

EFL Learning, EFL Motivation Types and National Identity: in Conflict or in Coalition

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Abstract

The present study was aimed at examining concerns about the social effects of EFL learning, a challenging area of research which has not been discussed sufficiently. It tried to investigate the relationship between EFL learning and national identity. In addition, attempt was made to find a relationship between language motivation types and national identity. Furthermore, the role of two demographic variables, gender and age was examined. To this end, a sample consisting of 350 undergraduates studying at Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran took part in the study. A questionnaire on national identity and another one on language motivation types followed by an interview were the instruments used. The questionnaires had already been developed. However, there were some major modifications for the former which consisted of 30 items measuring national identity for all participants. The latter contained 42 items measuring language motivation types for only EFL learners. The Regression analysis, independent samples t-tests and a one-way ANOVA were run. The results revealed that claims over the harmful social effects of EFL learning were not arguably significant and it was found that among the eight language motivation types, *going abroad* and *social responsibility* were correlated with national identity. Furthermore, gender and age indicated significant differences among the participants' tendencies. The findings indicated that the social concerns about EFL learning are too pessimistic. So, materials developers, syllabus designers and teachers might consider the potentiality of some social elements and demographic variables for the development of EFL learning.

Keywords: motivation, identity, national identity, foreign language learning,

INTRODUCTION

After two decades of the mainly psycholinguistic existence of SLA research, we have to take into account the social factors that facilitate or inhibit language acquisition. Block (2007) believes that a social turn has occurred in language education. Social interaction is broadly shown essential in SLA. Lantolf (2007) developed the influential sociocultural theory of SLA, already proposed by Vygotsky, in which collaborative learning played a major role in facilitating acquisition. The high focus of studies on linguistic aspects of language learning couldn't satisfy many experts in the field. The appearance of nativist approach pioneered by Chomsky, putting forward some shortcomings of behaviourism, seemed a big finding but lacked a comprehensive look at assumptions underlying EFL learning. As the need for more communication among nations was increased, more studies focusing on social aspects of language learning were required. Both interactionist SLA and sociocultural SLA lay the ground for what Block (2007) called 'the social turn in SLA' and its concern for the social and cultural identity of language learners. It is assumed that what is affected by social factors might have some social outcomes. So, it is required to examine the social consequences of such an enormous trend among global concerns. One of the issues that involves the social aspect of language learning is identity. Norton (1997, 2000, cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 336) proposed the social identity defining it as 'the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through interactions'. Lack of attention of many researches to this important subject has recently led some language experts and the researchers of this study to examine how national identity as the most social aspect of identity is influenced by EFL learning.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Identity Definitions and Approaches

According to Oxford Reference Dictionary (1986), identity is the condition of being a specified person or thing. Different viewpoints have offered somehow different definitions. Erikson (1968, cited in Omidian, 2010), the great psychologist, considers identity as the most important subject that individuals deal with during adolescence. However, many sociologists have claimed that it is a rather social construct and

accordingly provided their own social definition for identity. Wagner (1995, p. 358) defines identity as "the relation each thing bears just to itself". By identity, Osmon (2002) refers to those attributes that make you unique as an individual and different from others.

The theoretical assumptions of an identity approach to SLA suggest that language learning is not an individual process of internalizing a neutral set of rules, structures, and vocabulary of standard language. Rather, as Norton and McKinney (2011) believe, "such theoretical principles suggest that language learners need to struggle to appropriate the voice of others; they need to learn to command the attention of their listeners, and they need to negotiate language as a system and as a social practice (p. 81)". Identity in a socio-constructionist approach is not an intrapersonal issue but an interpersonal phenomenon, i.e. "the product of social interaction between the individuals and other members of the society" (Riley 2008, p.16). Identity is considered as diverse, dynamic and multidimensional having various aspects. Tajfel (1978) believes that identity has got a personal aspect but its main aspect is social.

EFL Learning and Identity

Norton (2000, cited in Hinkel, 2008, p. 898) uses the term identity to "reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future". Identity can answer the questions of "who am I?", "what am I?", "where am I from?", "what is my background?" and "what is my desire?" Confirming the possible relationship between language and identity, Nunan and Choi (2010) maintain that we all come across and struggle with issues of how language and culture affect or influence our identity.

