

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ACCENT

A MASTER'S THESIS

BY

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*To my Father (Ramazan), my Mother (Aygül),  
and my fiancée (İrfan Hayır)*

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## ABSTRACT

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND ACCENT

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This study investigates the relationship between cultural identity and accent. The focus is on the relationship between the identity perceptions of 20 native speakers of English, who have been living in Turkey for a long period of time, and their Turkish accent in terms of nativelikeness. The participants were administered a cultural identity questionnaire, their reading aloud of a few Turkish passages was recorded, and follow-up interviews were conducted with four of the participants.

The findings of this study showed that there is a relationship between cultural identity and accent, in the sense that the more the participants identified themselves as Turkish the more ‘native-like’ their accent score was. This finding confirms the previous literature (e.g., Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Jones, 2001; Marx, 2002; Rindal, 2010), suggesting a relationship between cultural identity and accent.

The findings further indicated that the participants tended to prioritize comprehensibility over presentation of speech. At the pedagogical level, this is a reminder that during their practices, second language teachers need to be aware of the language learners’ goals in order to avoid mismatches.

Key words: cultural identity, identity, accent, native-like



## ÖZET

## KÜLTÜREL KİMLİK VE AKSAN ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİ

Ahu Burcu Aydemir

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Bölümü

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Haziran 27, 2013

Bu çalışma, kültürel kimlik ve aksan arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektedir.

Çalışmanın odağı anadili İngilizce olan ve uzun süredir Türkiye’de yaşayan 20 kişinin kimlik algıları ve anadili gibi yakınlığı açısından Türkçe aksanları arasındaki ilişkidir. Katılımcılara bir kültürel kimlik anketi uygulanmış, birkaç Türk pasajların yüksek sesle okumaları kaydedilmiş, ve dört katılımcı ile takip görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Bu çalışmanın bulguları, kültürel kimlik ve aksan arasında bir ilişki olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu anlamda katılımcıların kendilerini Türk olarak gördükçe aksan skoları da o kadar 'anadili gibi' olduğu görülmektedir. Bu bulgu kültürel kimlik ve vurgu arasında bir ilişki olduğunu öne süren önceki literatürü (örneğin; Gatbonton , Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Jones, 2001; Marx, 2002; Rindal, 2010) doğrulamaktadır.

Bulgular, katılımcıların konuşma sunumu yerine anlaşılabilirliğe öncelik gösterme eğilimi olduğunu göstermiştir. Pedagojik düzeyde, bu çalışma ikinci dil öğretmenlerin kendi öğretim uygulamaları sırasında, dil öğrencileri ile arasında uyumsuzlukları önlemek için, dil öğrencilerinin hedeflerinin farkında olmaları gerektiğini hatırlatmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: kültürel kimlik, kimlik, aksan, ana dili gibi

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction**

Second language (L2) learners often learn a second culture; therefore, acquire a second identity while trying to adapt to the target culture community. This adaptation process has been called acculturation (Brown, 1986). One symbol of identity in second-language learners is native-like speech, or accent. Perceptions of identity are often reflected in a person's accent, in other words, the way a person speaks represents the way s/he views him/herself in relation to both the native and target language cultures.

In recent years, a number of studies have emphasized the link between language use and social identity (e.g., Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1992; Hall, 1996; van Dijk, 1997). Research on L2 identity and accent has predominantly been conducted in English speaking countries, largely with immigrant and refugee populations. However, there is limited research on identity and accents of native speakers of English living and learning languages in other countries. This study presents research that investigates the relationship between the identity perceptions of native speakers of English, who have been living in Turkey for a long period of time, and their Turkish accent in terms of nativelikeness.

### **Background of the Study**

Learning a second language always involves- to some degree- learning a second culture, especially in the context of acculturation, a process of adapting to a new culture (Brown, 1986). There are several contexts in which second language and second culture learning can occur (Brown, 1986). One of the contexts is "learning a language within the culture of that second language" (Brown, 1986, p. 34), in which the level of

acculturation is very intense. The learner must be able to live in a foreign culture, while at the same time learn a language which is required for communication within that community.

English has risen to currently being the international language of science and technology, of information and communication technology (ICT), and, in many cases, of contemporary life and living (Iwuchukwu, 2011). Therefore, English has gained the status of a prestige language worldwide. Kachru's (1985) three concentric circles provide a model that describes the spread of English. The inner circle includes countries where English is spoken as a first language, the outer circle includes countries where English is spoken as a second or major language, and the expanding circle includes countries where English has acquired cultural or commercial significance. With respect to the learning of English or the learning of other languages by native speakers of English, Kachru's (1985) circles provide a starting point for exploring the possible different hierarchical relations between the two languages and the subsequent cultural identity issues that may emerge.

L2 learning often leads to the negotiation and (re)construction of identity (Kinginger, 2004) because language learning not only involves learning a formal set of grammar rules, but also learning the culture at the same time. So, a second language learner, in some respects, acquires a second identity (Brown, 1986). According to Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, and Cain (1998), "Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them. They are important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (p. 5). Identity not only involves the formation of the self, but also relates to how an individual perceives himself/herself within his/her own community and the wider society. Norton

(1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Multilingual societies are a great part of life, therefore, academic interest in identity and its relationship to language use has grown (Miller, 2004).

A symbol of social identity is accent, which reveals who a person is (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Jones, 2001). Becker (1995) states that “An accent is the part of a person’s language that serves to identify the speaker’s regional origin or national/ethnic identity no matter what language the person is speaking” (p. 37). Accent not only influences communicative fluency but also has a role in judgments of social belonging and identity (Moyer, 2007). In that sense, Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) can explain the relationship between native-like speech and identity. CAT was developed “to describe and explain aspects of the way people modify their communication according to situational, personal or even interactional variables” (Williams, 1999, p. 152).

CAT has two separate aspects. The speakers may adjust their speech either towards the speech of their interlocutors (convergence) or away from the speech of their interlocutors (divergence) (Jenkins, 2000). Within the first aspect, convergence, the speaker accommodates his/her speech in order to be liked and understood and to assert him/herself as belonging to the interlocutors' community (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991). In the second aspect, divergence, the speaker tries to diverge his/her speech from the interlocutors’ speech in order to maintain his/her own in-group identity and stay loyal to his/her speech community (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005).

The research on identity has mostly focused on identities of individuals who are foreigners in native English speaking countries (e.g., Kaya, 2005; Kinginger, 2004; Lee, 2002; Miller, 2000; Norton, 1995). However, to the knowledge of the researcher, there is no research conducted on identities of English speakers living in countries in which English is not spoken as a native language. In regards to identity, the few studies that have been conducted in Turkey involve exploring the identities of Turkish students or teachers of English living in Turkey (e.g., Atay & Ece, 2009).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Identity issues in L2 acquisition have been of great interest to researchers for many years. The literature concerning identity primarily involves foreigners in native English speaker settings (e.g., Kaya, 2005; Kinginger, 2004; Lee, 2002; Miller, 2000; Norton, 1995). To the knowledge of the researcher, there is no research looking at the identity perceptions of English speakers living in countries where English is not spoken as a native language. Moreover, there are relatively few studies which focus on the relationship between language learners' identity, specifically their identifying with the target language culture, and the nativeness of their accent (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2009; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Miller, 1999; Piller, 2002; Timmis, 2002). The few studies that do examine the relationship between identity and accent tend to examine the situation with immigrants or refugees in ESL contexts (e.g., Derwing 2003; Moyer, 2007; Tahta, Wood, & Loewenthal, 1981). In other words, these studies have focused on individuals from outer or expanding circle countries learning or living in inner circle countries. The situation of English speakers from the inner circle countries moving to the expanding circle countries and learning those countries' native languages remains unexplored. Furthermore, the research in relation to identity that has

been conducted in Turkey, only involves the identities of English language learners and English language teachers, who are native speakers of Turkish (e.g., Atay & Ece, 2009), but lacks a closer exploration on the identities of expatriates.

Although students and teachers may be aware of various linguistics factors that affect students' pronunciation of the target language, and apply strategies to deal with those, they have a tendency to be far less aware of the possible socio-linguistic influences on pronunciation. If teachers and students remain unaware of the possible socio-linguistic factors in relation to pronunciation, then there may be a mismatch between teachers' goals and students' achievement. Teachers may, for example, strive to guide their students to have native-like pronunciation, however; students' pronunciation, possibly even by choice, may be less than native-like. The present study focuses on native English speakers that have lived in Turkey for a long period of time. The study aims to investigate the relation of these native English speakers' identity perceptions with their native or non-native like Turkish accents. Thus, the addressed research questions are:

#### **Research Questions:**

1. What are the self-perceptions of cultural identity among long-term native English speaking residents in Turkey?
2. What is the relationship between their perceptions and the nativeness of their Turkish accent?

#### **Significance of the Study**

Due to the limited amount of research on the issue of identities of English speakers living in foreign countries, the results of this study may contribute to the literature by providing insights into a different perspective of identity and L2 learning. Furthermore, this study will also contribute to the few studies that investigate the relationship between identity and accent. The few existing studies involve immigrants or refugees, whereas this current study investigates native English speakers living in Turkey. This will contribute to earlier research by providing evidence on whether the findings change with different native language and target language, specifically, in this case, with the learners' native language being a prestige language.

On a wide scale, this study may contribute to the debate regarding teaching pronunciation with a goal of achieving a native-like accent by providing some different perspectives. At a local level, the results of this study will provide teachers more information about the relationship between pronunciation and identity attitudes; therefore, giving them another issue to consider when formulating their beliefs about pronunciation and teaching. Furthermore, this study may be of benefit to students as it will provide them with an aspect to think about in relation to their own language learning beliefs. Ultimately, knowing more about the issue of whether identifying oneself with the target or native language culture affects, or does not affect, a student's achievement of a more, or less, native-like accent is important when teachers, test designers and curriculum developers, materials designers, and other administrators are making decisions about the content of teaching pronunciation.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature on acculturation, identity, and the relationship between identity and accent. Subsequently, the statement of the

problem, research questions, and the significance of the study have been presented. The next chapter focuses on the relevant literature on acculturation, identity, and the relationship between identity and accent in further detail.



## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This chapter aims to introduce and review the literature related to this research study investigating the relationship between the cultural identity perceptions of native English speakers, who have been living in Turkey for a long period of time, and their Turkish accent in terms of nativelikeness. First, a definition of acculturation will be provided, the particular context of acculturation that this study will focus on will be identified, and this section will be followed by a discussion of the rise of English as the most widely spoken/used language worldwide, Kachru's (1985) model of concentric circles, and Turkey's place within that model. Second, several definitions of identity, and a discussion of research concerning identity of foreigners in settings where English is the first language will be presented. Third, identity will be linked to accent, various definitions of accent will be provided, and Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) will be discussed in order to explain the relationship between native-like speech and identity. The chapter will end with a discussion of studies which focus on the relationship between language learners' identity, specifically language learners' identifying with the target language culture, and the nativeness of their accent.

### **Acculturation**

Acculturation is the process of adapting to a new culture, and involves changes that take place when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into extended, constant, direct contact with each other. The changes that may occur in this direct contact can be both at the individual level, such as individual's values, attitudes,

beliefs, and identities as well as at the group level, such as social and cultural systems (Berry, 2003). In order to adapt to a new culture, individuals may have to alter their ways of speech, social behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and customs, such as the way they celebrate holidays and their choice of food and entertainment. Acculturation generally includes the psychological and social changes that a person experiences when s/he moves into a new and different cultural environment (Cabassa, 2003). This definition suggests that acculturation is an interactive, developmental process involving multiple factors and dimensions (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado 1995).

