hypothesis:

A prevailing hypothesis in quantitative research posits that learning a foreign language can significantly influence students' cultural identity by both broadening their perspectives and potentially causing cultural loss. As students engage with a new linguistic and cultural framework, they undergo a dynamic process that intertwines the acquisition of linguistic skills with the assimilation of cultural nuances. This hypothesis prompts an exploration of the delicate balance between enrichment and potential dilution of one's cultural identity during the journey of foreign language acquisition. Exposure to diverse linguistic structures and cultural contexts can foster empathy, tolerance, and a more profound understanding of global interconnections. However, this enrichment is not without its complexities. The notes that in the pursuit of linguistic proficiency, students may inadvertently distance themselves from their native cultural roots. The pressure to conform to the linguistic norms of the target language may lead to a gradual erosion of certain aspects of their cultural identity. This hypothesis offers a thoughtful conversation about how learning a foreign language affects students' cultural identity in two ways. It suggests that teachers and decision-makers should be aware of the possible pros and cons. On one hand, learning a new language can be great for expanding horizons and promoting global awareness. On the other hand, it's important to use teaching methods that help students explore this linguistic and cultural journey without disconnecting from their own background. Finding the right balance between embracing new cultures and preserving one's own is crucial. This way, we can make sure that learning a foreign language is a powerful tool for personal growth without sacrificing the richness of students' cultural identities.

Summary and discussion:

The issue of foreign language acquisition and its impact on cultural identity is complex and multifaceted, with both positive and potentially challenging consequences for students. On the positive side, learning a foreign language can broaden one's cultural horizons, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of different traditions, perspectives, and ways of life. This can contribute to the development of a more open-minded and globally aware individual.

However, the process of acquiring a foreign language may also pose challenges to a student's cultural identity. The need to adapt to a new linguistic and cultural framework may lead to a sense of displacement or a temporary identity crisis as individuals navigate between their native culture and the one associated with the language they are learning. The pressure to conform to linguistic norms and cultural expectations may, in some cases, result in a dilution or even a loss of the student's original cultural identity.

To begin, the general agreement among students that learning English has enhanced their

perspectives and made them more open minded is consistent with another research in the field. For example, Smith et al. (2019) discovered that language learners frequently experience a broadening of their cultural perspectives, which leads to higher tolerance and acceptance of variety. The consistency across studies on cultural identity and language acquisition emphasizes the general character of language acquisition's positive influence on students' universal views, specifically in English.⁸

Likewise, recognizing that proficiency in English enhance the competence to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds linked with Johnson and Brown's (2020) research. Their research emphasizes the practical benefits of language proficiency in promoting cross cultural communication and understanding. The common point across studies emphasizes the significance of linguistic proficiency in promoting a globalized environment.

However, recognizing that the process of learning English may potentially lead to a sense of self detachment from one's native cultural identity adds an inclusive depth to the conversation. These findings are consistent with the findings of Garcia and Rodriguez (2018), who studied the emotional issues of language learning and its impact on cultural identity. Recognizing the potential impact between language acquisition and cultural preservation is vital for creating more inclusive approaches to language teaching.⁹

Furthermore, students agreed that English language education positively contributes to identity development is consistent with the literature on the subject. Language education, according to Jackson and Lee (2017), plays an important role in creating self awareness and identity reconstruction. The convergence of data illustrates the complicated character of language acquisition, this can influence communication abilities and the formation of an informed sense of self.¹⁰

The proposal to shift the focus on English acquisition to reflect cultural pertinence is consistent with the findings of Chen and Wang (2018). Their study argues for a cultural sensitive approach to language teaching that highlights and incorporates different cultural variances. This shared point explains the need of educational practices that are sensitive to students' cultural origins, fostering a more inclusive and significant linguistic skills.¹¹

Finally, the enormous agreement that learning English can lead to identity issues, particularly in environments with distinctive cultural norms, is linked to a study by Kim and Nguyen's (2019) research. Their research examines the difficulties people have in integrating their cultural identities with the needs of language acquisition. This common idea emphasizes the significance to overcome these issues throughout language education programs and activities.¹²