Iranian Studies on Language and Identity

Sociologists dealing with identity in Iranian setting, such as Ahmadi ((2010), believed in the key role of language in construction of identity with a special focus on discourse. A quick look at the relevant studies done both in Iran and abroad, shows although there are a few researches examining the relationship between education and national identity

(Shamshiri, 2008), not many studies have been conducted on the relationship between foreign language learning and national identity.

Besides, in a study conducted by Talebi (2000), it was found that there was not a meaningful relationship between study stages and belonging to national identity. Rahiminezhad and Ahmadi (2006) provided a questionnaire as a tool to investigate Iranian adolescent identity seeking. In a more recent study, using a questionnaire, Lotfabadi and Nouroozi (2004) examined how Iranian high school students handle globalization and its effect on religious and national identities and values. These peripheral studies have considered the issue of identity to be important but have not approached the issue properly in a foreign language learning context.

Language and Identity Formation

Structuralism and poststructuralism emphasize the constructive role of language in the formation of identity. Warschauer (2007) confirming the impact, states that language has always played an important role in the formation and expression of identity. Studies conducted on the constructs of language and identity have taken into account such a relationship and have developed their understanding of different levels of identity along with their uses in EFL learning.

As Mitchel and Myles (2004) have argued, sociolinguistic SLA reflects both a structural and interactional view. The former is evident in research that seeks to document how social constructs such as class, gender, and age impact on L2 learners as shown through their use of the L2 and their rate/success of learning. The latter is evident in research that "treats the social context as a complex and constantly changing arena for learning that is constructed and reconstructed by all participants including the learner" (Ellis, 2005, p. 282). In most parts of the world, the ability to speak two or more languages or dialects is a given, and language choice by minority groups becomes "a symbol of ethnic relations as well as a means of communication" (Heller, 1987, p. 308).

EFL Learning and National Identity

Three levels for identity are hierarchically recognized: individual, relational and collective. At the individual level the aspects of "self-definition", at the relational level, the interpersonally established features of identity, and at the collective level,

individuals' "identification with the groups and social categories to which they belong" are dealt with (Schwartz, Luyckx & Vignoles, 2011, p.3). Curriculum developers and language policy makers have considered formation of national identity as one of the aims of education system and citizenship. Accordingly, at the collective level, national identity, as the more comprehensive one, has drawn the attention of the researchers of current study and attempt was made to find the relation of this social factor with EFL learning.

Sociologists in their definition of national identity focus on the extent to which people appear as a nation with similar interests and values. People with one national identity probably have similar territory, language, custom, and history. National identity is something that people produce in discourse by drawing upon a variety of aspects such as communal understandings, common histories and shared geographies (McKinlay & McVittie, 2011).

Poole (2003) believes that national identity is the basis of all other kinds of identities. It is an ethical and philosophical concept which divides people into groups called nations. It is a sense of identity enforced by factors such as common territory, common language, common government, common religion and common beliefs (Hajiani, 2000).

The impulse to protect national culture and identity to safeguard the younger generation is not new. Some measures were considered essential to protect national identity. According to Blum (2007) "the main problem today is that much of the popular cultural threat to youth and societal values such as national identity comes from the outside world". (p.240) Learning a language involves learning a culture and so does a foreign language. In the domains of politics, economics, culture, and social and territorial atmosphere, when the role of national identity appears, the language learner gets a new experience and accordingly a new identity.

English Learning Motivation Types

In general terms, motivation refers to the effort that learners put into learning an L2 as a result of their need or desire to learn it (Ellis, 2005). The term motivation in a second language learning context is seen according to Gardner (1972) as referring to the extent to which the individual struggles to learn the language because of a desire or necessity

to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity. Norton (2001, cited in Atkinson, 2011) provides us with a more subtle understanding of motivation. Presenting evidences, she points out "highly motivated students were not invested in the language practices of their respective classroom". (p. 81) This study follows the classification provided by Gao; Zhao; Cheng & Zhou (2007) in which they offered eight motivation types. Two types of motivation are sometimes distinguished: Instrumental motivation and integrative motivation which have been introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Gao et al. (2007) expanded the dichotomy. They found out that there were some correlations between motivation types and identity change. Such a classification was examined in conducting the current study but considering national identity rather than identity change.