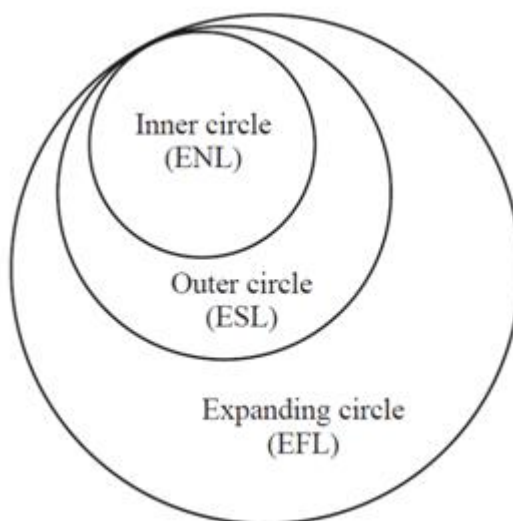
There are several contexts involved in second language (L2) and second culture learning (Brown, 1986). One of the contexts is “learning a language within the culture of that second language” (Brown, 1986, p. 34). In such cases, the level of acculturation is very intense. The learner must be able to live in a foreign culture, while at the same time learn the language which is required for communication within that community. The acculturation process may result in developing new survival skills and increase an individual’s ability to live in different settings. However, it can also cause identity conflicts (Unger, Gallaher, Shakib, Ritt-Olson, Palmer, & Johnson, 2002). Despite the varied environmental, cultural, and economic changes that individuals experience, the general processes of adaptation to a new society seem to be common for all acculturating individuals (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1996). What is involved in this general process of adaptation maybe the way an individual speaks or behaves, the types of holidays s/he celebrates, the choices s/he makes in food and entertainment, as well as beliefs and customs. This universal perspective of acculturation suggests that what differs from individual to individual is the course of adaptation, the level of difficulty

experienced during the process, and the actual result of the acculturation experience (Berry, 1997; Berry, 1998).

### **Kachru's Circles: the role of English in Turkey**

Emenanjo (as cited in Iwuchukwu, 2011, p. 169) states that “English is one of the richest world languages”. This is due to the fact that the English language and culture has had diverse contacts with other cultures and their languages. English has risen to currently being the international language of science and technology, of information and communication technology (ICT) and of contemporary life and living, resulting from the socio-political, cultural and military influence of the United States of America. (Iwuchukwu, 2011).

Kachru (1985) provided a model (Figure 1) of three concentric circles to describe the spread of English. The inner circle includes countries where English is spoken as a first native language, such as New Zealand, Australia, USA, Canada, and Britain. The outer circle consists of countries, often former British colonies, where English is spoken as a second or major language, such as Singapore, India, Pakistan, Malawi, Malaysia, and Nigeria. Within the expanding circle are countries where English has in more recent decades acquired cultural or commercial significance and is used as a foreign language, such as China, Sweden, Greece, and Japan.



*Figure 1.* Kachru's Three Circles of English. Kachru (1985), As cited in Yano, Y. (2003). World Englishes in 2000 and beyond. *World Englishes*, 20(2), 119-132.

According to Dogançay-Aktuna (1998), the spread of English in Turkey began in the 1950s as a result of the growing impact of American economic and military power. To be able to develop trade relations and advance in technology, Turkey, being at a developing stage, felt obligated to have better access to English. Furthermore, Acar (2004) states that as a result of advances in technology, Turkey's economic incorporation into the world economy, the rise in tourism income, the increase of private channels and cable TV, and the introduction of foreign movies, particularly American films, into Turkey, English has become wide spread in Turkey. In addition, Dogançay-Aktuna (1998) mentions that English was eagerly taken on by the Turkish government for modernization and westernization purposes. According to König (1990), Turkey, unlike numerous other countries, has displayed a growing tendency to use English as the medium of instruction at the secondary level and higher education institutions and often even in private elementary schools. In social and economic life in Turkey, English has

become a very common language to the extent that not knowing English creates barriers in areas such as education and employment.

As Atay and Ece (2009) state, in relation to Kachru's (1985) model, Turkey is one of the countries in the expanding circle. In the expanding circle, English is regarded as a foreign language for international communication and for specific purposes. In Turkey, English is an instrumental language to communicate with other non-native speakers (Dogancay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005). English is neither an official language nor a second language in Turkey, and it is not used for communication within minority groups. However, as a result of political, economic, technological, and cultural needs, as well as the globalization of English and the increase for international communication, English has been given a significant status in Turkey. Therefore, there are various fields in Turkey, such as education, business, science, and technology, where the use of English is similar to those countries in the outer-circle (Dogancay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005).

### **Identity**

Second language learning often leads to the negotiation and construction or reconstruction of identity (Kinging, 2004) because language learning not only involves learning a formal set of grammar rules, but also learning the culture at the same time. So, a second language learner, in some respects, acquires a second identity (Brown, 1986). According to Holland, Skinner, Lachiotte, and Cain (1998), "Identities are a key means through which people care about and care for what is going on around them. They are important bases from which people create new activities, new worlds, and new ways of being" (p. 5). Identity not only involves the formation of the self, but also relates to how an individual perceives himself/herself within his/her own community and the wider

society. Ryan (1997) discusses that the formation of identity occurs as an element of a progress of negotiation within the social surroundings. In other words “[...] how we are seen and how we present ourselves are determined by social context and the people around us” (Godley, 2003, p. 275).

Identity construction is not just an individual thing and is not formed or changed in isolation. Instead, who an individual is and what s/he becomes is strongly linked with the social environment s/he is involved in. The social contact an individual has with others and the social setting s/he is in, form in essential ways who an individual thinks s/he is and who and what an individual identifies her/himself with. Norton (1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Hall (1990) suggests that identity should be thought of as a construction that is continuously in progress and never complete.

Norton (1995) argues that second language acquisition (SLA) theorists have had difficulty in conceptualizing the link between the language learner and the social world because a broad theory of social identity has not been developed. Theories of SLA either focus on individual or social variables without the integration of the two. Norton (1995) also argues that SLA theory needs to develop a notion of the language learner as having a complex social identity that must be understood in relation to larger, and quite often unequal social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction:

It is through language that a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time, and it is through language that a person

gains access to—or is denied access to—powerful social networks that give learners the opportunities to speak. (Norton, 1995, p. 13)

Furthermore, Miller (2000) states that language is a key way of representing social identity and demonstrating membership of social groups. Ultimately, an individual's language influences the way a person perceives themselves in relation to the environment around them, and therefore has a crucial effect on the construction and development of their identity.

### **Research on Identity**

There is a great amount of interest in language and identity in the field of language learning (Hansen & Liu, 1997; McNamara, 1997). The related research have examined different cultural groups and different social contexts such as immigrants (e.g., Clark, 2008; Giampapa, 2001; Kinginger, 2004; Lee, 2002; Miller, 2000, Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001), and study abroad sojourners (e.g., Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Giles, 1973; Siegal, 1995; Storti, 2001; Wieland, 1990).

In relation to immigrants, Miller (2000) explored the relationships between second-language use, membership, and social contexts of 13 newly arrived immigrant students in Australian high schools. The results showed that although different factors affected the participants' language acquisition, identity formation, and social interaction, the complexity of the relationships of contexts, language use, and social memberships was apparent. Furthermore, Lee (2002) examined how cultural identity and native language maintenance functioned in the lives of 40 second-generation Korean-American university students in the United States. The results showed that most important factor in the participants' absence of motivation to preserve their native language was the inadequate societal recognition. However, the researcher found that the participants had

formed multiple identities consisting of aspects from both the Korean and the American cultures. Giampapa (2001) investigated how Italian-Canadian adolescents negotiate their identities through their language use and found that the participants have numerous identities and numerous positions that change and develop within and across different settings. The researcher states that language is a strong factor in the development of positioning and identification of the participants, and concludes that identity representations are never permanent but “a hybrid, complex, multicultural and multilingual expression of the participants’ desires” (p. 308).

There are very few studies which address issues relating to social and cultural aspects of study abroad sojourners (e.g., Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Storti, 2001). Studies (e.g., Giles, 1973; Siegal, 1995; Wieland, 1990) have found that even when sojourners are entirely aware of cultural differences; it is common for them to consciously not conform to host-culture conventions in order to maintain their sense of self-identity. Siegal (1995) and Wieland (1990) both describe sojourner participants who reported purposefully deciding not to accommodate to the known sociolinguistic norms of the host community because if they did it would have “compromised their own identity” (Wieland, 1990, p. 214).

To the knowledge of the researcher there are no studies that have examined the identity construction of native speakers of English who are from the inner circle but live in countries within the outer circles. Furthermore, the research on identity in Turkey is limited to the identities of native Turkish students or teachers of English living in Turkey.



### **Identity Research in Turkey**

Atay and Ece (2009) investigated the conflict of multiple identities by exploring how prospective teachers of English in Turkey approached foreign language learning and identity issues. Specifically, they focused on whether learning English influenced the development of the sociocultural identities of Turkish prospective EFL teachers. The researchers examined how these teachers discussed with each other their multiple identities, and what their attitudes were towards the possible conflict of multiple identities generated by the English learning process. Qualitative interviews were conducted over a two month period with 34 Turkish prospective English teachers. The results showed the presence of multiple identities Turkish, Muslim, and Western. Learning English was the major factor behind the formation of the participants' Western identities. The participants were aware of their multiple identities, however, all privileged their Turkish and Muslim identities over the Western identity. Many of the participants mentioned that learning English helped them to become aware of the differences between their culture and Western culture. Furthermore, the participants stated that this awareness aided them to see the positive exchanges among different cultures, enabled them to approach cultural issues from a broader perspective, and reconsider their own personalities.

Pullen (2012) investigated the relationships among cultural identity, the degree of accentedness, and attitudes toward pronunciation of non-native speakers of English in an EFL context. The participants, advanced Turkish speakers of English from two English-medium universities, completed a questionnaire about cultural identity, attitudes toward pronunciation, and language background, and provided a pronunciation sample. The findings did not show a significant relationship between cultural identity and degree

of accentedness. However, there was a significant relationship between cultural identity and the perception of how important native-like pronunciation of English was. The results revealed that the participants did not view native-like pronunciation as a threat to their cultural identity. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the teaching of pronunciation should take into account individual preferences and goals. Furthermore, the teaching of pronunciation should not be overlooked based on the claim that attempting to alter pronunciation is interfering with identity.

### **Accent**

One definition of accent provided by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary is “a way of speaking typical of a particular group of people and especially of the natives or residents of a region.” Accents in the context of sociolinguistics not only define people but also perform as a way of showing their belonging to a particular speech community. Therefore, accent is a symbol of social identity. Becker (1995) states that “An accent is the part of a person’s language that serves to identify the speaker’s regional origin or national/ethnic identity no matter what language the person is speaking” (p. 37). Accent, as one of the most effective indicators of identity (Seidlhofer, 2001; Sifakis and Sougari, 2005), not only influences communicative fluency but also has a role in judgments of social belonging and identity (Moyer, 2007). Within SLA, characterization of accented speech as been specified as foreign accents. Southwood and Fledge (1999) define a foreign accent as: “Non-pathological speech produced by second language learners that differs in partially systematic ways from the speech characteristics of native speakers of a given dialect” (p. 335). As Moyer (2004) points out, there are indications that language fluency of a non-native speaker can be positively developed by long term residence in the target country; therefore exposure to high frequency contact with native speakers

(e.g., Flege & Fletcher, 1992; Flege, Takagi, & Mann, 1995). However, there are also studies that have shown contradictory findings of the significance of the long term residence factor (e.g., Flege & Liu, 2001; Piske, MacKay, & Flege, 2001). Moyer (2009) argues that length of residence is an unreliable predictor of L2 phonological attainment because there are immigrants in many countries with many years residence who never came close to native like proficiency in accent.

