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Exploring the bi-directional effects of language learning experience and learners' identity (re)construction in glocal higher education context

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ABSTRACT

Though the concept of identity has been examined in foreign and second language learning contexts where the target language was mostly English, there is scarcity of research on the examination of identity in glocal language learning contexts where local and global characteristics co-exist. Therefore, this longitudinal case study investigates the bi-directional effects of learning experience in glocal context and learners' identity (re)construction. The participants were 11 foreign learners of Turkish receiving a-year-long preparatory language education in Turkey. The participation of these students was thought to form a glocal atmosphere. The data were collected through self-reports, observation notes and semi-structured interviews. The content analysis of the data revealed that the language learning process affected the identity development of the participants on educational, cultural and social basis and that the identities of the participants affected the progress of language learning with instances of raising awareness towards identity/through instances raising awareness towards identity. In the light of relevant literature, the findings are discussed.

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Introduction

As an integral component of human life in terms of personal, social, cultural and linguistic dimensions, identity has been a concept capturing the imagination in different areas of research ranging from psychology and sociology (Haverkamp et al. 2011) to language studies (Gao 2011; Besser and Chik 2014). Referring to the relationship between identity and interaction with the world within temporal and spatial paradigms, Norton (2000) defined identity as:

> how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future … understood with reference to larger, and more frequent inequitable, social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day interactions. (5)

Norton's assumption indicates that identity is a concept related to the way people perceive their existence in relation to their environment through interaction with others. This relationship with the others in different environments is established with the help of language. Therefore, it can be stated that language as the common tool for human interaction is one of the agents affecting the process of identity construction. Considering the role of language in shaping identity, Norton (1995) commented that with the help of language 'a person negotiates a sense of self within and across different sites at different points in time' (3). Holding a similar perspective, Larsen-Freeman and

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Cameron (2007) and Edwards (2009) maintained that language holds a critical position in identity construction and added that identity is constantly influenced by language use.

Expanding the discussion on the effects of language in shaping identity, Djité (2006) and Rezaei, Khatib, and Baleghizadeh (2014) called attention to the inseparable and bi-directional relationship between language and identity. The researchers maintained that language use affects an individual's identity and identity, in turn, affects language use. Setting out from this assumption, it may be argued that learners go through a process of reconstructing and redefining their new identities as language learners, which has been an issue of examination in foreign language learning contexts (Pomerantz 2008; Besser and Chik 2014; Sung 2014a, 2014b; López-Deflory and Juan-Garau 2017; Aliakbari and Amiri 2018) and second language learning contexts (Gao 2011; Liu and Tannacito 2013; Kim 2014; Fuentes 2016).

The perusal of the literature presents research on how language learning affects identity construction (Gao 2011), how identity affects language learning (Liu and Tannacito 2013; Vasilopoulos 2015; Aliakbari and Amiri 2018) and how the language learning context affects the identity construction of language learners (Gao 2011; Fuentes 2016). However, despite the growing awareness in research on language and identity in foreign and second language learning contexts, there is still scarcity of research examining the development of language identity in glocal second language learning contexts combining the characteristics of local and global learning environments.

Existing studies point at the need for research on the potential influence of language learning in the process of shaping and (re)constructing multilingual and multicultural identities. Therefore, this qualitative case study aims to investigate how a glocal second language learning context influences the learners' language identity (re)construction and how identity affects the language learning process. Grounded on a glocal perspective, this study is thought to contribute to the literature by picturing an existing case of identity development to foster the effectiveness of future interactions in such learning contexts. In addition, the presentation of this case can form a basis for conducting needs analysis to promote the efficiency of language education in glocal settings for the establishment of stronger language learner identities.

Literature review

Learning is a process in which learners naturally and inevitably participate in new communities where they are expected to reconstruct their identities. A clear explanation of the relationship between learning and identity was provided by Wenger (1998), who commented that 'because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity' (125). Gao (2011) contributed to the discussion stating that in addition to the acquisition of some knowledge and capabilities, learning is also a process in which learners are 'becoming, or avoiding becoming a certain person' (288).