Findings on the relationship between EFL learning along with language motivation types on the one hand and social nonlinguistic outcomes, especially identity, on the other hand, are limited yet worth noticing. From the 1980s to the present time, many studies have been conducted on the relationship between identity and language learning in different social educational contexts, sometimes with controversial findings and results (Razmjoo, 2010). In the study occurring in an Iranian context, he reported no significant relationship between language achievement and the aspects of identity. In his study, however, the role of gender appeared significant. The idea was developed in this study covering national identity as the more developed type of identity. To the researchers' knowledge, no comprehensive study has so far been reported with the current paradigm in mind.

Regarding studies on nonlinguistic outcome of EFL learning, Lambert's (1974) concepts of additive and subtractive bilingualism contributed significantly. These two types of bilingualism involve changes in the language learners' identities. So, the model already developed by Gardner was expanded and more factors interfering with language motivation got involved such as learning situation, self-confidence, salience of goals, valence, and self-efficacy (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

In a richly contextualized qualitative study, Norton (2000, cited in Hinkel, 2011) shows how learner identity influences motivation and, ultimately, acquisition of a foreign language. In a study conducted by Bagheri, Yamani and Riazi (2009), they concluded that "motivation is a major factor in learning and serious measures should be taken to enhance

the incentives so that learning in any mode and manifestation would be maximized". (p. 30)

Hassani (2005) investigated the role of EFL proficiency, gender, and the interaction of motivation type (intrinsic/extrinsic), gender, and levels of English achievement (high, mid, and low). In his study, it was made clear that there was no significant interaction among motivation, gender, and level of English proficiency.

PUPURSE OF THE STUDY

There are increasing concerns for the social effect of EFL learning due to the growing social interventions in EFL learning such as collaborative learning and sociocultural theory. It is also worthy of note that the cognitive definition of motivation has received much attention, while the socio-educational aspect of motivation has been almost ignored especially as far as identity is concerned.

Language is regarded as a part of culture and many experts (see Norton & Gao, 2008; Warschauer, 2007) have considered the relation between language and identity. Considering the dearth of research done on national identity, attempt was made to enhance our understanding of the relationship between EFL learning and national identity along with a close study of the relationship between eight language learning motivation types and national identity and also the role of two demographic variables, gender and age, through the following questions:

1. Is there any relationship between EFL learning experience and national identity?
2. Is there any relationship between language learning motivation types and EFL learners' national identity?
3. Is there any difference between male and female EFL learners as far as national identity is concerned?
4. Is there any difference between young and adult EFL learners as far as national identity is concerned?
5. Are the English textbooks culture biased?
6. Do the contents of English textbooks conform to Iranian identity?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 350 students, both male and female studying at Allameh Tabataba'i University participated in this study. They were from different cities in Iran. They were initially required to answer demographic questions related to their gender, age and learning experience. The participants were 212 females and 120 males aged between 18 and 30 comprising four age-groups (18-20, 21-23, 24-26, 27-30). This division was assumed to specify the participants and accordingly add to the balance of the data and exactness of the measurements. The higher the number of groups, the more meticulous the outcome would be. The participants were studying in 11 different majors (but all in humanities). They were randomly assigned to two groups: Those who had invested in EFL learning in language institutes (145 language learners) and those who had not (187 students). with the assumption that attending language institutes requires different motivations and accordingly offers different language learning experience different from that obtained from attending official schools. The first group received two questionnaires, the national identity and the language motivation types; the latter received just one questionnaire on national identity.

Instruments

To conduct the study, two questionnaires depicting national identity components and language motivation types were utilized. The following figure shows how participants handled the questionnaires.

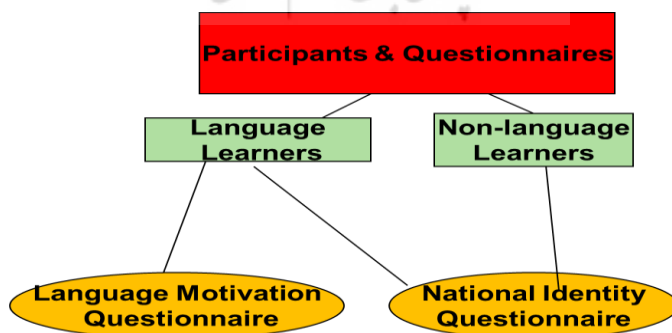


Figure 1: The way the participants handle questionnaires

National Identity Questionnaire

First, two versions of a questionnaire containing 30 items on national identity were chosen to be given to all participants. The questionnaires were designed in Persian and English with a commonly used five-point Likert scale format (from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). Students could respond in either of the two languages, preferably their native language, Farsi. It consisted of seven components of territory, custom, political system, religion, history, myths, literature and arts. All items were in two major groups: common belonging and common heritage.