Research on the development of L2 spoken skills has indicated that communicating in an L2 is cognitively demanding, and that the success of an interaction often depends on production quality (e.g., McCarthy & O’Keeffe, 2004). According to Tarone (2005), the aim of pronunciation teaching has moved from targeting a native like accent to targeting meaning, in other words, enabling learners to achieve general intelligibility rather than extreme accent modification (McKay, 2002). Morley (1991, p. 513) states that “intelligible pronunciation is seen as an essential component of communicative competence”. Therefore, Hinkel (2006) suggests that teaching needs to address the issues of clarity (such as the articulation of specific sounds), word stress and prosody, and the length and the timing of pauses. Furthermore, Otlowski (1998) suggests that for the success of a students’ pronunciation of a foreign language, the teacher and student need to work collaboratively during the language learning process.

### **The Relationship between Native Like Speech and Identity**

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) may help explain the relationship between native-like speech and identity. CAT was developed “to describe and explain aspects of the way people modify their communication according to situational, personal or even interactional variables” (Williams, 1999, p. 152). CAT has two main perspectives: speakers may adjust their speech either towards the speech of

their interlocutors (convergence) or away from the speech of their interlocutors (divergence) (Jenkins, 2000). Within the first aspect, convergence, the speaker accommodates his/her speech in order to be liked and understood and to assert him/herself as belonging to the interlocutors' community (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991). Through convergence, L2 learners believe they can gain access to resources such as wealth and friendship, which may be a greater challenge for language learners with distinct accents (Momenian, 2011). This difficulty results from the perception that having a foreign accent represents the speaker as an outsider and brings about negative stereotypes (Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Liu, Shearman, 2002). Therefore, according to the principle of convergence, in order for the language learners to be a part of the target language community, s/he must move away from his/her native language accent and converge towards the target language community's accent. In the second aspect, divergence, the speaker tries to diverge his/her speech from the interlocutors' speech in order to maintain his/her own in-group identity and stay loyal to his/her speech community (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005). Divergence occurs when an individual communicatively emphasizes the difference between him/herself and his/her interlocutors. It is common in many intergroup interactions in which identity is very important and is often negatively attributed and evaluated by recipients (Williams, 1999). Divergence is especially evident in situations where people attempt to communicatively emphasize the difference between themselves and their interlocutors.

The studies which focused on the link between language learners' identity and accent have examined accent convergence and divergence (e.g., Bourhis & Giles as cited in Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991; Shortreed & Ross, 1990), speech accommodation (e.g., Babel, 2010), the relationship between identity and pronunciation (e.g., Gatbonton,

Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Jones, 2001; Rindal, 2010), English as a second language acquisition and identities of migrant students (e.g., Miller, 1999), and second language and second culture acquisition and identity (e.g., Marx, 2002).

Bourhis and Giles (as cited in Giles, Coupland & Coupland 1991) conducted an experiment to demonstrate the use of accent divergence among Welsh people in an interethnic context. The participants were people who highly valued their national group membership and its language, and who were learning the Welsh language. Welsh people asked questions in English to the participants and arrogantly challenged their reasons for learning 'a dying language with a dismal future'. The participants' feelings of ethnic identity were threatened, and as a result they broadened their Welsh accents in their replies and used Welsh words and phrases.

Babel (2010) investigated speech accommodation in New Zealand English (NZE) when speakers of NZE are responding to an Australian English speaker. New Zealand participants were randomly assigned to a group, where they were either flattered or insulted by the Australian. Overall, in both situations the NZE speakers accommodated to the speech of the Australian English speaker. The results showed that being faced with flattery or insult did not affect the degree of accommodation; however, accommodation was predicted by participants' scores on a task that measured Australia and New Zealand biases. Participants who scored with a pro-Australia bias were more inclined to accommodate to the speech of the Australian English speaker. Social biases about how a participant feels about a speaker predicted the extent of accommodation.

Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) examined the relationship between ethnic group affiliation and second language (L2) pronunciation accuracy with 24 Francophone learners of English. The researchers found a significant relationship

between learners' L2 accent and perceived affiliation to their home ethnic group, suggesting that learners treat their peers' L2 accent as a sign of these peers' degree of ethnic affiliation. Furthermore, the results revealed behavioral consequences of this relationship, showing that L2 learning involves choices between the reward of being efficient and the cost of not marking identity.

A study by Miller (1999) examined the relationship between the acquisition of English as a second language by migrant students and the expression of social identity, particularly in the context of school. Non-English Speaking Background (NESB) students had gone to an on-arrival intensive ESL program at a purpose-built school and then for a while attended an ESL class within a normal high school followed by full integration into the high school mainstream. Miller (1999) found that each contextual change affected the NESB students' language use as well as identity. The researcher concluded that in order to be a recognized member and partaker in an institution the students needed to be audible to mainstream groups. In relation to NESB students, being audible means being accepted and acknowledged as an English speaker, and this acceptance and acknowledgment impacts the degree to which a student can take part in institutional activities and the way s/he represents her/himself.

Marx (2002) conducted a unique study in which she examined second language and second culture acquisition by focusing on identity, and a particular aspect, the appropriation of accent. She provided a first person account of the formation of identity that she went through over a three year period of living in Germany, and as her accent in her second foreign language (German, learned after French) became a factor of identity transformation. Marx experienced changes in her identity, varying from American, Canadian, and German. As a result of her English accent in her German she was viewed

as American by her German interlocutors, which caused her to feel out of place and identify herself as Canadian as opposed to American. After two years she formed her L2 identity with a native-like German accent and signs of loss of L1 identity emerged. At the end of the three year period, after returning to the L1 environment, she had developed a German accented English and this resulted in her identifying herself as not just Canadian but a foreigner. However, after three months her Canadian identity was reconstructed and the foreign accent in her English disappeared.

Ultimately, as the aforementioned studies reveal there is a close link between identity and accent. The way a person speaks, including his/her accent, is a significant social power in representing his/her identity (Cargile & Giles, 1997; Cargile, Giles, Ryan, & Bradac, 1994). An accent represents a persons' *manner of pronunciation* (Giles, 1970) and makes up an important part of a speaker's social identity as well as revealing a substantial amount of social information (Edwards, 1999).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter started with the definition of acculturation and then moved on to Turkey's place in terms of Kachru's (1985) circles, followed by various definitions of identity and accent. The relevant literature on identity, identity in Turkey, the relationship between identity and accent was presented in detail as a basis of this study. The research studies mentioned throughout this chapter reveal that language is a strong factor in identity construction and that accent plays a crucial role in a persons' identity representation. Furthermore, it can be seen that the research that has been conducted on the issue of identity, as well as identity and accent, has been predominantly conducted in native English speaking settings. There are very few studies that have investigated the identity construction of native speakers of English who are from the inner circle but live

in the outer circles. Thus, this current study intends to provide an insight into the relationship between identity and accent in a non-native English setting with the aim of filling the existing gap in the literature. The following chapter will focus on the methodology of this study, including the participants, setting, and data collection methods.



## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

The present study focused on native English speakers that have lived in Turkey for more than eight years. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation of these native English speakers' cultural identity perceptions with their native or non-native like Turkish accents.

In this respect, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the self-perceptions of cultural identity among long-term native English speaking residents in Turkey?
2. What is the relationship between their perceptions and the nativeness of their Turkish accent?

This chapter consists of five main sections: the participants, the research design, instruments, procedure, and data analysis. In the first section, the participants of this study are introduced and described in detail. In the second section, the research design that was employed in this study is explained briefly. In the third section, the data collection instruments, which are a cultural identity questionnaire and audio recording of participants' reading aloud in Turkish, are presented in reference to the research design. In the fourth section, the steps that were followed in the research procedure including the selection of participants and data collection are stated step by step. In the final section, the overall procedure for data analysis is provided.

## **Participants**

The participants of this study were 20 native English speakers; nine from the UK, six Americans, one Irish, and four Canadians, who have been living in Turkey for a minimum of eight years. The minimum residency years was set to eight because it was assumed that, by that time the participants would have broad knowledge of and familiarity with Turkish culture as well as extensive exposure to the Turkish language. As for the age of the participants, one was aged between 30-39, 11 were aged between 40-49, three were aged between 50-59, and five were aged between 60-69. Three of the participants' reasons for moving to Turkey was marriage, and 17 moved for work. These participants were all volunteers, and were contacted through an e-mail request that was sent to all English native speaking faculty members at a large private university in Turkey, as well as to a national list-server for foreign spouses of Turkish citizens. Once a list of volunteers who met the eligibility requirement of at least eight years of residence were found, they were asked to also pass on the request to any people they might know who also fit the description.

## **Research Design**

A mixed-method approach was used in the research design of this study, beginning with quantitative methods to collect and analyze data in order to provide preliminary answers for the research questions, followed by qualitative data collection in the form of interviews, to gain further insights into the results. Follow-up interviews were conducted with four of the participants.

## **Instruments**

The data were collected by means of three instruments: a cultural identity questionnaire, audio recordings of participants' reading aloud of three Turkish passages, and follow-up interviews.

### **Cultural Identity Questionnaire**

The first data collection instrument of this study was a 36-item cultural identity questionnaire (see Appendix A) which was composed of two main sections: a demographic information section and a cultural identity section. The first section consisted of nine items that aimed to find out the characteristics and background information about the participants of the study. In this section, participants were asked to state their nationality, age, occupation, length of living in Turkey and reasons for moving to Turkey, and any information about second language learning experience. They were also asked whether they are or have been married to a Turkish native speaker, and to rate their spoken Turkish skills on a scale from 1-5, with 5 being 'native-like fluency' and 1 being 'no Turkish ability'. The second section included 27 items aimed at investigating participants' self-identity perceptions in relation to their feelings of connectedness to Turkish culture/Turkey and to their native culture/country. This section of the questionnaire was measured using a 6 point Likert scale ranging from '1' representing *strongly agree* to '6' representing *strongly disagree*. Slight distinctions in wording were made in order to address the different nationalities of the participants, i.e., American, Canadian, British, and Irish.

The cultural identity questionnaire was adapted and developed by first combining specific items from various existing questionnaires measuring identity and acculturation (Cortes, Deren, Andia, Colon, Robles, & Kang, 2003; Garrett & Pichette,

2000; Stephenson, 2000; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2000; Zea, Asner-Self, Birman, & Buki, 2003). Several of the items were taken directly while others were adapted to better serve the current study's purpose. Still other items were written by the researcher herself.

**Piloting of the questionnaire.** The cultural identity questionnaire was piloted to check its validity and reliability. The questionnaire was piloted with five Americans who have been living in Turkey for an average of two years and four months. Upon completing the questionnaire they were asked to identify any questions that they found difficult to understand or that they were uncomfortable with answering. According to their responses, some adjustments were made to the wording of the questions. For example, the participants indicated that their values were a mixture of their native and Turkish values; therefore, in addition to the items "Overall, my values are American" and "Overall, my values are Turkish", the item "Overall, my values are both American and Turkish" was added. Another item, "I would like to get to know Turkish people better", was deleted as pilot participants expressed that it caused confusion. The results of the pilot questionnaires were entered into SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) version 18, a program developed to analyze quantitative data, and analyzed for internal reliability using Cronbach's Alpha test. The results showed a .924 reliability result indicating a strong positive reliability, therefore no further changes were made.