When interactional dynamics are considered, a similar system of reconstructing identity is observed in the language learning process (Norton 2000; Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). While learning a new language, people bring their linguistic, social and cultural identities to the process. Hall (2002) maintained that in a communicative setting people tend to shape their linguistic choices according to the way they perceive their existence and others' existence as well as how others perceive their existence. The researcher's stance lends support to Gee's (1996) notion that identity is displayed with particular language uses in social and cultural interactions and to the existence of a bi-directional relationship between identity and language learning (Block 2007; Gao 2011). In this bi-directional relationship, 'the language we use reveals our identity and our language in turn forms our identity' (Rezaei, Khatib, and Baleghizadeh 2014, 527). Upon the mutual effects of language and identity, Gao (2011) expressed that adapting identities to the learning context helps language learners gain access to possible interactive situations with the target speakers while their identities are also shaped by their interactions within the target context.

Defining language classroom as a 'social micro-cosmos' (7), López-Deflory and Juan-Garau (2017) explained that language learning is a process highly subjected to contextual factors and language classroom is one of these social micro-cosmic environments where learner identity is shaped through contextual dynamics. Evaluated within the post-structural paradigm, the delicate nature of identity undergoing processes of (re)construction reveals that it is not a stable and fixed but a constantly changing and fluctuating concept (Norton 2009; Norton and Toohey 2011; Sung 2014a). Upon the changing state of identity, Norton (2009) noted that our participation in different environments requires the renegotiation of our identities in relation to the circumstances.

Researchers also called attention to the relationship between language identity and such variables as perceptions, gender and educational levels. Besser and Chik (2014) conducted a photo elicitation project with 24 Hong Kong primary school children learning English as a foreign language. Based on the narrative identities of the participants, the researchers concluded that educational policy and cultural values of the students affected their second language identity. Sung (2014a, 2014b) also conducted two studies in the Hong Kong context to examine the perceptions of four university students as regards their desired identities of global citizens. The results of the interviews revealed that the participants held different understandings of their global identities as users of English. Studying the language identities of 1851 Iranian learners of English, Rezaei, Khatib, and Baleghizadeh (2014) reported, as a result of the questionnaire, that there was no statistically significant difference in language identity in terms of gender; however, age and proficiency level variables pointed at significant differences in the participants' language identity.

In Korean EFL context, Vasilopoulos (2015) examined how using English in daily interaction affected the self and social identity of 10 adult learners. The analysis of the open-ended questions and interviews indicated that while the participants experienced challenges in using English in the local setting, they tended to adjust their language use in order to be a part of or to distinguish themselves from the local context. López-Deflory and Juan-Garau (2017) divided 73 secondary education EFL students into two groups (43 receiving language education through Content and Language Integrated Learning – CLIL – and 30 with formal EFL instruction). The results of the questionnaire showed that the application of CLIL as an integrative approach promoted the construction of multilingualism. Working with 45 male adult EFL learners in Iran, Tamimi Sa'd (2017) conducted focus group interviews to study the relationship between learning English and identity reconstruction. The researcher reported that most of the participants regarded language learning as a process contributing to their identities and they tended to adopt the target cultural norms. Aliakbari and Amiri (2018) also carried out research in Iranian EFL context. The structural equation model analysis of the questionnaire completed by 930 secondary education EFL learners showed that the participants' ideal and private selves affected their language achievement. In addition, external selves were reported to negatively impact private selves and language achievement.

Literature also holds research conducted in English as a second language cases. Conducting an ethnographic case study, Gao (2011) examined the way the national identities of six ESL learners were displayed in the learning context. Based on the observations, participant diaries, phone and e-mail conversations and interviews with the teachers, the researcher concluded that the language learning experience in the second language learning context increased the participants' awareness of their national identity and encouraged them to reexamine the values related with their national identities. Liu and Tannacito (2013) examined the effects of racial and ideological factors on the writings of two Taiwanese ESL learners. The results obtained from observations, interviews and participant writings showed that because of some race and ethnicity-related issues, the participants held resistance to the practices in the writing class. Examining the pragmatic choices of 30 Korean ESL students, Kim (2014) collected data through questionnaire, discourse-completion test, interview and role-play. The analysis of the data revealed that the participants shaped their pragmatic choices thinking that their choices would add positive results to their social identity. The participants' age and length of stay in the ESL environment affected their pragmatic choices. Adopting multiple case study and ethnographic design, Fuentes (2016) studied how the institutional policies and

