

The Power of English Language in Reshaping EFL Learners' Identities: A Case Study Among Students in The Kurdistan Region

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ABSTRACT:

Identity construction is the process of developing and defining one's sense of self, which is influenced by various factors such as culture, experiences, and social interactions. Language learning is one such factor that can significantly shape one's identity construction. Given that, it is understandable that one's identity or sense of self may easily be affected in the process. In light of that, the current study aims at finding out the implications of the English language on EFL learners' identity at Soran university. Another aim of this research is to analyze the level of awareness among students in relation to the impacts of the English language on their identity. The study made use of a qualitative research design. Focus group interviews were used as a major tool for data collection. The participants of this study were twenty students from the English department/Faculty of Arts/Soran University who were both undergraduate (3rd, and 4th year) and postgraduate master students. The results of the study demonstrated that the English language has a great impact on the way the participants view their national identity, think about the world, dress, behave, and view their culture. It also revealed that learning the English language resulted in the formation of different learner identities and that some of the learners were unaware of such changes in their identities.

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1. Introduction:

1.1 Problem and its significance

Learning a language other than one's native tongue is one of the most complicated tasks. Physically, psychologically, and emotionally, it is a remarkably delicate and prolonged experience that involves the whole person. In that process, second language learners need to shift between their perception of themselves as native speakers of the first language and raise a critical awareness of themselves as second or foreign language learners. This influences the way they identify themselves.

Johnston (2003, p. 4) characterizes the "essence" of language instruction as values. This implies that language instruction, like all other forms of instruction, is neither impartial nor objective. It is influenced by and influences the values and morals of a community. Likewise, the sociopolitical situation influences and is influenced by language instruction. In a similar spirit, Kramsch (1993, p. 29) asserts that "the socio-cultural identities and ideologies are not static, deterministic constructs that EFL teachers and students bring to the classroom and then take away unchanged at the end of a lesson or course". That is to say, identities are easily affected and can be changed effectively. There are now two distinct types of identity paradigms in use. The basis of the first paradigm, the Western, mono-cultural, cognitive viewpoint, according to which the individual is viewed as independent, free, and self-sufficient. Regarding the second paradigm, society has a significant role in the formation of the identity of individuals. This paradigm is known as constructivism, and it holds that human identity is partially cognitive or individualistic and partly social (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Brown, 2007). It appears that no precise study has looked into their relationship; however, the current study tends to find that relationship. In light of this, the following research question is being addressed:

1- How is the relationship between learning the English language and EFL learners' identity construction?

2. Literature Review:

Language and identity are inextricably linked, so if we wish to maintain our identity, we must strive to preserve our language. The fact that English is becoming a global language has raised some concerns that must be taken into serious consideration because they impact every aspect of human life. The majority of participants believe that learning English as an international language poses a threat to their national, cultural, and even religious identities.

Identity is formed through participation in communities of practice, which refers to a network of connections formed over time between people, things, and the world (Wenger, 1998). Identity is a dynamic, hybrid, multi-framed, fragmented, and contradictory concept due to the fluid relationship between identity and community (Teng, 2018). Because of the variety of positions that EFL learners take in various social interactions, identity and investment in EFL learning have received a lot of attention over the last ten years. Learners' cognitive awareness and ideologies, their perceptions of affordances in the English learning community, their sense of agency, and mismatches between the actual community and the imagined community are at least four factors that can be discussed over time (Teng, 2018).

An identity is not an abstract concept or label, such as a title, ethnic group, or personal trait. It is a lived sense of belonging (or not belonging). A strong identity is characterized by deep connections with others based on shared histories and experiences, reciprocity, affection, and mutual commitments (Anwaruddin, 2012). It is believed that anyone who has learned a foreign/second language would admit that learning a language involves the construction of new identities with varying dimensions and complexities. One way to understand identity and English language learners is in the context of social power relations at both the local and international levels. Even though these discussions are pertinent to all languages, they are particularly pertinent to English because of its influence as one of the world's most powerful languages (Norton, 2017).

Moreover, English is a powerful language and can easily leave impacts on EFL learners' identity. The term "EFL learner identity" is used to describe the personality an individual develops when studying English as a foreign language. To put it another way, an EFL learner's identity is the collection of attitudes, values, and commitments that they bring to the experience of studying English. Thus, university student's identity changes and it is formed differently (Lan & Lan, 2022). According to Norton (1997), one's identity can be said to be a product of and a contributor to one's language. Furthermore, it is widely accepted that language acquisition and identity reconstruction are intricately intertwined (Edwards, 2009). However, there are ongoing debates in regards to identity theory which is rarely placed directly within learning English (Ortega, 2009).