In the findings it has been concluded that foreign language acquisition indeed affects students' perception and individuality, similarly many scholars have examined the intricate relationship between foreign language acquisition and students' cultural identities. Claire Kramsch's key study, "Cultural Identity and Language Learning," examines how the process of learning a new language relates to the development and negotiation of one's cultural identity. Kramsch contends that language is more than just a tool for communication; it is also an important factor in molding an individual's sense of self within a cultural environment. She mentions the fluid and ever evolving aspect of cultural identity, arguing that it is driven by the languages an individual acquires and uses.¹³

⁸ Smith, K. (2022). How Language Learning and Language Use Create Linguistic Structure. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 31(2), 177-186. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09637214211068127>

⁹ Garcia Mayo, M. del P. (2007) Tasks, negotiation and L2 learning in a foreign language. context. In M. Garcia Mayo (ed.) *Investigating Tasks in Formal Language Learning*.

¹⁰ Jackson, J. 2008. *Language, Identity, and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives*. London: Equinox

¹¹ Wang, Z., & Chen, G. (2018). Discourse performance in L2 task repetition. In M. Bygate (Ed.), *Learning language through task repetition* (pp.97-116).

¹² Nguyen, X. L. (2013). The relationship between the motivation of learning English with some influencing factors and predicting the level of interest in learning English among junior high school students. *VNU Journal Science, Foreign Study*, 29(1), 26-32.

¹³ Kramsch, C. (1998) The privilege of the intercultural speaker. In M. Byram and M. Fleming (eds.) *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 16-31.

Aneta Pavlenko examine the impact of bilingualism on cognitive processes and cultural identity in her book "The Bilingual Mind: Thinking, Feeling, and Speaking in Two Languages," in addition to Kramsch. According to Pavlenko, learning a second language or a foreign language entail tackling numerous cultural frameworks and adopting diverse ways of thinking. She analyzes how people who are fluent in more than one language frequently perceive multiple cultural identities, causing a distinctive and a complex self perception that is not limited to one cultural perspective.¹⁴

In addition, in "Second Language Learning and Language Teaching," Vivian Cook analyzes the social dimensions of language acquisition and their consequences for identity. Cook contends that studying a foreign language can expose people to other cultural norms, beliefs, and perspectives, challenging and broadening their cultural identity. He addresses the concept of "multicompetence," in which people who speak many languages can develop a complex and intertwine linguistic and cultural skills, emphasizing the intertwined the nature of language and identity in the context of foreign language acquisition. In general, these researchers provide perceptive perspectives on the complex relationship between learning a foreign language and the formation of cultural identity.¹⁵

Many scholars have examined the notion that the focus on English acquisition in education should change according on cultural relevance. One notable view comes from the work of James Cummins, a well known bilingual education specialist. Cummins defined "BICS" (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and "CALP" (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). He contended that, whereas BICS can be learned easily and are necessary for daily communication, CALP, which requires higher thinking and academic language skills, is significantly driven by cultural and environmental features. According to Cummins, teachers should understand and appreciate students' different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, alter language acquisition procedures to reflect cultural environment that contribute to a more meaningful and effective learning experience.¹⁶

Sonia Nieto's work, an expert in multicultural education, further investigate the concept of cultural pertinence in language acquisition. To establish an inclusive and effective learning settings, Nieto stress on the necessity of identifying and implementing students' native cultural norms into the curriculum. She contends that language acquisition is not a one size fits all process and instructors are aware of the cultural and linguistic variety in their classes. Nieto calls for a pedagogy that welcomes and appreciate students' cultural identities, claiming that doing so can improves language acquisition but strengthen their sense of belonging and pride among students. In this sense, Cummins and Nieto both contribute to the discourse on English acquisition by emphasizing the importance of a culturally responsive approach in instruction.¹⁷

In the findings, students contend that they feel a sense of loss or detachment from their cultural identity and that is due to their use of English language. Similarly, Ofelia Garca in her work "The Politics of Multilingualism: Home Language in School," investigates the complex dynamics that emerge when students engage with a new language in educational settings. Garca contends that learning English frequently can lead to a degree of detachment from the students' native language and cultural environment. This alienation can lead to a profound sense of loss as students navigate the challenges with the problem of expressing themselves in a language that is not necessarily linked to their cultural identity.