practices affected three students' identities and sense of place. The analysis of the narrative inquiries indicated that the language policy and practices in the higher education institution negatively influenced the way the participants shaped their identities, leading to alienation and assimilation.

Four main conclusions can be drawn in the light of the existing research. The first conclusion is that the relationship between identity and language learning has been a growing topic of investigation in foreign and second language learning contexts. However, there is scarcity of research examining the reconstruction of identity in second language learning contexts holding glocal characteristics. The second conclusion is that almost all the research on language and identity has examined cases in which English, as the lingua franca of the modern world, was the target language. Therefore, there is a need for further research examining identity development in the process of learning a different language. The third conclusion is related to the participant profile in the existing research. The studies conducted in foreign and second language learning contexts searched for the experiences of the participants who belonged to the same nationality. This conclusion points at the need for research examining the cases involving participants from different national backgrounds. The final conclusion has to do with the direction of investigation. Existing research has examined either the effect of the language learning process on the learners' identity or the effect of learners' identity on language learning. This conclusion draws attention to the gap in research examining the bi-directional effects of language learning and identity (re)construction. In the light of these conclusions, this longitudinal study is grounded on two objectives aiming to clarify:

- the effects of learners' national identities on their language learning,
- the effects of the learning experience on their identity (re)construction in the glocal second language learning setting.

This study aims to present research examining the bi-directional effects of identity (re)construction and language learning context combining the characteristics of global and local contexts in the same learning setting. Therefore, with an aim to better situate the role of the environmental characteristics in the process of identity (re)construction, the below section introduces the characteristics of glocal second language setting pointing at its relationship with language learner identity.

Glocal second language setting

The world citizens are leading their lives in a global village in which they have close relationships in different areas ranging from trade and economy to social and cultural events (Juergensmeyer 2013). Within such a context of intimate connections between people from different national backgrounds, it is essential that they participate in these interactive situations without losing their original cultural, social and national identities. At this point, the unbreakable and interdependent unity between the local and global aspects forming glocal characteristics becomes critical. The concept, *glocal*, encompasses the unity of the local within the global framework. Pieterse (2013) maintained that within this framework, the global is a combination of the locals. Thus, for the maintenance of the global atmosphere, the participation of locals is essential in the formation of a glocal community.

As learning spaces composed of both local and international students, higher education campuses can be regarded as places where a glocal culture is experienced. The internalisation of tertiary level education around the world plays a fundamental role in this glocalisation movement. As regards the move towards glocalisation, global localisation, in university campuses, Ross and Lou (2005), Willems and Bossu (2012) and Patel (2017) commented that formal education is becoming progressively glocalised. In cosmopolitan campuses, a glocal culture is established with the participation of students with different cultural and social backgrounds (Takkaç Tulgar 2018a). While contributing to the globalisation of university campuses bringing their local peculiarities, international students also interact with local cultures. These interactive situations result in glocalised learning atmospheres in which students can maintain their national identities while participating in global interactions.

Within the scope of higher education, language education also takes its share in this glocal movement. Joseph and Ramani (2012) remarked that language and language education should be regarded among the main supporters of glocal atmospheres. In glocal language learning settings, students engage themselves in a process of language learning in which they can be in constant interaction with local and global perspectives. Such glocal atmospheres are reported to contribute to the success of language learning by increasing learners' motivation (Takkaç Tulgar 2018b) and stimulating their curiosity (Takkaç Tulgar 2018c).

Evaluated from the identity perspective, glocal learning contexts can be said to promote both national citizenship and global understanding (Krossa 2009; Adriaens and Biltereyst 2012; Roudometof 2014). Since language serves as the common medium of interaction among students holding different cultural and national backgrounds, language education becomes a crucial process in the (re)construction of identity. Students' local identities are intertwined with global identities through their interactions in the glocal language learning settings.