### **Audio Recordings**

Another instrument that was used in this study was the audio recording of participants' reading aloud of three Turkish passages (see Appendix B). The passages were chosen from three different genres in order to provide a variety of topics and vocabulary, and to include multiple examples of different phonological sounds that

might pose problems for English speakers such as ç ('ch' as in 'chimpanzee'), ğ (no English equivalent), ı ('e' as in 'open'), 'ö' (although there is not an exact equivalent the closest example is 'u' as in 'turn'), 'ş' ('sh' as in 'shine'), and 'ü' (although there is not an exact equivalent the closest example is 'u' as in 'cube'). It should be noted that the 'ch' and 'sh' sounds, for 'ç' and 'ş' respectively, are problematic not phonologically but orthographically, these letters do not exist in English and this was done on a reading aloud basis. The first passage was a short anecdote taken from the back cover of a personal development book. The second passage was taken from the blurb of the back cover of a novel by a famous Turkish writer. The third and final passage was a short news article about the weather taken from a Turkish newspaper. Reading aloud was chosen instead of spontaneous speech because it would allow the raters to only concentrate on the accent of the speakers. If spontaneous speech were used, the raters might have possibly been distracted by various grammatical or vocabulary errors, which are irrelevant in the case of this study. The audio recordings were scored for 'nativeness' of accent using a 5-point Likert rating scale, ranging from '1' being *'Not like a native'* to '5' being *'Very much like a native'*. The rating scale was developed by the researcher after thorough exploration of various studies that have used accent rating scales.

**Piloting of the audio recordings.** The rating scale was first piloted to test its reliability. Three native English speakers were recorded and the recordings were then listened to and rated separately by three different native Turkish speaking raters, including the researcher. All raters rated all participants the same, with one exception in the last recording, in which one of the raters gave a one point lower score. This minor difference was not seen as a problem and the rating scale was shown to be reliable. It

was thought that, if in any case there happens to be more than a one point difference between raters then re-rating and/or negotiation will be done.

### **Follow-up Interviews**

The final instrument used for data collection was a qualitative one, follow-up interviews. Four participants were interviewed and were chosen on the basis of their cultural identity and accent scores. One of the participants, Darcy, had the highest accent score (3.0) and a fairly high cultural identity score (4.38), one, Cassandra, had a fairly high cultural identity score (4.20) but a fairly low accent score (1.0), one, Doug, had a fairly low cultural identity (2.63) and a fairly low accent score (1.6), and one, Jasmine, had a cultural identity score somewhat in the middle (3.89) and a fairly low accent score (2.0). Although participant number five had an interesting case with the highest cultural identity score (4.52) and a fairly low accent score (1.3), she was unfortunately unavailable for interviewing. The questions for the follow-up interviews (see Appendix C) were designed by the researcher with the assistance of her advisor. The purpose of the interviews was to gain further insight into the results of the cultural identity questionnaire and the audio recordings. Specifically, the researcher wanted to see whether the participants were aware of their own accent and if the cultural identity score was in line with their thoughts of their cultural identity. Furthermore, the questions also were designed to find out how connected participants felt to the Turkish culture.

*Note: The names of the participants have been changed for anonymity purposes.*

### **Procedure**

Participants provided verbal and email consent to participate in the study. The participants were sent the questionnaire via email and responses were received electronically. Later, appointments were made to meet with the participants in order to

conduct the recordings. The participants were asked whether the presence of the researcher would make them uncomfortable while doing the readings, and if so, the researcher left the room for the recordings. The participants were reminded that the recordings were not to be seen as a test of their Turkish speaking abilities in anyway, but they were also not told the specific focus of the recordings in order to prevent any influence that may occur. They were asked to speak as clearly as possible. Furthermore, the participants were not shown the passages beforehand in order to avoid any possible memorization, preparation, or unnatural pronunciation. After the data analysis follow-up interviews were conducted with four of the participants. The participant with the highest accent score, who also had a relatively high cultural identity score, was chosen for interviewing. A participant who had a low accent score but a relatively high cultural identity score was interviewed. The other two participants that were interviewed were chosen randomly. As for the interview procedure, participants were given two copies of an informed consent form (see Appendix D), one for themselves and one to sign and give to the researcher. The participants were explained that the purpose of the interview was to gain further insight into their cultural identity. They were also told that their names would not be used at all and that they could withdraw from the interview at any time they liked. The interviews were all audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The participants were asked the interview questions and at the end of the interview were asked if they had any questions for the researcher about the study. In addition, they were assured that the recordings would be deleted once the study was completed and the thesis was published.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected via the questionnaire and audio recordings were analyzed quantitatively, while the data collected through the interviews were analyzed qualitatively. First the data collected via questionnaires were evaluated in version 18 of SPSS. The items in Part A of the questionnaire, exploring the participants' demographic information, were analyzed through descriptive statistics. For Part B of the questionnaire, consisting of the 27 Likert scale items, first the mean of the cultural identity score was calculated for each participant. Then, in order to test for any significant relationships between the questions in Part A and the participants' cultural identity scores, Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, a non-parametric correlation test, was conducted. The same test was used to examine the relationship between the participants' cultural identity scores and accent scores.

The recordings were rated by three native speakers of Turkish in terms of nativelikeness. The recordings were ordered randomly and rated by each of the raters in the same way. Once the ratings of all the raters were received, they were compared to check for consistency. The scores that did not differ by more than one point off in either direction were averaged. Two of the scores differed by more than one point and they were re-sent to the raters for a second rating and negotiation. The second ratings were consistent, therefore; no further negotiation was necessary.

The data from the follow-up interviews were analyzed in a qualitative way in order to provide a deeper understanding of the results from the questionnaire and audio recordings. Content analysis was conducted with the data resulting from the follow-up interviews and themes were identified.



## **Conclusion**

In this methodology chapter, the participants, research design, instruments, and the procedure of the present study investigating the relationship between the identity perceptions of native English speakers, who have been living in Turkey for a long period of time, and their Turkish accent in terms of nativelikeness were described in detail. The next chapter will present detailed analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the 20 participants through three different data collection instruments that are; a cultural identity questionnaire, audio recordings of the participants' reading aloud, and follow-up interviews.

## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

### Introduction

The present study focused on native English speakers that have lived in Turkey for more than eight years. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between these native English speakers' cultural identity perceptions and their native or non-native like Turkish accents.

In this respect, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the self-perceptions of cultural identity among long-term native English speaking residents in Turkey?
2. What is the relationship between their perceptions and the nativeness of their Turkish accent?

In this study with 20 native English speakers that have lived in Turkey for more than eight years, the data were collected via three different instruments: a cultural identity questionnaire, audio recordings, and follow-up interviews. In accordance with the adopted mixed-methods research design, the data from the cultural identity questionnaire and the audio recordings were analyzed quantitatively, while the data from the follow-up interviews were evaluated qualitatively. This chapter will first present the data analysis procedures and results of the quantitative data, followed by the qualitative data.

### Questionnaire Data Analysis

Firstly, the data obtained via the cultural identity questionnaire were entered into version 18 of SPSS. The questionnaire was analyzed for reliability and had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .924, suggesting that the items have a high internal consistency. The demographic data gathered in the questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive statistics. Table 1 shows the participants' nationalities and ages, Table 2 shows the participants' length of residency, and Table 3 shows the participants' reasons for moving to Turkey.

Table 1  
*Nationality and Age*

Nationality	Frequency	Age	Frequency
USA	6	30-49	1
Canada	4	40-49	11
UK	9	50-59	3
Irish	1	60-69	5
Total	20	Total	20

As shown in Table 1, half of the participants were from the UK and half from North America and all but one of the participants were above the age of 40.

Table 2  
*Length of Residency in years*

Length of Residency	Frequency
9-11	6
12-13	3
14-15	6
17-18	2
20-25	3
Total	20

As shown in Table 2 the length of residency in Turkey of the participants ranged from nine years to 25 years, with an average of 14.5 years.

Table 3  
*Reasons for Moving to Turkey*

Reasons	Frequency
Work	17
Marriage	3
Total	20

As shown in Table 3 the majority of the participants moved to Turkey for work related reasons, with the remaining three moving for marriage-related reasons.

For Part B of the questionnaire, the participants' mean cultural identity scores were calculated. Then, in order to test for any significant relationships between the questions in Part A and the participants' cultural identity scores, a series of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficients, a non-parametric correlation test, were calculated. The results showed that there was no significant relationship between the participants' cultural identity score and; their age, length of residency, or reasons for moving to Turkey. However, there was a significant relationship ( $\rho = .640$ ) between the participants' own rating of spoken Turkish skills and their cultural identity score. This means that the higher a participant rated his/her spoken Turkish skills the higher, or more Turkish, their cultural identity score was. Furthermore, the results also showed a significant relationship ( $\rho = .498$ ) between the participants' length of marriage to a native Turkish speaker and their cultural identity score. This shows that the longer that a participant had been married to a native Turkish speaker, the higher, or more Turkish, their cultural identity score was.

### Audio Recordings Analysis

The participants' audio recordings of three short Turkish texts of different genres were rated by three native speakers of Turkish for "nativelikeness". Each rater was asked to listen and rate the randomized recordings. Their ratings were then compared in order to check for consistency. The scores that were the same or only differed by one point in either direction were averaged. Two of the scores differed by more than one point and so the raters were asked to re-rate and negotiate. The second ratings were consistent, therefore; met the criteria to be able to be averaged. Table 4 provides the cultural identity and accent score of each participant, ordered according to the highest to the lowest cultural identity score. Next the accent scores were correlated with the cultural identity scores using Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results showed a significant relationship ( $\rho = .468$ ) between the participants' accent scores and their cultural identity scores. In other words, the higher a participant's accent score was, the higher, or closer to Turkish, their cultural identity score was.

Table 4  
*Cultural Identity and Accent Scores*

Participant No.	Cultural Identity Score	Accent Score
5	4.52	1.3
6 *Darcy	4.38	3.0
12 *Cassandra	4.20	1.0
14 *Jasmine	3.89	2.0
4	3.73	2.0
16	3.38	2.3
8	3.38	1.3
18	3.37	1.3
11	3.33	1.0
15	3.27	2.3
19	3.12	2.0
13	2.96	1.3
17	2.89	1.0
2	2.81	1.3

20	2.69	1.6
10 *Doug	2.63	1.6
7	2.63	1.0
3	2.57	1.0
1	2.38	1.0
9	2.33	1.0

*Note.* The cultural identity scores are out of 6 (meaning the higher the score the closest to Turkish identity) and the accent scores are out of 5 (meaning the higher the score the closer to native-like Turkish accent).

\* These participants were interviewed.

As shown in Table 4, the highest cultural identity score was 4.52, received by participant number 5, and the highest accent score was 3.0, received by participant number 6.

The mean of the cultural identity scores was 3.22 and although the results were varied they were generally around the mean, which is shown in the fairly low standard deviation of 0.65. A mean of 3.22 on a 6 point Likert scale suggests that the participants have cultural identities that are quite balanced between their native cultures and Turkish culture. For the accent scores the mean was 1.5 and the results were also generally quite close to the mean, with a standard deviation of 0.57. On a 5-point Likert scale, having the scores generally closely located around a mean of 1.5 indicates a fairly strong non-nativelike accent among the participants. It is also important to note that the range of the cultural identity scores and accent scores were both fairly small, 2.19 and 2, respectively. This indicates that the participants were more inclined to be similar to each other than they were to represent a broad diversity of either cultural identity or accent types.