The national identity questionnaire has been adapted, but based on its shortcomings eleven items were added. Its reliability and validity had already been tested by Alizadehaghdam, Shiri and Ojaghlu (2010). Since basic to the validity of any questionnaire is asking the right questions in the least ambiguous way possible (Best & Kahn, 2006), the items were revised for a couple of times with the help of TEFL and sociology lecturers, Ph D candidates and MA students. To estimate its overall reliability, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was calculated and found to be 0.831.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts, common belonging and common heritage. Their obtained Cronbach's alpha appeared to be 0.787 and 0.706, respectively.

Language Motivation Types Questionnaire

The second questionnaire, containing 42 items on language motivation types, was given just to those participants who had effective (at least two years) experience in EFL learning. The questionnaires were designed in Persian and English with the same five-point Likert scale format. Again, the language learners could respond in either of the two languages, preferably their native language, Farsi.

The motivation type questionnaire consisted of items already developed and validated by Gao et al. (2007). It included 42 statements which were provided to collect data on language learners' performance on eight components forming motivation types. To examine the internal consistency of the items, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated for each component and found to be: 1. Intrinsic interest (0.742), 2. Immediate achievement (0.705), 3. Learning situation (0.717), 4. Going abroad (0.866), 5. Social responsibility (.708), 6. Individual development

(0.763), 7. Information medium (0.711), and 8. Identity formation (0.720). The overall Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the above constructs were calculated and found to be quite reliable with Cronbach's alpha 0.810.

Interview

The interviews consisting of seven questions were conducted with 40 participants and were aimed at making some ambiguous items clear, hoping to provide better insights into the learners' language motivation types and identity. The interviews are to argue about the thoughts, desires, feelings, and decisions of the learners. They would clarify the points in mind and add to the validity of the study. The seven questions posed in the interviews are:

1. You know that you become familiar with two cultures during learning English. Do you feel at ease handling the two cultures?
2. Which culture do you like more?
3. How much effect do the contents of your books have on your opinion about Persian culture?
4. Are the contents and pictures of books in line with Persian culture? Are they culture –biased?
5. Do the contents of English textbooks conform to Iranian identity?
6. Does Satellites play any roles for learners in learning English?
7. Do English language teachers' views have any effect on learners' own culture?

Data Collection Procedure

To investigate the relationship between identity and language learning, researchers often combine a range of methods of data collection such as interviews and written responses to research questions, ethnographic observation, and diary studies. In this study, two questionnaires and an interview were administered. The assumption was that since questionnaires are objective, the participants might feel more at ease to cooperate and fill them out more carefully. The interviews would clarify the points in mind and add to the validity of the study. All participants were given a national identity questionnaire. However, those who had experience in EFL learning were to fill out the language motivation type

questionnaire too. The researchers attended classrooms after obtaining permission from the lecturers and distributed the questionnaires. The 18 participants who did not fill out the questionnaires completely were excluded from the data. There were 332 participants left. An interview consisting of seven open ended questions was conducted with almost 25% of all the participants.

A small-scale pilot study was carried out. The participants in the pilot study were asked to fill in the questionnaires in the presence of one of the researchers so that any possible ambiguous item could be identified assuring higher rates of content validity. The questionnaires were administered in the learners' mother tongue, Farsi. The Participants were informed that the information gathered would be kept confidential and used for research purposes only.

The interview was conducted with 40 participants and was aimed at making some ambiguous items clear, hoping to provide better insights into the thoughts, desires, feelings, and especially cultural identity of the learners.

Data Analysis

The raw data were fed into the computer and then analyzed using SPSS software (version 18). It is worth mentioning that for seven items of national identity questionnaire the participants were assumed to provide inverted response, hoping to prevent random response. In the case of violation, that participant's performance was wholly excluded from the study. To see any association between EFL learning and national identity items and also language motivation types, the frequencies of the items were calculated to find the percentage for each part or type. The research questions required the following measures. Correlation analyses were carried out to examine the relationship between investment in EFL learning and national identity as the first hypothesized question of the study.