As regards the unity of global and local in identity (re)construction, Soldatova and Geer (2013) referred to Socrates' famous expression underlining a global perspective for identity shaping and added a local perspective to this saying and emphasising the glocal standpoint:

> Socrates used to say: 'I am a citizen, not of Athens nor Greece, but of the world!'. Perhaps today his motto would sound more on like 'I am a citizen, of Athens, of Greece and of the world!' (470).

What made Socrates regard himself as a citizen of the world was probably his interactions with people from other nations. What made Soldatova and Geer (2013) consider themselves both as the citizens of their country and the world was the growing understanding of the co-existence of the local and global in the same atmosphere. In the process of language learning through a dynamic interaction, learners who follow their language studies in glocal second language learning settings can be said to add, with the help of their cultural interactions in the glocal context (Takkaç Tulgar 2018a), a global dimension to their local identities. The transformation of individual identities holding local and global characteristics is expected to affect language learning and to be affected by language learning simultaneously.

Within this perspective, glocal language learning settings hold a significant place in shaping the identities of language learners as these environments present a combination of global and local outlooks, which is expected to have an influence on the identity (re)construction process. These settings can also be influenced by the language learners' identities as each learner is to bring peculiar aspects belonging to his/her culture and nationality to such cosmopolitan contexts, which forms a basis for the (re)formulation and enrichment of the learning setting.

Methodology

Longitudinal case study design was adopted with an aim to understand the bi-directional effects of language learning in the glocal environment and (re)construction of the learners' second language identities. Longitudinal design was preferred for this study as both language learning and identity (re)construction as well as their bi-directional effects would take a long duration. In this sense, the design is thought to help the researcher reach a deep understanding of the real experiences of the participants (Bogdan and Biklen 2007; Yin 2014).

Participants and setting

This study was conducted with 11 participants receiving preparatory Turkish language education at AtaTömer, an institution established to provide preparatory language education in Turkish at a state university in Turkey. The participants were undergraduate and graduate students who were required to successfully complete their preparatory class education in order to be able to go on their studies in various departments of the university. Five of the participants were male and nine were female. They

were from Russia (2), Kazakhstan (2), Iran (3), Mongolia (1) and Azerbaijan (3). Their ages ranged from 18 to 27. The whole group came to Turkey to receive their higher education at the same time (the beginning of fall term of the academic year) and their length of stay was the same (ten months). The participants were given a Turkish proficiency test (which is given by the Institution at the beginning of each academic year to determine the language levels of international students and to assign learning programmes for them) and were placed in A2 level class. This indicated that the participants had started to learn basic Turkish in their own countries and completed A1 level and were expected to improve their target language to C1 level.

The participants were placed in the same class as a result of their proficiency exam scores. Their engagement in language courses and their enthusiasm to interact with fellow students and teaching staff in the learning setting attracted the attention of their instructors. Their curricular and extracurricular activeness formed the ground for participant selection through purposeful sampling.

The environment in which these participants were receiving their language education was of a glocal nature in which there was a combination of the local culture and the global culture from different parts of the world. This context provided the participants with the chance to observe and interact with the target culture and other national cultures represented by the students in the learning setting. In this glocal setting, the participants learned Turkish and participated in cultural and social exchanges broadening their global perspectives. They also contributed to the expansion of the global culture by presenting the peculiarities of their cultures and being exposed to the local target culture. The learning space with the above-mentioned characteristics is supposed to create a bi-directional effect on mutual social and cultural interactions among the participants. As the participants in this study learned the target language in the learning setting including all the cultural components, the process was expected to affect their personal identities. Again, due to the fact that the participants brought their national cultural identities to the learning setting, they were presumed to bring bits and pieces of their national cultural elements to the learning space. The hypothetical notion proposed regarding the bi-directional effects of language learning on identity and identity on language learning in the learning setting briefly described above was the initiative on which this study was based.