### **Interview Data Analysis**

The four participants interviewed were Darcy, Jasmine, Cassandra, and Doug (all names are pseudonyms). Darcy and Jasmine were American, Cassandra was Canadian, and Doug was British. All four participants were aged between 40-49, all were in the

education field either as a teacher or professor, and all moved to Turkey for work related reasons. As for the length of residency in Turkey Darcy has been living in Turkey for 14 years, Jasmine for 11 years, Cassandra for 13 years, and Doug for 15 years. Jasmine has been married to a native speaker for 19 years and Cassandra for 10 years, whereas Doug and Darcy are not married to native Turkish speakers.

To explore the results of the cultural identity questionnaire and audio recordings further, a content analysis was carried out on the data resulting from the follow-up interviews. Content analysis was used because most of the themes were pre-determined by the interview questions however; some themes did emerge as the data were examined. Firstly, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed. The analysis was done by first determining categories or themes based on the interview questions and giving each theme a different color to allow for easier identification. Next, the transcriptions of the interviews for each participant were examined and responses relating to the themes were highlighted with the relevant color. Information relating to the themes and any other key or common information from the responses of each participant were noted. The analysis was then checked by a second person, who was an experienced teacher of foreign languages, for reliability and anything that might have been overlooked. This person examined the interview transcripts by using the color codes.

Overlapping themes were combined and uncategorized items were assigned new themes. At the end of the analysis, five overall themes were identified: conscious concentration on accent, and comprehensibility of speaking; personal connection to Turkish culture; becoming “Turkified” (the term “Turkified” emerged from an interview with one of the participants and is used to mean the process of acculturation by non-

native Turkish speakers living in Turkey), and experiences with comments in relation to foreignness or Turkishness; perception of accent, and questionnaire results; relationship between accent and cultural identity, as well as factor contributing to language learning: environment. The findings will be presented according to each theme.

### ***Conscious Concentration on Accent and Comprehensibility of Speaking***

With regard to whether the participants make any particular efforts to work specifically on their accent, three of the participants interviewed said they did not and one said he did. The three participants who said that they did not make any particular efforts for their accent stated that this is because they believe being understood is much more important than sounding ‘native-like’. Interestingly, Cassandra explained that when she first started to learn Turkish she tried to focus on her accent but found that doing so distracted her, and actually led to problems in communication. Referring to accent Cassandra stated that, “I find that the more effective communicators actually don’t worry about stuff like that.” The one participant, Darcy, who said he does make a conscious effort for his accent noted that it depends on the situation. Even though he makes some effort for his accent he explained that when he was living in a country where he had to work in the native language, pronunciation and accent were even much more important than is the case for him in Turkey. He further explained that his professional life in Turkey requires only English, and his private life requires only limited Turkish, so he states “the incentive to do as well as possible is slightly lower.” He pointed out that if a person’s focus is just on communicating then his/her “pronunciation is going to go down”. Darcy further added that reading a newspaper or a book out loud is good because “you don’t have to focus on production or the meaning coming up as something to say, you can just look at pronunciation.”



Interestingly, the three interviewees who focused on comprehensibility also tended to have relatively lower pronunciation scores Jasmine 2.0, Caroline 1.0, and David 1.6, whereas, Darcy had the highest pronunciation score of 3.0. This finding at least suggests that accent is something that can be improved. Even though Darcy himself did not receive an extremely high pronunciation rating, he was at least the highest of all the participants, and it is evident that he has made efforts to achieve this rating. However, as for the other three participants, whether they first felt that they could not succeed at achieving a native-like accent and therefore opted to emphasize comprehensibility, or whether they first made a conscious decision to emphasize comprehensibility and with that dropped any efforts to improve their pronunciation, resulting in relatively less native-like pronunciation, remains unknown. Another interesting point is that in the questionnaire all four participants rated their own spoken Turkish skills nearly the same, with the exception of Jasmine who rated herself as 3.5 out of 5, while the other three rated themselves as 3 out of 5. This is interesting because while three of the participants focused on comprehensibility and one only said that he makes a conscious effort with his accent, they all rated their own spoken Turkish skills the same.

Among the participants interviewed, pronunciation and accent do not seem to be a priority in their Turkish language learning and use. Instead, there seems to be much more emphasis on a much more pragmatic approach, in which the meaning and message, not the way it is presented, is prioritized.

### ***Personal Connection to Turkish Culture***

For some of the participants, their scores reflected their responses and for others they did not, in other words it was not consistent. This may be because in relation to the

participants' feelings about how connected they feel to the Turkish culture, there seemed to be varied interpretations of culture. The participants referred to different aspects of culture, such as food, celebrations, TV and music, family issues, and language.

Jasmine and Doug's scores somewhat reflected their responses. In relation to the different interpretation of culture, Doug actually stated that "it depends on what we mean by that word (culture)." He further explained that some areas like Turkish cuisine or to some extent Turkish mentality he can feel connected to. However, there are other aspects of Turkish culture such as the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, Children's Day, which, although he appreciates and understands its meaningfulness in principle, he does not necessarily actively participate in or feel a connection to. Doug's mixed comments and tendency to focus on surface level cultural things like food and holidays comes through clearly in his cultural identity score of 2.63, which is close to the middle but leaning towards the non-Turkish side. Jasmine explained that she has always felt very connected to Turkish culture, but when filling out the questionnaire was suddenly struck by all the things that might be associated with "connectedness", like watching Turkish television or listening to Turkish music, that she does not often do. On the other hand, she notes that although she might not be very connected on those particular aspects of culture, on a more fundamental level, if someone were to ask her where she would like to spend the rest of her life, she would say "Turkey", not the United States. Moreover, Jasmine also noted that in relation to deep-down issues like feelings about family and how older people should be treated, she feels more Turkish than American. Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, her cultural identity score was a little over the middle and slightly closer to the Turkish side, 3.89. Ultimately however, Jasmine summed up her fairly middle-of-the-road cultural identity score with the following comment "I think I am more of a non

cultural kind of person rather than a Turkish or American,” explaining that she does not feel a tremendous connection to American culture either. For Jasmine, the deeper, and possibly arguably more meaningful aspects of culture are more Turkish for her, but she ‘lost points’ on her score due to more daily social things like TV and music. Therefore; her slightly more Turkish score does reflect her comments.

Cassandra and Darcy’s situation may be viewed as examples of cultural identity scores not matching responses. Cassandra explained that she loves Turkish language and grammar and feels connected in that sense. However, she touches on the difficulties of being an expatriate, stating, “I think when you are an expat in any culture you’re always going to be outside the system,” but points out that she feels “as connected as possible.” Darcy also mentioned a similar issue by saying, “I don’t think I’ll ever understand Turkish culture completely, I’m not sure how much anyone can understand a foreign culture fully” however; he pointed out that he does enjoy the Turkish culture. Cassandra and Darcy’s comments are interesting because despite their both emphasizing the impossibility of a foreigner or expatriate to fully fit into a local culture, their cultural identity scores are fairly high, 4.20 and 4.38 respectively, indicating a closer cultural identity to Turkish. Cassandra and Darcy’s higher scores may just reflect their personal drives to be as connected as possible.

### ***Becoming “Turkified” and Experiences with Comments in Relation to Foreignness or Turkishness***

In relation to the related theme of becoming “Turkified” all the participants said that they feel fairly “Turkified”. The general response was that the participants felt “Turkified” enough to feel comfortable by noting that they enjoy the Turkish culture. Darcy explained that he feels ‘Turkified’ enough to not be bothered by things he usually

could be. He gave the example of proximity explaining that “Turkish people tend to stand closer to each other than is comfortable in other cultures.” Darcy added that he has gotten used to the proximity issue and no longer feels uncomfortable with it. An interesting comment came from Cassandra who stated that “I think I’m very Turkified actually but it doesn’t show in Turkey because I’m not as Turkish as a Turkish person.” She went on to explain that when she goes to Canada, her Turkishness shows up much more because her Canadian family and friends notice things that are different. For example, she uses the word ‘inşallah’, meaning ‘if God permits’, and this surprises her family. Cassandra says that she uses this word because it is so useful. Furthermore, in relation to other peoples’ comments about their Turkishness or foreignness, the participants were generally assessed by Turks regarding their appearances. The participants mentioned that they look and dress foreign and Turkish people notice this. An interesting comment was made by Doug, who said that because he looks foreign, Turkish people automatically assume that there is going to be a communication problem; they do not expect him to speak Turkish and when he does, it takes a while for them to adapt. Doug states that “the Turkish person I’m speaking to in a café, will think, ‘ah foreigner,’ and for some reason they won’t understand my Turkish”. Doug further explains that he does not think this is an accent problem but rather a ‘mentality’ issue, in which the Turkish person decides in advance that they are addressing a foreign person, and they expect that there will be communication breakdown. Jasmine explains that her family friends, who are Turkish, always say that she is not “like other Americans,” she is “like Turkish”. Jasmine interprets this as meaning that she does Turkish things like always serving tea and water, and cooking Turkish food.

### ***Perception of Own Accent and Questionnaire Results***

When asked what the participants thought about the results of their cultural identity and accent scores, the participants' responses varied. Darcy and Cassandra both felt that their scores reflected 'reality', even though in Darcy's case it was quite a high score, 3.0, and in Cassandra's a very low one, 1.0. When asked what she thought about her own Turkish accent, Cassandra said "I think it is awful", and was not very surprised with her accent score. Jasmine and Doug were both somewhat surprised with their scores. Jasmine, who received 2.0, admitted that it was 'deserved' because she was aware of the mispronunciations she was making even as she was reading. In addition, as she went on reading she could feel herself becoming more self-conscious and 'worse' in her accent. However, Jasmine did not feel it was completely an accurate reflection, because she felt that she normally does better. In relation to this Jasmine stated 'if you had asked me before doing the reading then that score would have surprised me.' She also says that she has even had native Turkish speakers comment on her quite good accent when she is speaking normally. Doug also expressed surprise with his accent score, 1.6, saying, "I would have thought it would have been a little higher". Doug explained that while reading the passages he thought he was handling the pronunciations well. He also stated that he thought this was the case because he does a lot of reading practice through helping his children with their Turkish readings.

### ***Perceptions of Relationship Between Accent and Cultural Identity, Factor***

#### ***Contributing to Language Learning: Environment***

When asked about their thoughts on the relationship between accent and cultural identity two of the participants said that enjoying and liking the culture is an important factor in achieving a more native-like accent. Darcy stated that "I certainly think that if

you identify with a culture and you enjoy a culture then you probably make a greater effort to speak the language properly.” Cassandra also said a similar thing by explaining that to be a successful speaker of a language you have to enjoy and like the culture and have a positive experience with it. On the other hand, Cassandra emphasized that practice is also very important, stating, “I think practice is absolutely the most important factor; the more practice you have the better your accent is going to be.” She further explained that no matter what language you are learning “you need to hear it and practice it a lot and once that happens it’s a fairly natural process.” Jasmine gave an interesting response by providing arguments for both sides. She says that her initial response would be no, because she thinks she feels quite Turkish but it did not seem to reflect in her accent. On the other hand, she mentions that “it’s a full package,” in other words, if you are closely connected to the target culture you are more likely to get more “linguistic input” and interact with the culture. However, she provides a counter argument by stating that there are even some psychological reasons why people cannot achieve a native like accent. Jasmine emphasizes that it is an individual thing and can change from person to person and adds that there could definitely be a connection, but it is not the only factor contributing to language learning.