It is important to understand learners' views in regard to learning English which may lead to identity change due to its power. For Shardkova and Pavlenko (2004), EFL learners' sense of self is seriously affected when they speak English. This partly results from the power and status that the English language has in comparison to other languages. Furthermore, Norton (1997) demonstrates that some English learners feel the need to reject their first language culture in order to assimilate into the mainstream academic discourse in English during the "assimilation process". This process involves learners' use of English in most cases, which also explains how English can be powerful in reshaping their identity.

As learners learn more English, they tend to depend on it for social purposes. This may lead to destabilization in terms of how one believes in things and sees him/herself (Block, 2002).

Furthermore, English language power in terms of globalization can have a long-term impact on learner identity. As a key tool for globalization, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) argues "English plays an invasive and aggressive function that interferes with the language and cultural integrity of other nations". Moreover, the growth of English in the world is also seen as a sign of "linguistic imperialism" (Gu, 2009). Globalization and technological advancement have increased the likelihood of the emergence of dual and hybrid identities (Block, 2008) This has complicated the way people are categorized based on factors such as class, race, and gender. Consequently, there is a growing sense of doubt regarding one's sense of self (Miyahara, 2010).

In spite of globalization, there is also imperialism that gives English a greater dominance in the world. This also shows how English can control other countries through imperialism and educational tools. According to Phillipson (1992), education has three functions for the imperial center: ideological, economic, and repressive. The ideological function facilitates the dissemination of social and cultural values. In this capacity, English is regarded as "the gateway to improved communication, education, and living standards." P.47. The second function, which is economic, legitimizes English as a means of qualifying individuals to make a contribution to their nation and operate the technology to which English provides access. Repression, which is the third function, has enabled English dominance over indigenous languages. Linguistic imperialism highlights the potential consequences of English teaching globally when the ideologies of 'inner circle' countries are embedded in instruction, thereby legitimizing colonial or establishment power and resources and "reconstituting cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (Phillipson, 1992).

According to many scholars, the position of English in the globe is not coincidental. Greenbaum (1985), Kachru (1981, 1986), Phillipson (1988), and Quirk and Widdowson (1986) are only a few of the authors who emphasized the issue of linguistic imperialism in the late 1970s and 1980s. Given the interest of research in such field, it is important to understand one more important aspect that is colonization. It is clear that English spread over the lands it conquered and as a result English became more powerful in the world. Although, there was some control over the spread of English during the early stages of colonization, this is no longer the case. Additionally, English is advertised as a low-cost remedy against multilingualism which gives it another advantage. According to this perspective, those who choose to speak English today do so freely (Brutt-Griffler, 1998, 2002).

In addition, Lobatón (2011) conducted a research project with the purpose of identifying and analyzing the identities that students construct as foreign language learners while interacting in an EFL classroom, as well as the effects that this identity construction may have on the language learning process. The results of the study indicated that issues such as the use of L1 in the EFL classroom, the teacher's conception of language learning and teaching, and the silent struggle for power between teacher and students are crucial in the struggle of students to construct their social and individual identities as learners within a given classroom community.

^Scholars in the fields of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics are interested in the relationship between identity and language learning. The majority of studies on learner identity place greater emphasis on external contexts, whereas the role of metaphor which is adding non-human characterization to humans appears to be undervalued, and few studies have investigated the effect metaphor has on learner identity. Huang (2011) investigated the role of language learners' metaphors by describing their English learning

attitudes and experiences and then found that the metaphor played a great role in the development of language learners' identities.

3. Methodology:

3.1 The Research Tools

A qualitative approach is usually used to answer questions concerning the complex nature of phenomena with the intention of describing and comprehending the phenomena from the point of view of the participants on that account, the qualitative approach was considered suitable for this study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:94). Exploratory qualitative research seeks to understand difficult situations. Qualitative research is empirical, inductive, and interpretive. It involves using social experience analysis to deduce general principles and norms from specific cases (Pacho, 2015). Qualitative research methods focus on how meaning is socially constructed and interpret and analyze what people say and do rather than measurement or numerical analysis, according to Lindlof and Taylor (2011).