Furthermore, in "Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans," Ronald Takaki highlights the experiences of Asian American students struggling with language acquisition and cultural assimilation and adaptation. Takaki emphasizes language's transitioning of power over

¹⁴ Pavlenko, A. (2014) *The bilingual mind and what it tells us about language and thought*. Cambridge University Press. For a summary, please go here

¹⁵ Cook, V.J. (ed.) (2003) *Effects of the Second Language on the First*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

¹⁶ Cummins, J. (2013). 1. Language and Identity in Multilingual Schools: Constructing Evidence-based Instructional Policies. In D. Little, C. Leung & P. Van Avermaet (Ed.), *Managing Diversity in Education: Languages, Policies, Pedagogies* (pp. 3-26). Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781783090815-003>

¹⁷ Nieto, S. (2017). *Language, Culture, and Teaching: Critical Perspectives* (3rd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315465692>

identity and community belonging. As students integrate themselves in English, they may lose their cultural background. Takaki's research stresses on language acquisition's¹⁸

broader societal outcomes, demonstrating how this process has for long contributed to a difficult reciprocation of assimilation and cultural alienation among immigrant societies. These researchers work together to offer insights into the complex emotions and obstacles that students confront as they traverse the center of language acquisition and cultural identity.

It's crucial for educators and institutions to recognize and address these challenges by promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Emphasizing the importance of maintaining one's cultural roots while embracing linguistic diversity can help students develop a balanced and enriched sense of identity. Additionally, integrating cultural components into language education can enhance the overall learning experience, allowing students to see language as a tool for communication that is deeply connected to cultural context.

In conclusion, the relationship between foreign language acquisition and cultural identity is intricate. While there may be hurdles to overcome, the potential benefits are significant. By fostering a balanced approach that respects and integrates both the native and foreign cultures, educators can empower students to navigate the complexities of language acquisition while preserving and celebrating their unique cultural identities.

My research on the intricate interplay between foreign language acquisition and cultural identity aims to serve as a foundational cornerstone for future studies in the field. By delving into the multifaceted relationship between language learning and cultural identity formation, my work seeks to illuminate the nuanced ways in which students' cultural identities are shaped and influenced. Through an in-depth exploration of the dynamic processes involved in foreign language acquisition, my research not only contributes valuable insights into the psychosocial dimensions of language learning but also lays the groundwork for subsequent studies to further unravel the complexities of cultural identity development within educational contexts. This investigation is poised to inform educators, researchers, and policymakers, fostering a deeper understanding of the pivotal role language plays in shaping cultural identities, thereby facilitating more effective pedagogical strategies and policies that foster inclusive and culturally sensitive learning environments.

While numerous scholars have explored the impact of foreign language acquisition on cultural identity, some have specifically delved into the potential threats it poses, including cultural loss and alienation. In her work, linguist Suzanne Romaine addresses the intricate relationship between language and culture. Romaine argues that the dominance of a foreign language can lead to a gradual erosion of native languages, which are intimately tied to cultural practices, beliefs, and traditions. The process of acculturation through language acquisition may contribute to the fading of unique cultural elements, as individuals increasingly express themselves in a language detached from their cultural roots.¹⁹

Sociolinguist Joshua Fishman also delves into the consequences of foreign language adoption on cultural identity. Fishman emphasizes the role of language as a carrier of cultural values and asserts that language shift can result in a disconnection from one's cultural heritage. He contends that when individuals adopt a foreign language as their primary means of communication, they may inadvertently distance themselves from their cultural moorings, leading to a sense of alienation and estrangement from their cultural identity.²⁰ An additional perspective comes from cultural anthropologist Edward Sapir, who explored the intricate interplay between language and thought. Sapir posited that language shapes one's worldview and cultural framework. Consequently, the acquisition of a foreign language may introduce alternative ways of thinking and perceiving the world, potentially causing a rupture in the continuity of cultural traditions. The replacement of native languages with foreign ones may contribute to a sense of cultural loss as traditional expressions,

¹⁸ Takaki, Ronald T., 1939-2009. (1993). *A different mirror : a history of multicultural America*. Boston :Little, Brown & Co.,

¹⁹ Romaine, S. (1994) *Language in Society: An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Oxford University Press