Data collection tools and procedure

The data were collected through self-reports kept by the participants, semi-structured interviews with the participants and observation notes kept by the researcher. All data sets were collected in Turkish as it was the common language for all the participants in the learning setting and then translated into English. These instruments were adopted for data triangulation with an aim to examine the issue from different sources and angles.

Before the data collection process, ethical permission was obtained from the institution and consent was taken from the participants for their voluntary participation. The participants were invited to an acquaintance meeting with the researcher during which they were informed of the purposes of the study and given an outline of such terms as *local*, *global* and *glocal*.

As regards the first instrument, the self-reports, I, in the light of the literature and my informal conversations with the participants, formed a guide for the participants. The guide involved the items, according to which the participants could shape their notes. These items covered their experiences in the learning environment, how they were affected by the environment in adopting their new identities and how their national identities affected their language learning experiences. There was no word-limitation in the guide proposed for the reports. This guide was shown to two instructors in the Institution to get their evaluations on the appropriateness and clarity of the items.

The self-reports (reflection reports) of this longitudinal study were collected in the second term of the academic year so that the participants had the opportunity to adapt to the glocal learning setting and improved their target language to B2 level (as they all successfully completed A2 and B1 proficiency levels). At this stage, their knowledge and skills in Turkish enabled them to express their thoughts and views in written language with almost no orthographic and semantic difficulties and

to establish interaction with their classmates, instructors, students from other classes and departments. Self-reports were collected in three periods with five-week intervals starting from the second week of the spring term which lasted 16 weeks: one at the beginning, one in the middle and one at the end. The participants were asked to keep the reflective reports in Turkish with no word-limit (none of the self-reports exceeded 100 words though). Even the first self-reports of the participants were intelligible enough; however, the improvement in language was visible in the second and third self-reports.

The second tool included four observation notes in one-month intervals I kept during the informal meetings or conversations and some social events lasting from fifteen minutes to one hour. Observation notes were intended to record how the participants reflected their cultural and national identities on their language use on the one hand and how they were exposed to the effects generated by the language learning process in the target setting on the other. These notes included the changes and progress the participants showed during the language learning process. How they reflected their existing identities in the learning context, how they affected and were affected by other students and how language learning exerted influence on their learner identities were the highlights in the observation notes.

The third tool was the semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants at the end of the spring term so that it could include an overall evaluation of the experience in the glocal setting. By this way, the questions for the semi-structured interview were prepared in the light of the participants' self-report notes and my observation notes. The time allocated for interviews with each participant was 15–20 min. The interviews were conducted at the end of the preparatory education after data were obtained through self-reports and observations. The reason for this was that interviews would serve as evaluation sessions of the whole preparatory class experience as regards the content and purpose of this particular study. The end of the academic year in the target setting would also mean a year-long experience in the glocal language learning environment for the participants during which they had cultural, social and linguistic interactions for ten months. The interviews were conducted in Turkish in order to observe how the participants used the target language in communication.

Following the data collection process, I translated the relevant parts of the data into English and a native speaker did the proofreading. Before the analysis process, the participants were also shown the transcripts of their notes and interview records. These processes were followed to increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

Data analysis

Before the main analysis process, the data collected through different tools were shared with the participants. In addition, the participants were also shown initial analysis example in order to obtain their views on the analysis process. This initial step was followed to increase trustworthiness through member checking.

The data were analysed through conventional content analysis as the analysis was not based on preconceived categories but on the categories emerging within the flow of the data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). I adopted a three-step analysis. In the first step, the data obtained from the three sources were analysed separately. In the analysis of the self-reports, each participant's reflection was examined one by one to reveal the recurring and common codes in the single data set. Then, the observation notes and interviews were examined in the same manner to ensure unity in the analysis process. In the second step, the answers of the participants were compared to each other in the same data set. For example, the self-report notes of all the participants were compared to each other to find out similar and different aspects. In the final step, a cross-check process was followed to compare the answers in three data sets. These three steps involving in-group check and cross-group check were followed in order to establish unity in the analysis process and to ensure trustworthiness in the data analysis.