This study uses a qualitative case study to understand how students view identity creation in English language learning. Most research design papers define design as "a plan or process for carrying out or accomplishing something" (Zainal, 2007, p. 343). According to Maxwell (2012), the design is either a list of standard types to choose from or a list of steps to follow when organizing or conducting a study. Typological and sequential design models are unsuitable for qualitative research because they try to define 'the processes and characteristics of the investigation'. During the study, new information or changes in another component may require redesigning any part of the design (Maxwell, 2012). Research goes beyond data collection. Instead, it solves open problems or develops unproven theories. Research often increases ignorance. Arrogant people believe they know everything (Goddard & Melville, 2004). Understanding the research's philosophical foundation is important because we're tempted to learn things we can't do elsewhere. Learn about things that don't directly affect us (Beins, 2017). "The approaches or procedures used to obtain and analyze data linked to some research question(s)" are research methods (Crotty, 1998: p. 2).

A focus group is a research method that collects information through group interaction. The group consists of a small number of carefully chosen individuals who discuss a particular topic. Focus groups are utilized to identify and investigate how people think and behave, shedding light on the why, what, and how questions. In addition, focus groups are a type of group interview that relies on communication between research participants to generate data. Focus groups explicitly include group interaction as a part of the method, whereas group interviews are frequently used as a quick and convenient way to collect data from multiple people simultaneously. This means that instead of the researcher asking each participant to respond to a question individually, participants are encouraged to engage in conversation with one another by asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each other's experiences and perspectives (Kitzinger, 1995).

This study includes undergraduate and graduate students from the English department at Soran University. The participants were divided into five focus groups as a means of fostering an environment conducive to diverse responses. The questions were designed to elicit more free-form responses and leave no bias toward a specific concept. The advantage of such questions

is that respondents have multiple ways to express themselves and view their opinions from different perspectives.

The procedure of the study is to record focus group discussions. The researcher use non-random sampling. The researchers choose sample elements using selection criteria one of which is non-random sampling. Qualitative and case study research often use non-probability sampling. Case studies focus on small samples and explore real-world phenomena, not statistical conclusions about a large population (Yin, 2003). Purposive or judgmental sampling selects situations, people, or events to provide crucial information that cannot be obtained through other means (Maxwell, 1996).

As qualitative research rarely attempts to generalize its findings to a larger population, the use of probability sampling is seen as unneeded and unjustified (Merriam, 1998). As with the majority of qualitative research, the participants in this case study research were selected via purposive sampling. This selection method was used to hand-select participants from whom a great deal might be learned about the effect of English learning on the identity of EFL learners in the Kurdistan Region. According to Patton (2002), this is the rationale and effectiveness of purposeful sampling.

University of Soran is selected as the research site for two primary reasons. First, as a student at this university, It is assumed that targeting people from within the university would be more straightforward and convenient. Second, the site selection choice is to study more about the relationship between learning English and its effect on the identities of EFL learners.

Data is gathered from focus groups that include student's from Department of English/ University of Soran. Their levels are 3rd year, 4th year, and graduates from the department of English. This method involves people from different departments and hierarchies (Saunders, 2012). Participant diversity increases the likelihood of a complete case report (Creswell, 2013). This classification attracted master's, junior, and senior English language students from arts, education, morning, and evening classes. Twenty participants are divided into five focus groups: four master's students (group 1), which is also the pilot group, four junior students from the faculty of arts in the morning classes (group 2), four seniors from the Faculty of Education (group 3), four seniors from the Faculty of Arts (group 4), and four seniors from the evening classes (group 5).

Table 1: The Pseudonyms of the Student Participants according to their level of education.

Initials ST + An assigned alphabet to each student + group number				
Group 1 G1	STAG1	STBG1	STCG1	STDG1
Group 2 G2	STEG2	STFG2	STGG2	STHG2
Group 3 G3	STIG3	STJG3	STKG3	STLG3
Group 4 G4	STMG4	STNG4	STOG4	STPG4
Group 5 G5	STQG5	STRG5	STSG5	STTG5

3.2 Data Analysis and Findings:

A qualitative method was used to gather data from a focus group. It is important to mention that a focus group is a way of collecting necessary data for research that brings a small group of people together to answer questions in a moderated setting. The questions that were asked in the focus group was designed in a way that helped in shedding light on the topic to collect the data for the current research. The answers of the focus groups were taken for conducting the data analysis. The beliefs of the five focus groups were used to confirm and refute the pre-existing beliefs. Given that, the answers of focus groups are important for this research on which little data was available. The thoughts, beliefs, and feelings of the focus groups were emphasized to serve the case study research. This is a productive way of analyzing data in regard to this research since it leaves room for further thinking.