The data revealed at least one concrete factor that might be one of the “other factors” contributing to language learning and, thus, to accent, and that is the context in which the participants live and work. Cassandra and Doug mentioned that the environment in which they work (a private university) and live (the university campus) is a very foreign one. Doug referred to the campus that he lives in as “an artificial environment” explaining that the majority of the people he socializes and interacts with everyday are foreigners. Cassandra also touched on this issue by saying that even the

Turkish people on campus do not act Turkish, they act foreign. She explains that when she tries to speak Turkish to a Turkish person on campus, that person often insists on replying in English. Cassandra says that she has recently moved off campus and has the opportunity to interact with Turks a bit more.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, the descriptive statistics from the demographic information part of the questionnaire and the findings from the quantitative data, the cultural identity questionnaire and the audio recordings, were presented. Furthermore, the findings from the follow-up interviews, were reported. In the following chapter, the findings will be discussed, especially as to how the data answer the research questions of this study. In addition, the limitations and implications of the study will be discussed, and suggestions will be made for further research.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

### Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between cultural identity and accent. The focus of the study was native English speakers who have lived in Turkey for more than eight years. Specifically, the study aimed to investigate the relation of these native English speakers' cultural identity perceptions with their native or non-native like Turkish accents.

In this respect, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. What are the self-perceptions of cultural identity among long-term native English speaking residents in Turkey?
2. What is the relationship between their perceptions and the nativeness of their Turkish accent?

In this study with 20 native English speakers in Turkey, three data collection instruments - a cultural identity questionnaire, audio recordings, and follow-up interviews – were employed. While the data obtained from the cultural identity questionnaire and audio recordings were analyzed quantitatively by using Cronbach's Alpha for reliability, descriptive statistics, and Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient, the data from the follow-up interviews were analyzed qualitatively by means of content analysis.

This chapter consists of four main sections. In the first section, the findings emerging from this study will be discussed, in relation to the similar studies in the



literature. In the next section, the limitations of the study will be explained. In the third section, the implications of the present study will be discussed and in the final section, suggestions for further research will be presented.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire aimed to provide answers to the first research question of this study: “*What are the self-perceptions of cultural identity among long-term native English speaking residents in Turkey?*” The mean score of the cultural identity questionnaire was 3.22 (out of 6), indicating that the average identity perceptions of the participants were in the middle. In other words, on average the participants did not strongly identify themselves as either Turkish nor American, Canadian, British, or Irish. In the analysis of the questionnaire, after a Spearman’s Rank Correlation Coefficient test was conducted, a significant relationship ( $\rho = .640$ ) between the participants’ own rating of spoken Turkish skills and their cultural identity score was found. This indicates that the higher a participant perceived their own spoken Turkish skills, the higher or more Turkish, their cultural identity score was. The only judgment that is obtained of the participants Turkish skills results from their self-perception/rating, nevertheless, this finding reveals at least to some extent a connection between social acculturation with the L2 and language proficiency. Schuman (1976) claims that the greater social and psychological distance an individual has from the target culture, the more difficult it is for that individual to acquire the language of the target language group. Similarly, Lambert (1967) argues that if an individual wants to learn successfully another social group’s language, s/he must have the readiness and desire to adopt various aspects of behavior including verbal behavior which characterize members of the target language

group. The individual's attitudes towards the target language group determine to some degree his/her success in learning the target language. Even though this study only looked at reported proficiency, a positive correlation between it and identifying more closely with the L2 culture is apparent.

In addition, a significant relationship ( $p = .498$ ) between the participants' length of marriage to a native Turkish speaker and their cultural identity score was also found. This shows that, for those participants married to a native Turkish speaker, the longer they had been married, the more Turkish their cultural identity score was. As a result of being married to a native Turkish speaker for a long time the participants may have adopted elements of Turkish culture into their lives.

The results of the correlation test showed that there was no significant relationship between the participants' cultural identity scores and their age, length of residency, or reasons for moving to Turkey. This indicates that, for the participants involved in this study, such factors do not play an important role in their identity construction. Reasons for moving to Turkey may not have been an important factor for the participants because the vast majority had moved to Turkey for work related reasons and they all work at a university in which English is the medium of instruction. As a result of using English so much at work, this factor may have influenced their identity construction process in a very moderating manner, in other words, it may have slowed down their acculturation to Turkish culture because it limited their exposure to the language. In relation to length of residency, a reason for a significant relationship not being evident may be because participants were chosen with the criterion of having lived in Turkey for at least eight years to ensure they would have broad knowledge of and familiarity with Turkish culture as well as extensive exposure to the Turkish language.

The findings suggest that while that assumption may be true, simply spending more time than this does not necessarily lead to additional changes. The participants' length of residency ranged from nine years to 25 years, so they all had a great amount of time to obtain knowledge of and become familiar with Turkish culture as well as to be exposed to the Turkish language. What may be drawn from this is that patterns of social identification appear to become set in the early years, and do not seem to continue developing and deepening as the years pass. This phenomenon in terms of acculturation can almost be like the concept of fossilization in second language learning, in which "some features in a learner's language may stop changing" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 80). In this case, the participants' social identification may have become 'fossilized', in the sense that after the early years, their degree of identification with the Turkish culture did not increase or decrease. As a result, the findings show the level of identification for all the participants is generally a middle ground between the native and Turkish cultures.

### ***Audio Recordings***

The audio recordings aimed to answer the second research question of this study: "*What is the relationship between their perceptions and the nativeness of their Turkish accent?*" The mean score of the audio recordings was 1.5 (out of 5), indicating that on average the participants' accent scores were fairly low. The accent scores of the participants were correlated with the cultural identity scores through Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results showed a significant relationship ( $\rho = .468$ ) between the participants' accent scores and their cultural identity scores. In other words, the higher a participant's accent score was, the higher, or closer to Turkish, their cultural identity score was, and vice versa. These results confirm the findings of previous

studies conducted on this issue. Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) and Rindal (2010) also took a quantitative approach when exploring the relationship between accent and cultural identity in English language learners, while Jones (2001) and Marx (2002) took a more qualitative approach; however, they also pointed to a positive relationship between closer identification with the target culture, and more native-like accent in the target language.

It is important to note that there was not a significant relationship between length of residency and the participants' accent scores. The literature is mixed on this issue; some provide evidence that longer residence in the target country positively affects a learner's language fluency, as it provides higher frequency of contact with native speakers (Moyer, 2004). However, just like the findings of this current study, others have shown contradictory findings of this factor's significance (Piske, MacKay, & Flege, 2001). Flege and Liu (2001) explored this issue with Chinese immigrants to the United States by comparing students and non-students on phonemic recognition, listening comprehension and grammaticality judgments. The results showed that length of residence was not significant for the non-students, indicating that extra years in the target country do not matter. The authors suggest that the type of input the students received from native speakers and their teachers caused the difference and this is why length of residence was significant for students. The results of this current study confirm this finding, and lend evidence to the literature stating that there is no connection, because the participants in this study were all non-students and length of residence was not a significant factor in relation to their accent scores.

### *Follow-up Interviews*

The follow-up interviews aimed to provide further insight into the results of the cultural identity questionnaire and audio recordings, thus, giving deeper understanding to the answers of the research questions.

In relation to personal connection to Turkish culture and becoming ‘Turkified’, the participants gave diverse responses because they drew on different aspects of culture. Adapting to a new culture is known as acculturation, which involves changes. Berry (2003) states that these changes may be both at the individual level, such as individual’s values, attitudes, beliefs, and identities as well as at the group level, such as social and cultural systems. The participants interviewed, in reference to their identification with Turkish culture, referred to these types of changes within culture such as getting used to and enjoying Turkish food, feeling to some extent a connection towards particular cultural celebrations, beliefs about family issues like raising children and attitudes towards the elderly, and adapting to and enjoying the Turkish language, in other words, their acculturation processes were influenced towards aspects of Turkish culture by many factors. These references to diverse aspects of culture are supported by the literature because the definition of acculturation suggests that it is an interactive, developmental process involving multiple factors and dimensions (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado 1995). Thus, the findings of this study confirm that the acculturation process is complex and dependent on a wide variety of factors. Furthermore, this shows that the acculturation issues faced by native English speakers living in non-native English speaking countries are similar to issues faced by non-native English speakers living in native English speaking countries. Regardless of varied environmental, cultural, and economic changes experienced by individuals, the general processes of adaptation to a

new society seem to be common for all acculturating individuals (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sam, 1996). This universal perspective of acculturation asserts that what differs from individual to individual is the course of adaptation, the level of difficulty experienced during the process, and the actual result of the acculturation experience (Berry, 1997; Berry, 1998).

Cassandra explained that she uses every opportunity to speak Turkish with native speakers, indicating that her speech has aspects of convergence in relation to the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). In other words, she adjusts her speech towards the speech of her interlocutors (Jenkins, 2000), in this case native Turkish speakers. She does this in order to practice her Turkish and to interact with native Turkish speakers so that she is liked and accepted, which is an aspect of convergence (Giles, Coupland & Coupland, 1991). This finding is also reflected in Cassandra's high cultural identity score of 4.20 (out of 6). This score shows that Cassandra is fairly close to identifying herself as Turkish, which is in line with her indications of using convergence to be a part of the Turkish society. Therefore, it can be said that Cassandra's perception of her own identity is also evident in her practices of speaking the target, in this case, Turkish language. On this same general topic however, an interesting finding occurred in Doug's case. He also explains that he tries to speak Turkish with native speakers, in other words, also converges; however, Doug's cultural identity score (2.63 out of 6) was closer to the British side. In this case, his reporting of converging and his cultural identity score appear to contradict each other. This could mean that although Doug does not identify himself as Turkish he has a positive attitude towards the Turkish culture and Turkish people; therefore, wishes to interact with them. This was evident in Doug's interview when he explained that there are aspects of

Turkish culture such as the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, Children's Day, which is a big part of Turkish culture, which he appreciates and understands, but does not necessarily actively participate in or feel a connection to. The difficulty resulting from the perception that having a foreign accent represents the speaker as an outsider and brings about negative stereotypes (Bresnahan, Ohashi, Nebashi, Liu, Shearman, 2002) is also evident in Doug's experiences. He explains that when he speaks Turkish with native Turkish speakers they often address him with the pre-determined judgment of addressing a foreigner, and that this will automatically cause communication breakdowns. Doug's experience shows that this may occur even when the speaker's speech has evidence of convergence. Cassandra reported on a similar issue, and an interesting comment arose from her interview data. In relation to the campus being a very 'foreign environment', Cassandra stated that, on-campus, when she tries to speak Turkish to native Turkish speakers, they respond in English. This was an unexpected issue because it indicates that the people that Cassandra tried to speak Turkish to on-campus were also using convergence. They were responding in English, even when Cassandra spoke Turkish, because their interlocutor was a foreigner. One possible reason for this may be that the native Turkish speakers might have a similar intention to Cassandra, in other words, practicing their L2 as much as possible. Practice of the target language is perceived to be an important factor in fluency. According to Hinkel (2006) in the 1990s, many researchers concluded that exposure to and communicative interaction in an L2 permits learners to achieve L2 speaking fluency. Those who rely more on L2 achieve closer-to-native like sounding speech than those who use their mother tongue as their main medium of communication (Moyer, 2004; Moyer, 2009; Singleton, 2000). Furthermore, according to Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) the extent to which an individual

receives feedback from the social environment in relation to their use of the language determines the extent to which they are able to control their own speech forms to equate to the speech norms of the group to which that individual would like to be a part of. So, Doug's and Cassandra's attempts to interact and speak Turkish with native speakers may be a (sub)conscious effort to receive as much feedback and develop their Turkish language spoken skills as possible.