Furthermore, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 42 language motivation statements to explore motivation types.. The regression analysis was carried out to examine the relationship between the eight motivation types and national identity. The data collected and the analyses conducted provided the answer to the second hypothesized question and its subcategories in this investigation. The subcategories of

language motivation types questionnaire provided data for examining the corresponding eight null hypotheses:

- a. There is no relationship between *intrinsic interest* and national identity.
- b. There is no relationship between *immediate achievement* and national identity.
- c. There is no relationship between *learning situation* and national identity.
- d. There is no relationship between *going abroad* and national identity.
- e. There is no relationship between *social responsibility* and national identity.
- f. There is no relationship between *individual achievement* and national identity.
- g. There is no relationship between *information medium* and national identity.
- h. There is no relationship between *identity formation* and national identity.

Then, an independent samples t-test was carried out to examine the effect of moderator variable, gender. The last statistical calculations, a one-way ANOVA and Tukey's Multiple Comparisons, were carried out to examine the effect of moderator variable age, as put forth in the fourth hypothesized question.

RESULTS

EFL Learning and National Identity

To find any relationship between national identity and EFL learning, the data were collected from the students' performance on national identity questionnaire. The students were in two groups, those who had prior experience in EFL learning in language institutes and those who didn't have such an experience. Each group's performance was compared against their counterparts. The result was assumed to help educators gain insight into the role of EFL learning in national identity. Table 1 presents the number of students in two groups.

Table 1: Frequency table of the number of participants

Group	Frequency		
	Male	Female	Total
Students with effective EFL learning experience	40	105	145
Students without effective EFL learning experience	80	107	187

The number of female students as shown in Table 1 appeared to be higher than their male counterparts. Descriptive analysis of the participants' performance is presented in the following table.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the students' performance on national identity (N=332)

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
				Mean
without effective EFL learning experience	187	3.3743	.44715	.03270
with effective EFL learning experience	145	3.3750	.38264	.03178

As presented in Table 2, the mean of the students' performance on national identity in 'effective EFL learning experience' group was found to be 3.375; whereas their counterparts' mean in 'without effective EFL learning experience' group was 3.374. Attendance in language institutes for more than one year was considered to be effective experience in EFL learning. An independent samples t-test determined if the difference is significant.

The independent samples t-test was conducted (see Table 3) to evaluate the possible impact of experience in EFL learning on national identity. Though unexpectedly, the means obtained showed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the two groups, those with effective experience in EFL learning (M=3.375, SD=.382) and those without effective experience in EFL leaning [M=3.374, SD=.447, $t(330) = 0.016$, $p > 0.05$]. Accordingly, the null hypothesis was confirmed, meaning statistically, there was no significant difference

between the participants' performances in both groups as far as national identity was concerned.

Table 3: Independent samples t- test on national identity between *experience* and *no-experience* groups

National Identity	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.928	.166	-.016	330	.988	-.00072	.04650	-.09219	.09075
Equal variances not assumed			-.016	326.767	.987	-.00072	.04560	-.09042	.08897

Sig.>0.05

Language Motivation Types and National Identity

To evaluate the possible relationship among motivation types and national identity, the regression analysis was conducted. As indicated by Tables 4-6, there was a correlation between *going abroad* and *social responsibility* with national identity. *Social responsibility* had positive correlation with national identity, emphasizing the social aspect of national identity. However, the correlation on the part of *going abroad* was opposite suggesting participants with emigration, as their main motivation, need special attention as far as national identity is concerned.

Table 4: Linear Regression measuring relation of Motivation types and national identity

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Dependent Variable:
.426 ^a	.181	.135	.35251	National Identity

R square obtained by the regression is 0.181 which shows that only 18.1% of the dependent variable (national identity) is determined by the independent variables.

Table 5: ANOVA^b

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	3.933	8	.492	3.957	.000 ^a
Residual	17.769	143	.124		
Total	21.702	151			

The Sig. value in the ANOVA equals .000. It confirms the hypothesis stating the relation between dependent and independent variables are linear and accordingly approves that linear regression is the proper way of measurement.