3.3 English and its impact on identity construction:

It is clear that every language has a number of speakers and the speakers share similar identities due to their language and culture. The impacts that one language places on another could be closely related to culture, and may lead to changes in some cultural aspects of a particular country. Alshammari (2018) investigates the relationship between language and identity construction. He concluded that language allows culture to exist, and culture is necessary for language to exist. If you take one of these things away from the other, one of them will inevitably lose some of its power, become a hybrid of the two, or be absorbed by the more potent of the two.

3.3.1 Religious identity:

Religion plays an important role in one's identity. The way one is raised in a particular society in most cases shapes their religion as well. In Kurdish society, the majority of people follow the Islamic religion and it has become a part of their identity. Many people are unfamiliar with the other religions in the world. And, it is believed that by learning English, learners can be familiar with other religions and can also learn about a number of other ideologies. Given all this, the learners were asked if learning English affected their identity and which religion is a part of it. The participants expressed some strong views and opinions in regard to such questions.

Students' opinions vary about the impact that English has placed on their identity, particularly their religious identity. Most of the participants believed that learning English weakens the sense of one's religious identity. However, some differences of opinions were analyzed in the study. STBG1 for example, believed that the English language has weakened his religion. STCG1 disagrees: "if it affects us or weakens your religion in another way it strengthens your religion you know why?" "Ten years ago, some questions were strictly taboo," STBG1 says. Facebook users are questioning everything and religion. Some other participants seemed to agree with him and viewed the problem similarly. STLG3 agrees: "maybe a time comes when Christianity overcomes our Islamic religion, so maybe our future is in danger". Another participant also expressed the same opinion and said; "Maybe English will affect our religion, a lot of people don't pray, and they change their religion to Christianity or other religions because a mixture of cultures," says STKG3.

3.3.2 The sense of national belonging:

To some people, English has somehow affected their sense of national belonging and their intimacy towards their culture. While others tend to believe differently. The latter is contradictory to the former which means there are people whose sense of national identity has been reinforced as the result of learning the English language. STBG1 believes that learning English has a negative impact on culture and nationality: "it has negatively affected their culture. Their sense of national belonging. I've heard people say; I actually don't have any intimacy towards my national identity anymore because it's not a land where you can live a happy life". STDG1 agrees and says: "it has affected me personally as an EFL learner. The English language has affected in weakening my sense of national belonging".

Some other participants believe differently and state that learning English has in fact reinforced their love for their Kurdish identity. STDG1 states that: "learning English made me think that I love my country more than before when I was in high school, but the thing is because I've seen people who made revolutions under the name of nationalism". STAG1 agrees with STDG1 and says: "I think it helped me love my country more than before because sometimes I compare my life with others, how it affects me, and why I want to live in my country".

However, other aspects of foreign life make learners question their identity. Learners may think their lives are better than English people's after observing foreigners. They can also see how much others love their countries and leaders, which may make them love theirs more. STJG3 believes that; "learning English makes you love your president and officials as they do. I'm proud of our officials because they're proud of their queens and kings". STHG2 adds; "because as we see how the English people take care of their nationality and how they love, and we learn from them how we should keep our nationality and we love more and show them we are Kurds proudly".

3.3.3 Imitation:

Many participants believe that to learn a language, you must adapt to its style. To master a language, one must also learn its culture. Thus, students begin to act and talk like English native speakers. Participants discussed imitation. Most of the participants seem to want to copy the language and lifestyles of English native speakers. STBG1 states; "We were impressed by their language and how developed they were,". "I see English people, I work with them, and I see how they respect their culture and I try to imitate them because I'm no different from them," says STDG1. This shows that the culture of English people has great impact on the beliefs and views of the participants. "English learners have interacted with their culture and with their language, lifestyles, how they think they eat," STMG4 says.