The results of this current study are similar to those of a study conducted by Shortreed and Ross (1990), in which they investigated the attitudes of Japanese native speakers towards the use of convergence and divergence as linguistic reaction-strategies towards non-native speakers of Japanese who try to speak their language. The researchers found that in Japan, a non-native speaker trying to converge linguistically toward a Japanese interlocutor may result in the native interlocutor simultaneously converging toward the language of the non-native. The authors suggest that research into attitudes towards second language acquisition by non-Japanese can also provide insight into the issue of 'language competition', in which two speakers (or groups) try to converge simultaneously towards each other. Therefore, the results of this current study support the literature, in the sense that within an interaction between speakers from two different language backgrounds, convergence may occur both ways. Shortreed and Ross (1990) explain that in an interaction between a native and non-native speaker, the native speaker may respond in the native language either to signal the non-native's acceptance or to talk beyond the non-native speakers' proficiency and thus emphasize the non-native as an 'outsider'. Similarly, a native speaker may respond in the non-native speaker's language either to accommodate to the non-native, or to signal dissociation from the non-native's efforts to converge toward their linguistic norms. Any speaker



who uses any of these speech styles may have many possible subjective motivations; therefore, the use of these speech styles may result in confusion because of misinterpretation of a speaker's intent. Furthermore, Shortreed and Ross (1990, p. 137) state that "what may be perceived as divergence by a minority group could be an attempt on the part of the majority group to converge or even 'over-converge' toward a minority language group, especially if the minority group's language is considered a 'prestige' language." This may be the case in Cassandra's situation, the native Turkish speakers may have chosen to converge towards her language because her native language, English, is considered a 'prestige' language. The status of English being a 'prestige' language is due to the fact that English has risen to currently being the international language of science and technology, of information and communication technology (ICT) and of contemporary life and living, resulting from the socio-political, cultural and military influence of the United States of America (Iwuchukwu, 2011).

Research on the issue of identities of English speakers living in foreign countries is limited; therefore, the results of this study may contribute to the literature by providing insights into a different perspective on identity and L2 learning. The findings of this study provide insights into the cultural identity, acculturation and accent issues that native English speakers face while living in a country belonging to Kachru's (1985) expanding circle. Furthermore, this study will also contribute to the few studies that investigate the relationship between identity and accent. Kachru's (1985) model of concentric circles describes the spread of English. The inner circle includes countries where English is spoken as a first native language, such as New Zealand, Australia, USA, Canada, and Britain. The outer circle consists of countries where English is spoken as a second or major language, such as Singapore, India, Pakistan, Malawi,

Malaysia, and Nigeria. Within the expanding circle are countries where English has acquired cultural or commercial significance and is used as a foreign language, such as Turkey, China, Sweden, Greece, and Japan. The few existing studies on identity and accent involve individuals from countries within the outer and expanding circles living in the inner circles countries, whereas this current study investigates native English speakers living in Turkey, in other words, the exact reverse, individuals from inner circle countries living in an expanding circle country. This study contributes to earlier research by providing evidence that the findings are similar, that identity construction and acculturation are complex processes involving multiple factors, despite different native and target languages, in other words, the learners' native language being a prestige language. In this case, English is a prestige language as stated by Emenanjo (as cited in Iwuchukwu, 2011, p. 169) "English is one of the richest world languages". The findings of this study have shown that individuals from inner circle countries living in an expanding circle country also experience acculturation and identity changes in different aspects of culture. For example, the participants of this study have indicated that there are aspects of Turkish culture, such as family, celebrations, and food, with which they can connect or identify with.

### **Limitations**

One of the major limitations of this study was that all the participants worked at the same university so, they were all part of the same environment. Also, this particular university was one in which English is the medium of instruction and which can be described as being quite a 'foreign' environment. English is spoken by almost everyone on-campus; therefore, foreigners that work and/or live on-campus may not have obvious opportunities to use Turkish. However, it is important to note that although the

environment was a very foreign one, dominated by English, it is the choice of an individual to use as much or as little Turkish as they desire. In addition, the sample size was low in number so, the findings should not be interpreted as a representation of all native English speakers living in Turkey.

Another limitation was the scale used for rating the audio recordings. A scale that elicited a wider range of scores would have been more effective. The current scale was a 1-5 scale; thus as the raters rated the participants accents quite low the results ended up being clustered primarily in the 1-2 range. However, if a larger ranged scale was used, for example 1-10, the results may have been wider ranged. This could have resulted from the scale itself being a bit blunt or the training of the raters.

Furthermore, another methodological limitation is one that results from the very nature of measuring acculturation and cultural identity, especially through a short questionnaire. Although all efforts were made to attempt to cover various aspects of culture, the issue of acculturation and cultural identity are very diverse, multi-faceted, and open to many different interpretations; in other words, they are very difficult concepts to summarize. Moreover, a questionnaire forces individuals to try to label very complex feelings and perceptions in a simple 1-6 scale. Ultimately, although the questionnaire gives somewhat an idea of acculturation and cultural identity, it is naturally limited.

### **Implications**

At the pedagogical level, by providing some different perspectives this study may contribute to the debate regarding teaching pronunciation with a goal of achieving a native-like accent. The results of the study, especially through the follow-up interviews, show that pronunciation and accent do not seem to be a priority among native English

speakers in their Turkish language use. Instead, a pragmatic approach is deemed more important, in which the meaning and message, not the way it is presented, is prioritized. The literature supports this importance of meaning in the sense that communication breakdown is most likely to occur when non-natives focus on segmental cues, thus missing important contextual information (Jenkins, 2002). Although the results of this study cannot be generalized for all language learners, the emphasis placed on meaning by these language learners is still an important factor to take into consideration when teaching language. As Tarone (2005) notes, the goal of pronunciation teaching has shifted from targeting a native-like accent to targeting meaning, in other words, the extent to which the listener understands the speaker's speech. Research on the elements and development of L2 oral skills has shown that communicating in an L2 is cognitively demanding, and that the success of an interaction often depends on production quality (e.g., McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004). The quality of production may affect the meaning intended in an interaction and lead to communication breakdown; this phenomenon is supported by Jasmine's comment on comprehensibility. She explained that as long as understanding between two people is not inhibited then pronunciation should not be the focus. So, although the participants emphasize meaning the importance of the production being understandable is noted.

Furthermore, currently, L2 pronunciation pedagogy has the objective of enabling learners to achieve general intelligibility rather than extreme accent modification (McKay, 2002). Therefore, teaching needs to address the issues of clarity (such as the articulation of specific sounds), word stress and prosody, and the length and the timing of pauses (Hinkel, 2006). According to Chun (2002), the current approach to teaching pronunciation is generally based on three criteria: (a) Pronunciation and intonation are

taught in context and in combination with speaking skills, (b) instruction in pronunciation provides broader communicative purposes, and (c) the teaching of pronunciation and intonation is based on realistic instead of idealistic language models. As a result of the current debates on the issue of pronunciation teaching, with both sides, striving for native-like accent on one hand and focusing on communication and meaning on the other hand, making some valuable points, language teachers may be confused about what position they actually hold with regards to the issue.

The findings of this study may give some further insights to second language teachers who are struggling with these issues. The results of this study will provide second language teachers more information about the relationship between pronunciation and identity attitudes; therefore, giving them another issue to consider when formulating their beliefs about pronunciation and teaching. The findings of this current study may even further aid teachers of, specifically, Turkish as a Second Language in their teaching practice. When teaching Turkish to non-native Turkish speakers these teachers should take into account the goals of their learners. For example, the participants of this study prioritized meaning over accent; therefore Turkish as Second Language teachers need to be aware that their learners' goals may not be to achieve a native like accent or pronunciation. This may be because they are native English speakers, and due to the widespread use of English in Turkey, and in particular on the campus that they live and work, they do not feel as great a need to blend in. The results of this study showed that a certain degree of identification with the language is correlated with a more native-like accent in Turkish; however, it was noted that it is not the only factor. Teachers of language need to be aware of and take into consideration all

possible factors that may influence each language learner's success in the language learning process.

Furthermore, this study may be of benefit to students as it will provide them with an additional aspect to consider in relation to their own language learning beliefs. Learners may benefit from greater awareness of issues such as acculturation and cultural identity and how these can relate to accent and pronunciation. Once learners are aware of these issues they then can reflect on themselves and determine what their own perceptions are; thereby, leading to their decisions on their own accent and how they learn language as an individual. This means that students need to play an active role and take great responsibility in their own language learning process.

Otlowski (1998) suggests that for the success of a students' pronunciation of a foreign language, the teacher and student need to participate together in the language learning process. Success of pronunciation can be achieved if each has, respectively, individual teaching and learning goals. Pronunciation needs to be seen as more than the correct production of phonemes, instead, it must be viewed in the same way as grammar, syntax, and discourse, in other words, a crucial aspect of communication. The literature seems to support the findings of this current study, in the sense that the view of pronunciation that is being emphasized is meaningful pronunciation rather than aiming for native-like pronunciation. Morley (1991, p. 513) states that "intelligible pronunciation is seen as an essential component of communicative competence". Therefore, teachers need to keep this in mind when setting goals and addressing the communication needs of their students. The learner also needs to become part of the learning process, and be actively involved in their own learning. The content of the course should be integrated into the communication or speaking class, with the content

focusing on the teaching of suprasegmentals, connecting pronunciation with listening comprehension, and providing opportunities for meaningful pronunciation practice. Furthermore, the teacher needs to act as a ‘speech coach’ instead of a simple checker of pronunciation because the feedback given to the student can encourage and motivate learners to improve their pronunciation. If these criteria are followed, all students, regardless of their learner unique goals, can be expected to achieve a meaningful pronunciation in the learning of a foreign language.

Ultimately, knowing more about the issue of whether identifying oneself with the target or native language culture affects, or does not affect, a student’s achievement of a more, or less, native like accent is important when teachers, test designers and curriculum developers, materials designers, and other administrators are making decisions about the content of teaching pronunciation.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, some suggestions may be provided for further research. To begin with, research with a larger and more diverse number of participants is needed. English native speakers from different cities of Turkey and from a wide range of different origins may provide a deeper insight into the issue. Also, individuals from different native language backgrounds, instead of native English speakers, may provide additional insights by exploring the identity, acculturation, and accent issues faced by people from different cultures who live in Turkey. These individuals may be compared to native English speakers in Turkey to see whether there are any similarities or differences and what the reasons for these are. Furthermore, and most importantly, participants living and working in different environments, for

example, Turkish and non-Turkish speaking environments, will enrich and take the findings to another level.

In addition, more in-depth studies need to be conducted as this current study provides a scratch of the surface on this topic. This may be done by exploring individuals with highly differentiated lengths of residence in Turkey (e.g., 1-2 years versus 8 + years). The literature has shown that long term residents have achieved more authenticity in the production of their L2 (Flege & Fletcher, 1992; Flege, Takagi, & Mann, 1995). Although, the findings of this study did not find a correlation between longer residence and identity construction, better pronunciation/accent or more acculturation, it is important to explore the early years, because that may be when the patterns are set that may determine how these issues will progress. Therefore, investigation into individuals that have lived in Turkey for a shorter period of time, and comparison of these individuals with long term residents, will provide further insight. Moreover, given the fairly moderate range in differences among participants in their cultural identity and accent scores, future studies might purposefully seek to explore more diverse samples, and also look into the reasons behind that diversity.

In addition, an exploration into the attitudes and perceptions of Turkish as Second Language teachers in relation to pronunciation is needed. This will provide insight into whether the practices of these teachers meet the needs and goals of non-native Turkish speaking learners.