Table 6: Coefficients^a out of regression analysis

Model	Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
Independent variables	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.792	.287		9.724	.000
Intrinsic Interest	-.019	.041	-.041	-.456	.649
Immediate Achievement	.042	.042	.094	1.004	.317
Learning Situation	-.011	.039	-.025	-.282	.779
Going Abroad	-.097	.028	-.300	-	.001
Social Responsibility	.096	.036	.211	2.690	.008
Individual Achievement	.016	.058	.028	.279	.781
Information Medium	.071	.042	.150	1.698	.092
Identity Formation	.077	.040	.148	1.932	.055

a. Dependent Variable: National Identity

In the above table the Sig. value for the variable *going abroad* and *social responsibility* is .05. Meanwhile, the Standardized Beta for these two variables are -.300 and .211 respectively. It shows the relation between *going abroad* and national identity is negative meaning the relationship is opposite. The corresponding research questions were the following:

RQ 2.a. Is there any relationship between *intrinsic interest* and national identity? Table 7 shows that there is no meaningful relationship between *intrinsic interest* and national identity (Sig>0.05). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was confirmed meaning there was no relationship between the two constructs.

RQ2.b: Is there any relationship between *immediate achievement* and national identity? As presented in Table 7, there was no relationship between *national identity* and *immediate achievement* ($\text{sig}>0.05$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was confirmed meaning there was no relationship between the two constructs.

RQ2.c: Is there any relationship between *learning situation* and national identity? Table 7 shows that there is no relationship between *learning situation* and national identity ($\text{sig}>0.05$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was confirmed meaning there was no relationship between the two constructs.

RQ2.d: Is there any relationship between *going abroad* and national identity? As presented in Table 8, there is a relationship between *going abroad* and national identity ($\text{sig}<0.01$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was rejected meaning there was a relationship between the two constructs. Since the correlation coefficient is negative, the relationship is opposite.

RQ2.e: Is there any relationship between *social responsibility* and national identity? As presented in Table 7, there is a relationship between *social responsibility* and national identity ($\text{sig}<0.01$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was rejected showing a relationship between the two constructs. Since correlation coefficient is positive, the relationship is direct.

RQ2.f: Is there any relationship between *individual achievement* and national identity? Table 7 shows there is no relationship between national identity and *individual achievement* ($\text{sig}>0.05$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types was confirmed indicating no relationship between the two constructs.

RQ2.g: Is there any relationship between *information medium* and national identity? Table 7 shows that there is no relationship between *information medium* and national identity ($\text{sig}>0.05$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types is confirmed meaning there is no relationship between the two constructs.

RQ2. h: Is there any relationship between *identity formation* and national identity? As presented in Table 7, there is no relationship between national identity and *identity formation* ($\text{sig} > .05$). So, the null hypothesis for this subcategory of motivation types is confirmed meaning there is no relationship between the two constructs.

Relationship between National Identity and Gender

RQ3. Is there any association between gender and national identity formation? In order to investigate the impact of gender on the participants' performance on national identity, they were categorized in terms of their gender. Then the collected data were analyzed. As presented in the following table (Table 7), the mean obtained by male students was found to be 3.20. It was considered lower than that of their female counterparts (3.46). This difference proved to be significant. ($\text{Sig} < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis for RQ3 was rejected (Table 8).

Table 7: Group statistics on the relationship between national identity and gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
National Identity	Male	41	3.2630	.42933	.06705
	female	110	3.4115	.35414	.03377

As presented in table 7, the mean of the scores obtained by the male students (3.26) was found to be less than that of female students (3.41).

Table 8: Independent Samples t- test on the differences between males and females on national identity questionnaire

National Identity	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Effect size/eta squared
								Lower	Upper	
Equal variances assumed	6.137	.014	-	336	.000	-.25685	.04539	-.34613	.16758	.086
Equal variances not assumed	-	-	5.277	202.060	.000	-.25685	.04867	-.35282	.16088	-

Sig<0.05

As presented in table 8, there is a difference between participants' performance on national identity as far as their gender was concerned. Female students obtained higher mean score compared to their male peers. The independent samples t-test indicated a significant association between gender and national identity. The difference was found statistically significant ($\text{sig} < 0.05$). So, the third null hypothesis was rejected, meaning there was a relationship between the students' gender and their national identity.

Relationship between National Identity and Age-group

RQ4. Is there any association between age-group and construction of national identity? The students' performance on national identity questionnaire was also investigated in terms of their age. Because of the need for more precision and easier comparison of the results, the participants were divided into four age-groups. The means obtained for the four age-groups are in the following order: 18-20=**3.48**; 21-23=**3.33**; 24-26=**3.31**; 27-30= **3.01**. To compare the effectiveness of four different age-groups, there appears one factor (independent variable) with four levels. The dependent variable is the participants' performance on the national identity statements of the questionnaires.