3.3.4 English language learning effect on EFL learners' dressing:

The current study also focuses on the dressing. Some focus group questions are designed to identify whether learning English changed the way Kurdish EFL learners dress. The current study also tries to answer the question of whether learning English impacted EFL learners' sense of their culture and customs. Thus, some of the participants seemed to completely agree with the notion that learning English did change their way of thinking and dressing. For example, STAG1 claims that "the way that I'm dressing right now is very different from the way when I used to dress before I came to university because the English language affected me". And, STKG3 agrees by saying: "The English language can influence the way that they

dress". Overall, the participants show that the English language has great effects on the way they dress. They also explain that their way of dressing was different before learning English,

3.3.5 EFL Effect on EFL Learners' Perceptions:

Understanding how English learning affects identity is crucial. Several participants are asked if learning English fit their identities to see how learning English changed them. "English always was a way to provide a better understanding of what it is like out there and how it has transformed into our daily lives and learning to be okay with it and to embrace it," says STIG3. One participant thought everyone learning English, especially young children, weakened their national identity. STJG3 says parents now send their kids to private English-only schools. This threatens the Kurdish language and future generations. Whether positive or negative, learning English has changed people's thoughts and national identities. Most study participants said learning English changed their views and identity. STPG4 believes that the "English language has changed my thoughts to the best." STKG3, on the other hand, believes that she is motivated now to improve on many skills that she has developed as the result of studying in the department of English and says:

I came to the English department, and the way I think and the way I want to improve myself and my life is totally different. But before, it was totally different according to the way that I thought and the way that I wanted to improve my life and my abilities before I came to university.

Some other participants state that learning English has opened their eyes to the world in a way that they are more open-minded and braver than they previously were. In that regard, STNG4 claims that: "English made me more open-minded. And also, it made me if someone has a different idea, I have to tolerate". Besides this, STPG4 believes that he is braver now and he states that the "English language has taught me to be brave in proposing to girls. Now, I don't hesitate to do so".

3.3.6 EFL Learning Effect on EFL Learners' Behavior:

This study investigates whether learning English changes Kurdish EFL learners' behavior. Participants were asked about how learning English changed their behavior. This question also sought participants' opposing views for analysis to discover cultural differences. "As you watch them you may learn the same, and you behave as they behave," says STJG3. According to STOG4, "when you are learning a language, you are also acquiring their customs, behaviors, and pick up their habits". "In certain countries, they hug when they greet each other," she adds. Thus, our culture suffers. Islam forbids it".

Participants mention that learners' behavior has changed but is not accepted by society. If so, students tend to do so among themselves. "We are only practicing with our close friends because we have normalized it between us, but I don't think public opinion will agree," STIG3 says. STQG5 approves: "I can say that learning language was impacting my behavior when sometimes me and my friends were speaking English, and our behaviors also changed". On the other hand, STFG2 touches upon some important things such as the identities of people who lived abroad and says that:

those learners who are already spending time with English people, their behaviors are changed like when those people are going abroad and when they are back, they are

behaving differently. they don't shy we have some traditional things that they don't care about anymore.

Participants also laid out the differences between Kurdish and English cultures. STEG2 in that regard states that: “some gestures or kisses between the same gender, maybe in our culture, is normal. Maybe if we do this in an English culture, people think differently because it has other meanings”. This shows how some behaviors can be quite normal in one culture and that same behavior can be different in the other culture. Participants also touched upon the normalization of such behaviors by getting to know the culture better.

3.3.7 Age Factor in Identity Construction:

Self-creation is an individualized process. Personality develops at a certain age. Adolescent identity is crucial because this is the first stage of life when a person's maturing body, mind, and social norms help them understand their early sense of self and chart a course toward adulthood. Identity is self-awareness. Clarifying one's morals, ethics, and standards and choosing a career are necessary to shape one's identity (Upreti, 2017). The current study put age differences and how learning English affected learner identity into consideration. Participants are asked about age and identity construction. STBG1 states: "This is the main point. It harms English-speaking teens. Neglecting culture is bad. Because they're immature".

It is nonetheless important to mention that the participants of the study mostly focus on the vulnerability of children in terms of identity construction. They mostly believe that for children at a younger age identity construction is quite subconscious and they do not have much to do with it. In this regard, STLG3 states that:

if a child wants to learn the English language, it means his or her personality completely changes, but for us, as an adult who wants to learn the English language, maybe we will kind of commit to our tradition and culture.

Some other participants believe that learning English at a younger age is more beneficial since you learn to speak like a native speaker. STNG4 for example says: “The earlier you start, the better or, the bigger the effect”. Another important point is how learning English changes a person and that is stated by “STOG4” who claims: “I want to say learning English really changes the way you think and your mind to some extent, especially at an early age, it affects you, for example, when you are learning, it affects your identity”.