### **Conclusion**

This study conducted with 20 native English speakers living in Turkey has reported on the relationship between cultural identity and accent. In this respect, the results of this study constitute an attempt to demonstrate the role that perceptions of



cultural identity play in accent and pronunciation of a learned foreign language. As the findings of this study show and as the literature supports (e.g., Gatbonton , Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005; Jones, 2001; Marx, 2002; Rindal, 2010), there is a relationship between cultural identity and accent, in the sense that the more the participants identified themselves as Turkish the higher their accent score was. However, an important thing to consider is that the findings indicated that the participants prioritized meaning rather than the presentation of speech. At a pedagogical level, this is a reminder that during their practices second language teachers need to be aware of the goals of language learners. Furthermore, after the early years of residency the increasing length of time spent in the country does not seem to correspond to a similar growth in the degree of cultural identification, acculturation, and pronunciation/accent progress; however, what the cut off for this cessation in ongoing development and change has not been determined. In addition, marriage to a native speaker has been shown to affect an individual's cultural identification. Ultimately, the results of this study confirm the literature that cultural identification and acculturation are complex processes with multiple factors involved, regardless of different native and target languages.

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## APPENDIX A: CULTURAL IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Cultural Identity Questionnaire*Ahu Burcu Aydemir*Part A. Background Information - Please answer as applicable to you.**1. Where are you from?** \_\_\_\_\_**2. How old are you?**

a) 20-29                      b) 30-39                      c) 40-49                      d) 50-59                      e) 60-69

**3. What is/was your occupation?** \_\_\_\_\_**4. What languages have you studied/learned and to what level?**

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**5. How many years have you been living in Turkey?** \_\_\_\_\_**6. Why did you move to Turkey?**a) Work      b) Marriage      c) Education      d) Other- please  
state: \_\_\_\_\_**7. On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being ‘native-like fluency’ and 1 being ‘no Turkish ability’, how would you rate your spoken Turkish skills?**

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

None

Native-like

**8. Have you ever received any formal education to learn Turkish?**

a) No                      b) Yes- please state type of education and length.

---

**9. Are you or have you ever been married to a native Turkish speaker?**

a) No

b) If, yes, for how many years? \_\_\_\_\_

### Part B

*Directions: Please read each statement carefully. Fill in the circle next to the number, corresponding to your degree of agreement with the statement or the relevance the statement has for you.*

**1- I celebrate all American holidays.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree     
  2 – Moderately Agree     
  3 – Slightly Agree  
 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree     
  5 – Moderately Disagree     
  6 – Strongly

**2- American values are an important part of my life.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree     
  2 – Moderately Agree     
  3 – Slightly Agree  
 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree     
  5 – Moderately Disagree     
  6 – Strongly

**3- I am proud of being American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree     
  2 – Moderately Agree     
  3 – Slightly Agree  
 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree     
  5 – Moderately Disagree     
  6 – Strongly

**4- I identify myself as American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree     
  2 – Moderately Agree     
  3 – Slightly Agree

- 4 – Slightly Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly Disagree

**5- I sometimes feel like I have become more Turkish than American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly Disagree

**6- I am very comfortable in groups where everyone is Turkish.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly Disagree

**7- I am most comfortable being in groups where everyone is American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly Disagree

**8- I am most comfortable being in groups where there is at least one other American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly Disagree

**9- I prefer American music to Turkish music.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**10- I watch/listen and enjoy Turkish TV and/or radio shows.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**11- I prefer American TV and/or radio shows.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**12- I always think in English.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**13- I like attending social functions with Americans.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**14- I believe that my children should have American names only.**



1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**15- I prefer to engage in American forms of recreational activities rather than Turkish.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**16- I prefer speaking English over Turkish.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**17- Turkish culture has had a positive impact on my life.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**18- I would prefer to live in America.**

1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree

4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**19- I feel comfortable speaking English around Turkish people.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**20- American current affairs issues are more important to me than Turkish current affairs issues.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**21- Overall, my lifestyle is American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**22- Overall, my lifestyle is Turkish.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**23- Overall, my values are American.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**24- Overall, my values are Turkish.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**25- Overall, my values are both American and Turkish.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**26- I find it easy to build close friendships here with Turks.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

**27- Most of my closest friends here are Americans.**

- 1 – Strongly Agree       2 – Moderately Agree       3 – Slightly Agree
- 4 – Slightly Disagree  
Disagree       5 – Moderately Disagree       6 – Strongly

## APPENDIX B: READING ALOUD PASSAGES

### **Ruhun Deşifresi- Mehmet Ali Bulut**

Vaktiyle adamın birisi öğrencilerini toplamış, onlara mutlu olmanın yollarını anlatıyormuş. Bir gün, "herkes gözünü kapatsın ve kendisini dilediği bir şey olarak düşlesin" demiş.

Öğrencilerden biri kendini gökyüzünde uçan bir kuş olarak hayal etmiş. Tam böyle keyfince gökyüzünde süzülüp uçarken, bir de bakmış ki aşağıda bir avcı, elindeki tüfeğini kendisine doğrultmuş, ateş edecek. Öğrenci sıçramış ve hayalinden sıyrılmış.

Hocası sormuş: -Ne oldu evladım? Öğrenci cevap vermiş: -Ben kendimi bir kuş olarak düşledim hocam. Havada uçuyordum. Bir de baktım aşağıda bir avcı var. Beni avlamak için tüfeğini bana doğrultunca korkup sıçradım... Hocası: -A çocuğum! Hayal senin hayalin, düş senin düşün. Hayalinin içine o avcıyı niye sokuşturuyorsun? Sen hayal etmesen o avcı nasıl girsin senin hayal dünyana!..

Çoğumuz bir yandan kuş olmayı hayal ediyor, diğer taraftan da düşlerimize sinsî bir avcı sokuşturuyoruz. Oysa biz istemezsek avcı hayalimizin içerisine nasıl girebilir ki!

Bu kitap, beynimizin ve hayalimizin semalarında dolaşan bu sinsî avcıların neler olduğunu ve bunları dünyamızdan nasıl çıkaracağımızı tarif ediyor.

### **Zülfü Livaneli-Serenad**

Roman okumak istiyorsanız...

Her şey, 2001 yılının Şubat ayında soğuk bir gün, İstanbul Üniversitesinde halkla ilişkiler görevini yürüten Maya Duranın ABDden gelen Alman asıllı Profesör Maximilian Wagneri karşılamasıyla başlar.

1930lu yıllarda İstanbul Üniversitesinde hocalık yapmış olan profesörün isteği üzerine, Maya bir gün onu Şileye götürür. Böylece, katları yavaş yavaş açılan dokunaklı bir aşk hikâyesine karışmakla kalmaz, dünya tarihine ve kendi ailesine ilişkin birtakım sırları da öğrenir.

Serenad, 60 yıldır süren bir aşkı ele alırken, ister herkesin bildiği Yahudi Soykırımı olsun isterse çok az kimsenin bildiği Mavi Alay, bütün siyasi sorunlarda asıl harcananın, gürültüye gidenin hep insan olduğu gerçeğini de göz önüne seriyor.

Okurunu sınıksız kavrayan Serenadta Zülfü Livanelinin romancılığının en temel niteliklerinden biri yine başrolde: İç içe geçmiş, kaynaşmış kişisel ve toplumsal tarihlerin kusursuz Dengesi.

### **Hürriyet- Marmara'da fırtına bekleniyor**

Meteoroloji Genel Müdürlüğü, bu akşam saatlerinde güney ve güneybatıdan (Lodos) 5 ila 7 kuvvetinde fırtınamsı rüzgar şeklinde esecek olan rüzgarın, yarın öğle saatlerine kadar etkisini sürdürmesinin tahmin edildiğini açıkladı.

Rüzgarın periyot boyunca zaman zaman 8 kuvvetinde esmesi beklendiği belirtildi.

### **DALGALARLA DANS**

Öte yandan, şiddetli rüzgarı fırsat bilen altı sörfçü ve bir uçurtma sörfçüsü, Marmaris Körfezi'nde renkli görüntüler oluşturdu. Kıyıdaکی Marmarisliler'in de büyük bir keyifle izlediği sörfçülerden Mehmet Göçer, "Fırtına bizim için keyif aracı. Sörf yapmak, dalgalarla dans etmek bizi dinlendiriyor, tüm stresimizi alıyor" dedi.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In general, what are your feelings about the importance—or UNimportance--of pronunciation/accent when speaking a foreign language?
2. How important is it to you personally to have a ‘good’ accent when you’re speaking a foreign language?
3. How do you feel about your own Turkish accent?
4. Do you or have you ever made any particular efforts to work specifically on your accent? (if yes, could you please describe those efforts) (if no, there is any particular reason for that)
5. As a/n \_\_\_\_\_ living in Turkey for the past \_\_\_\_ years, how connected do you feel to Turkish culture?
6. I know this is a very intangible concept, but if I were to ask you how ‘Turkish’ you feel or how ‘Turkified’ you’ve become, what would say? If it’s easier, you could maybe respond to this by also considering how ‘Canadian/Irish/American...’ you feel yourself to be.
7. Have you ever had any experiences here in which Turks commented on your ‘Turkishness’ or your ‘foreignness’?
8. Having said all that (*their response to Q6*), I’d like to show you how you scored on the cultural identity part of the survey. You had a \_\_\_\_ average, in which 6 would have meant ‘fully Turkish’ and 1 would have meant ‘fully Canadian/etc’. Does this score strike you as an accurate assessment of your connection to Turkish culture?
9. [if yes] – encourage them to elaborate on it; if it’s high, you could ask them what things do they think characterize their ‘Turkishness’, if it’s low, what things do they think characterize their ‘Canadianness’etc., [if no] – “Is there anything particular about the questionnaire itself that you think might have led to this kind of score when you would have expected a more Turkish/more Canadian score?”
10. A final question, this study was trying to explore the relationship between accent in a foreign language, and the speaker’s connection with that particular foreign culture. I’m curious what you think, based on your own experiences learning Turkish and perhaps other languages, do you think that the degree to which you identify yourself with the culture of the language you’re learning, helps you to learn that language better and, in particular, helps you to have a more native-like accent when speaking that language?

Thank you again for all your help with this study...

If you are interested, do send me an email and I'll be happy to send you a synopsis of the full results when it is complete.

## APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This study is being conducted by Ahu Burcu Aydemir, who is currently enrolled at Bilkent University in the MATEFL program. The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between cultural identity and accent. The participation in the study is completely voluntary and the answers will be used only for research purposes. The interview will be recorded. The recordings and recording-transcripts (or copy of notes taken) will be kept anonymous, without any reference to your identity, and your identity will be concealed in any reports written from the interviews. If you would like further information about the study, please, contact the researcher at [ahu.aydemir@bilkent.edu.tr](mailto:ahu.aydemir@bilkent.edu.tr). Thank you for your participation in the study.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to be interviewed for the project entitled  
'The Relationship Between Identity and Accent' which is being produced by Ahu Burcu Aydemir of Bilkent University.

I certify that I have been told of the confidentiality of information collected for this project and the anonymity of my participation; that I have been given satisfactory answers to my inquiries concerning project procedures and other matters; and that I have been advised that I am free to withdraw my consent and to discontinue participation in the project or activity at any time without prejudice.

I agree to participate in one or more electronically recorded interviews for this project. I understand that such interviews and related materials will be kept completely anonymous, and that the results of this study may be published in an MA Thesis.

I agree that any information obtained from this research may be used in any way thought best for this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Interviewee

Date \_\_\_\_\_