Table 9: One-way ANOVA demonstrating the difference among the four age-groups on national identity

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.812	3	.453	3.347	.012
Within Groups	19.891	147	.135		
Total	21.702	151			

Sig<0.05 so there is a significant difference among the four age-groups

In this study, to examine the effect of age on performance on national identity questionnaire among four different age-groups, a one-way analysis of variance was conducted to obtain the F ratio. The calculated F ratio represented the variance between the groups, divided by the variance within the groups. As table 9 presents, the Sig. value is less than 0.05. So, there is a significant difference somewhere among the mean scores on the independent variable ($\text{sig} < 0.05$), meaning an association was observed between age and national identity among EFL learners. Table 10 shows where the difference was observed.

As demonstrated in the following table, Tukey's test revealed that there was a significant difference between the two rather different age groups (18-20 and 27-30), and adult language learners showed lower performance than young language learners.

Table10: Tukey's Multiple Comparisons on national identity among age-groups

(I) age	(J) age	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
18-20	21-23	.14646	.06440	.159	-.0314	.3243
	24-26	.16931	.12580	.663	-.1781	.5167
	27-30	.47438*	.14705	.013	.0682	.8805
21-23	18-20	-.14646	.06440	.159	-.3243	.0314
	24-26	.02285	.12403	1.000	-.3197	.3654
	27-30	.32791	.14555	.166	-.0741	.7299
24-26	18-20	-.16931	.12580	.663	-.5167	.1781
	21-23	-.02285	.12403	1.000	-.3654	.3197
	27-30	.30507	.18128	.448	-.1956	.8057
27-30	18-20	-.47438*	.14705	.013	-.8805	-.0682
	21-23	-.32791	.14555	.166	-.7299	.0741
	24-26	-.30507	.18128	.448	-.8057	.1956

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results on the Interview Questions

Table 11 represents the results of the seven questions the participants answered. The results revealed that the participants felt at ease (71.9%) being exposed to a foreign culture through learning a foreign language, while 28.1% had believed that they didn't feel at ease. To see which culture they liked more, 78.1% referred to Persian culture, while others referred to English (21.9%).

Regarding the extent to which the contents of English books have effect on their idea about Persian culture, 25% of the interviewees believed in the positive effect while 6.3% believed in the negative effect. It's worth mentioning that 62.5% claimed that the contents of the English books had no special effect on their idea about their native culture, Persian. About 6.3% believed in both positive and negative effects.

Table 11: Frequency results on the seven interview questions

Interview Questions	Positive response/ frequency	Positive response/ percentage	Negative response/ frequency	Negative response/ percentage	Neutral response/ percentage	Both positive and negative/ percentage
Question 1	23	71.9	9	28.1		
Question 2	25	78.1	7	21.9		
Question 3	8	25	2	6.3	62.5	6.3
Question 4	0	0	20	66.7		59.4
Question 5	7	21.9	25	78.1		
Question 6	10	31.3	22	68.8		
Question 7	6	18.5	26	81.3		
Total	32	100%	32	100%	100%	100%

To examine if the contents of the English books are biased, 66.7% of the total interviewees believed that they were not biased, however, only 3.7% believed that they were in line with Persian culture. It was found that 78.1% preferred the contents of English books with western culture, while 21.9% chose Persian culture.

Meanwhile, it was revealed that 18.5% of the participants believed in their language teachers' view on participants' idea about native culture.

To increase the reliability of the data gathered through interviews, two interviewers conducted the task. To examine the agreement obtained, the Cohen's Kappa measure of agreement was calculated. The result proved to be quite high (0.721).

DISSCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate the relationship between EFL learning and the components of some social constructs. Concerning the research questions, the results of the present study indicated that the participants effectively exposed to EFL learning did not perform on the national identity questionnaire at a lower

level than those participants without such an exposure. The reason behind that might lie in the fact that exposure to a different language and culture might not lead to rejection of the native cultural values. While it is generally assumed that exposure to a different language would result in a decline in belonging to native cultural values, the results of the current study provided different interpretations. Language learning is not in confrontation with native cultural values.