3.4 Discussion:

The findings of this research help in understanding the concept of identity formation, language change, behavior change, and the shift in the worldviews and perspectives of those who learn English. A number of questions were posed to study participants in order to gauge their overall comprehension of language and identity. It is also intended to determine whether or not students took a highly visible stance when attempting to protect their identities. This is done in light of the study of Mona and Rodriguez (2019) who found out that participants developed various identities as English language learners (dominant, submissive, resistant, and productive), which either negatively or positively impacted their academic investment. In addition, the participant's responses were evaluated to determine the causes of additional identity issues. The influence that English had on the identities of language learners was one of the issues addressed in this research. Concerning this research question, participants were

asked if English influenced how language learners dressed, behaved, practiced their culture, thought, worldviews, and felt about their national identity. Participants believed that English has had a substantial impact on their manner of dress. This is supported by Mansfield (2000) who discovered the human tendency to perceive clothing as a playful collection of visual symbols relating to the self can be utilized in L2 instruction. Self is typically perceived as malleable and plural. However, some participants went on to say that they still protected their manner of dress as an integral part of their identity in order to share it with individuals of various cultural backgrounds. Similarly, a large number of participants reported that their behavior has changed as a result of their English-learning. This can be reinforced by a study conducted by Lessard-Clouston (1996) who argued that culture, as a rooted set of behaviors and patterns of perception, has a significant role in the acquisition of a second language. He stated that “a language is part of a culture, and a culture is part of a language: the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture.” Participants appeared to still value their traditional way of life, but some believed that learning English culture helped them become politer and more respectful. In light of these findings, the notion that the English language influences the behavior and attire of English language learners is highly plausible. Moreover, participants' perspectives regarding their sense of national identity and their appreciation of Kurdish costumes tended to vary. After learning another language and becoming acquainted with a different culture, a group of participants stated that they no longer give their identity much thought. Nonetheless, a large number of individuals believed that their identity was the essence of who they were as individuals and that they were compelled to protect it at all costs. Furthermore, participants appeared to value their traditions and believe in maintaining their costumes. In addition, it makes sense to assert that after learning a new language, one's thinking and worldview may alter. This can coincide with the findings of Jackendoff (1996) who discovered that making thought available for attention is possible because language is the only modality of consciousness that makes the relational form of thought and the abstract elements of thought perceptible. According to the findings of this study, the same holds true. The majority of respondents indicated that learning English significantly altered their worldviews and modes of thought. Some participants viewed this as a detriment to their personalities and believed they could never alter. Others viewed it favorably and believed that learning English increased their knowledge of the world.

In addition, the present research also addresses the important topic of identity construction. The results of the research indicate that individual identities are constructed over time and influenced by a wide range of variables. Language is crucial in the formation of identity (Djité, 2006). Individual, according to this viewpoint, is a socio-historical and socio-cultural product, implying different and multiple identities at various points in time and settings (Gergen, 1991; Hall, Held & McGrew, 1992).

To get a handle on this, we ask participants to share their thoughts and anecdotes about how the English language has affected their sense of self. Participants are asked to rate the extent to which they believed that speaking English made them feel less connected to their country of origin. Most respondents agree that becoming fluent in English lessened their sense of national pride. But some take part who disagreed. Learners who took the time to immerse themselves in English culture reported feeling a renewed sense of pride in their national heritage. The more students learn about the experiences of others, the more likely they are to either endorse or condemn such language policies. In light of the results of this research, both viewpoints are reasonable when thinking about the impact of learning English on the identity

development of students. The vast majority of interviewees agree that the rise in immigration can be traced back to the participants' improved command of English and familiarity with local customs. When asked if they thought English and Kurdish identities were compatible, most respondents said no. Accordingly, it's safe to assume that the vast majority of students viewed English as superior to their native tongue and culture. In addition, those argued that their sense of identity was less robust than the English and that the two were fundamentally distinct.

Another essential research question concerns awareness. This study emphasizes that learning English has consequences for identity formation. Regarding this, the purpose of the research question was to determine if students were aware of these changes. Participants were asked if they agreed with the alterations to their identities brought about by learning English. This was an effort to determine whether or not the students accepted the notion of redefining their identities as a result of learning English. In spite of this, students have expressed a sense of identity transformation. Some demonstrated prejudice toward their language and disapproved of their identity construction. Others, however, believed it to be normal because learning English had made them more tolerant and helped them acquire more skills. In light of these findings, it can be stated that English language learners were more aware of and accepting of their identity construction.