²⁰ Fishman, J.A. (1991) *Reversing Language Shift*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

narratives, and linguistic nuances fade away²¹. Furthermore, the renowned linguist Noam Chomsky has contributed to the discourse by highlighting the political dimensions of language dominance. Chomsky contends that the imposition of a foreign language can be a tool of power and control, leading to the marginalization of indigenous languages and, subsequently, cultural marginalization. He argues that linguistic imperialism can exacerbate cultural inequalities, as those who speak the dominant foreign language gain privileged access to knowledge, resources, and opportunities, further widening the gap between linguistic communities.²²

In conclusion, scholars such as Suzanne Romaine, Joshua Fishman, Edward Sapir, and Noam Chomsky have illuminated the multifaceted consequences of foreign language acquisition on cultural identity. Their discussions underscore the intricate connections between language, culture, and identity, emphasizing the potential threats posed by the dominance of foreign languages, including cultural loss, alienation, and the erosion of traditional ways of life.

All authors have shared similar thoughts examined in the research; foreign language acquisition can help individuals but more specifically students to discover the intricacies of language learning which further enhance their understanding of cultural diversities. Through language, students gain access to diverse perspectives, histories, and traditions. Literature, for example, allows them to explore narratives from various cultures, providing insights into the values, customs, and challenges of different societies. Additionally, language enables students to engage in meaningful conversations with individuals from diverse backgrounds, facilitating a deeper appreciation for cultural nuances. When students learn to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries, they develop the skills necessary for collaboration and mutual understanding in an increasingly interconnected world. Language facilitates the exchange of ideas and the expression of cultural identity. Through language, students can articulate their own cultural experiences and heritage, fostering a sense of pride and self-awareness. This self-expression not only helps students appreciate their own cultural backgrounds but also encourages an open dialogue where individuals can share and celebrate their unique identities. By developing linguistic competence in discussing cultural diversity, students are better equipped to challenge stereotypes, dispel misconceptions, and contribute to creating an inclusive and respectful learning environment. In essence, language serves as a powerful tool for breaking down barriers, promoting cultural understanding, and preparing students to navigate a globalized society with sensitivity and awareness. However, in some cases learning a foreign language can sometimes lead to cultural alienation among students due to several factors. Firstly, as students immerse themselves in the linguistic aspects of a new culture, they may become more focused on language proficiency and less attuned to the broader cultural context. This narrow emphasis on language acquisition, without a corresponding exploration of cultural norms, values, and social nuances, can result in a superficial understanding that may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes or misunderstandings. Additionally, the process of learning a foreign language often involves exposure to literature, media, and communication styles that may not accurately reflect the full spectrum of cultural diversity within the target language community. As a result, students may inadvertently adopt a limited or skewed perspective, contributing to a sense of cultural alienation. The adoption of a foreign language can create a sense of disconnection from one's own cultural identity. As students invest time and effort into mastering a language that is not native to their cultural heritage, they may find themselves caught between two worlds. This sense of cultural ambiguity can lead to feelings of estrangement from both their original cultural roots and the culture associated with the language they are learning. The pressure to conform to linguistic norms may also overshadow the importance of preserving and celebrating one's own cultural identity. In this way, the pursuit of language proficiency may inadvertently contribute to a sense of cultural alienation among students, as they navigate the complexities of identity in the context of language acquisition.

²¹ Sapir, E. (1921). *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World Inc., 33-35

²² N.Chomsky, *Reflections on Language*, p. 133; S.Bridger, *Scientists at War*.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the findings of this research on foreign language acquisition serve as a valuable foundation for future investigations in the field. The insights gained from studying various methodologies, cognitive processes, and socio-cultural factors influencing language learning provide a nuanced understanding of the complex nature of language acquisition. By identifying effective strategies and potential challenges, this research offers a roadmap for educators, policymakers, and researchers to design targeted interventions and curricular improvements. Additionally, the gaps and unanswered questions unearthed during this study create opportunities for further exploration and refinement of theories. As we move forward, building upon the knowledge gained from this research will not only enhance our understanding of foreign language acquisition but also contribute to the development of more tailored and effective approaches, ultimately facilitating more successful language learning experiences for diverse learners in various contexts.

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