Furthermore, the language learners' performance on the two language motivation types, *going abroad* and *social responsibility* was different from that of other six language motivation types. On the one hand, the reason behind negative performances on *going abroad* construct appears rational but problematic. *Going abroad* acts as a language motivation type but it is in conflict with the sense of belonging to national identity, a kind of result which does not appear strange. On the other hand, for the *social responsibility* construct the researchers of the current study came up with a clear-cut idea. Those students who have a higher social responsibility have a stronger sense of belonging to national identity. Here, enriching the language learners' sense of national identity is in line with increasing their language motivation. Such a statement cannot be uttered as far as *going abroad* is concerned. Actually, *going abroad* is a construct which is in confrontation with national ideologies. Those who choose it as their main motivation to learn a foreign language can not probably adapt themselves with the social, political atmosphere governing the society. So, during the language learning a paradox appear as far as national identity is concerned. Language teachers are to take care not to disregard such an opposite relation of language motivation construct and national identity.

Concerning the two demographic variables, the results confirming the role of gender manifested that female participants have a stronger sense of belonging to national identity. The multidimensional aspect of national identity impedes suggesting a straightforward judgment. Meanwhile, the variable age appeared significant. It was found out that younger language learners obtained higher mean scores than the adults as far as national identity was concerned. Such a change makes it rather hard to draw a strong conclusion leading toward suggesting further

research. There is an assumption that the change in the variable (sense of belonging to national identity) might appear either from long exposure to foreign cultural values or because of age.

The results of the interview conducted revealed that students prefer making use of ELT textbooks and materials with British cultural content, although they showed high interest in their native culture, Persian. Concerns about social side effects of EFL learning are rational but at high levels would be pessimistic. The contents of English textbooks are biased. However, language learners prefer such a tendency and would like to become more familiar with cultural values of the target language.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Language policy makers, educators and parents have expressed concerns about non-linguistic social confrontations occurring during the process of learning a foreign language. This study, triggered by the above concerns, provided the researchers with interesting findings.

The students with different EFL learning experience performed similarly on national identity. The absence of significant difference between the students with regard to national identity indicated that EFL learning was not detrimental to national identity of the participants. Generally, based on the findings of this study, if other studies approach similar results with the same design, it might be concluded that EFL learning is not in confrontation with national identity.

Moreover, this study was conducted to explore the possible relationship between university students' language motivation types and construct of national identity. It was found that the participants' performances on the two constructs of *going abroad* and *social responsibility* had correlation with the construction of national identity. Students, with a desire to immigrate, showed modes of separation rather than the sense of belonging to national identity. Those with strong adherence to *social responsibility* performed equally well on national identity questionnaire and vice versa. Regarding six out of eight constructs, no significant correlation was observed among the students as far as their performance on national identity questionnaire was concerned. However, *going abroad* and *social responsibility* appeared differently and the outcome of their correlation with national identity was found to be opposite and direct, respectively.

Based on the findings of this study, if other studies with the same design, approach similar results, it might be concluded that concerns, especially at high levels, about the social side effects of EFL learning are not much reliable especially at high levels. Meanwhile, there is a mutual relationship between *social responsibility* and construction of national identity. The strengthening mode of *social responsibility* might enforce the construction of national identity and vice versa. On the contrary, *going abroad* as another EFL learning motivation type has an opposite association with national identity, i.e. being determined to go abroad as a language motivation is in conflict with construction of national identity. The presence of such an association, though not strange, may be due to language learners' interest in migration which might have roots in other social and political issues. Final word is that it was the main purpose of this study to open up these issues for discussion to reveal these hidden agendas.

Furthermore, it was found that female university students showed more affinity to national identity than male counterparts. Presumably, the researchers might assume that female students are more hopeful toward future and probably because women generally don't get involved in political issues. It has been found that age has a significant correlation with national identity. Adult language learners could not perform on national identity questionnaire as well as young learners.

Therefore, EFL learning and most language motivation types are in coalition with national identity rather than in conflict. Therefore, concerns about EFL learning are assumed to be declining if other more comprehensive studies approach similar results. To increase EFL learning motivation, syllabus designers and textbook developers can take national identity construct into account more seriously and appropriately in curriculum development of schools and universities. The Iranian national identity components examined in this study include interest toward territory, custom, political system, religion, history, myths, literature and arts.

The main theoretical implication that may be drawn from this study is that EFL learning is not in confrontation with an important social construct, national identity. It has some implications for material designer. It is rational to include in current global ELT textbooks materials covering components of national identity and some language motivation types.

This study has of course its own limitations. The validity of the findings depends heavily on the subsequent tests to measure national identity components, and further work on designing items of national identity components and language motivation types is obviously necessary.

Bio-data

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