It is also important to note that students had differing perspectives on how the English language has affected their native tongue. Some of the participants claimed that the increasing number of people learning English is detrimental to their language. That is to say that the native language of the participants is affected negatively as a result of learning English. Additionally, they stated that learning English at a younger age could have greater effects on the native language. Some participants believed that learning English could result in the extinction of the Kurdish language and culture. Given this, it can be asserted with certainty that participants did not recognize the harm that English caused to their language and that their language was endangered as a result of the increasing number of English speakers in their society. In addition, participants were asked to express their opinions on the usage of numerous English words in Kurdish. The majority of participants appeared to agree that this resulted in the richness of English culture and its vocabulary. Participants asserted that the English language holds a prominent position internationally and has influenced nearly all other languages. Based on the findings of the study, it is also possible to assert that the status of the Kurdish language may be in jeopardy as more people begin to speak and use English effectively in daily life.

4. Conclusion:

The study aimed at finding the relationship between learning English and its impacts on learner identity. In light of that, students' awareness of identity construction was considered. As well as that, the impacts of the English language on student behavior, dressing, worldviews, and their sense of national identity were investigated. In regard to the research questions, the data revealed that the identity of the EFL learners at Soran university was largely impacted in the process of learning English. The participants of the study ranged their views in terms of viewing their national identity. Some of them stated their strong tendency towards their language and culture. They believed that their language and culture were essential to their identity, and that they must endeavor to protect their identity. On the other hand, some learners claimed that their interaction with English language and culture was an essential part of learning and that they must be familiar with culture in order to learn English. Furthermore, the impacts of English language on student behavior and way of dressing was one of the major

concerns of the current research. The data gathered from the participants revealed that most of the students behaved and dressed differently as the result of learning English. Nonetheless, there were some participants whose views in regards to dressing and behavior differed. They stated that they should protect their traditions as an attempt to preserve their identity. When it comes to learner awareness of identity construction, it is concluded that many learners were unaware of the changes learning English brought to their identities. It can be stated that, most of the students' identities were impacted as the result of learning English language. Learning English and getting to know the culture seems to have largely influenced learner's religious identities. Some of the learners claimed that after learning English they started to question more about their religion. In this case, most of the learners believed that their native language was endangered due to the wide spread of English language and its culture in the Kurdistan region.

قدرة اللغة الإنجليزية في إعادة تشكيل هويات متعلميها كلغة أجنبية: دراسة حالة طلاب كردستان

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ملخص البحث:

بناء الهوية عبارة عن عملية تطوير وتعريف إحساس الفرد بالذات، والذي يتأثر بعوامل مختلفة مثل الثقافة والتجارب والتفاعلات الاجتماعية. وتعد عملية تعلم اللغة أحد العوامل التي يمكن أن تؤثر بشكل كبير في بناء الهوية؛ فإنه من المفهوم أن هوية الفرد أو إحساسه بذاته قد يتأثر بسهولة في هذه العملية، وفي ضوء ذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة تداعيات اللغة الإنجليزية على هوية متعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بين طلاب جامعة سوران في إقليم كردستان. والهدف الآخر من هذا البحث هو تحليل وعي المتعلم بتأثيرات اللغة الإنجليزية على هويتهم. كما تسعى الدراسة أيضا إلى الكشف عن السمات الحالية للغة الإنجليزية التي يتم فرضها على متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة سوران. وسلك البحث المنهج النوعية، لجمع البيانات، وتمت مقابلة جماعية مركزية، شارك فيها عشرين طالب/طالبة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية/فاكولتي الآداب/جامعة سوران، من المرحلة: الثالثة والرابعة، وخريجين (طلاب ماجستير). وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة المستندة إلى آراء المشاركين أن اللغة الإنجليزية لها تأثير كبير على الطرق التي ينظر بها المشاركون إلى هويتهم الوطنية، والتفكير في العالم، واللباس، والتصرف، واطهار ثقافتهم، كما كشفت الدراسة أن تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية أدى إلى تكوين هويات مختلفة للمتعلم، وأن بعض المتعلمين لم يكونوا على دراية بمثل هذه التغييرات في هويتهم.