Results

The results obtained from the participant self-reports, observation notes and interviews can be presented under two main sections: The effects of the language learning experience in the glocal second language learning setting on the language learner identities and The effects of learners' identities on language learning in the glocal second language learning setting.

The effects of the language learning experience in the glocal second language learning setting on the language learner identities

It was found in this study focusing on the relationship between language and identity that the language learning experience in the glocal second language learning setting affected the identity (re)construction of the participants in three dimensions: The effects on educational identity, the effects on cultural identity and the effects on social identity. The first impact, educational identity, in other words, language identity, originated from the characteristic features of the learning context. The participants, who were from different countries, were receiving their preparatory language education in the target setting with comprehensive input. Their minds were occupied with unending new concepts in the target language. The way they thought and talked was inevitably affected by the input they were exposed to, which exerted its influence on the language identities of learners in the ten-month learning process.

The participants stated that the glocal characteristics of the learning environment enabled them to develop their language knowledge and abilities effectively. This case was reported to increase their motivation and willingness to put effort for further development. The participants were all pleased to learn Turkish in its natural setting surrounded by native speakers of the language. A participant referred to the advantage of this situation:

> I believe we are really lucky to learn Turkish in Turkey. As there are Turkish speaking people all around us, we hear and practice the language effectively. This couldn't be possible if I had learned Turkish in my country. (P1-self-report 2)

Pointing at the advantage of the natural environment, another participant also explained that they were in constant interaction with the language and its culture in authentic settings. She stated that the interactions with the language and culture offered them a chance to learn the language easily and more effectively. She underlined that this opportunity increased her confidence as a language learner:

> As a foreign learner of Turkish, I can say that I have high confidence in myself. Though there are some challenges in the process, I believe that the learning environment makes it easier for me to learn Turkish. Since the language is all around, I can learn it without much difficulty and this really increases my confidence. (P7-interview)

The learning environment was also reported to increase the participants' motivation in learning Turkish. Having multiple chances of being exposed to the language and practicing it in natural settings, the participants were motivated in developing their language knowledge and abilities, as expressed by a participant:

> The learning environment really motivates me. I can reach the language easily and I can practice it easily. I think these are the two essential processes in language learning. So, I naturally become motivated in learning Turkish. (P11-interview)

The participants also appreciated the contributions of the interactional cases with native speakers and fellow students to their language development. They explained that they were encouraged to develop their target language skills in order to better communicate with other members in the glocal community.

> I have many friends coming from all over the world besides the native friends. And Turkish is almost the only tool through which we can communicate with each other. So, I know that if I want to interact with people

around me, I need to develop my Turkish. These interactional chances really increase my motivation as a language learner. (P8-self-report 3)

The observation notes also pointed at the instances in which the participants showed willingness to use the target language and their motivation in searching for ways to develop language. I observed that when, for example, one of the participants was not able to say something in the target language, s/he immediately asked a friend or instructor for help. Or, another participant was noting down the unknown items in his instructor's speech in his/her mobile phone. These instances were signs that the participants felt the motivation to improve their language knowledge, showing the increasing levels of enthusiasm and courage in their educational identities.

The results indicate that the learning environment stimulated motivation and self-confidence of the participants as second language learners. The availability of language exposure and chances for practice made it easier for the participants to learn Turkish, helped them become motivated and enthusiastic language learners and increased their motivation and confidence. In addition, the participants came to realise that they needed to develop their knowledge and skills in the target language as a common means of interaction in the glocal learning community, which shows that the participants' educational identities were positively affected by the interactional patterns in the glocal context.

The second aspect of the effects of the language learning experience in the glocal environment was observed in the participants' cultural identities. Since the learning context was of glocal nature reflecting the sensitive approach of individuals to others with different cultures, the participants could observe local and global examples of cultural aspects in the same setting and the learning context served as an atmosphere in which the participants were engaged in cultural exchanges. They were able to observe an awful lot of cultural elements exhibited by citizens of different nations in the world. They also had the chance to introduce unique aspects of their culture to other individuals in the learning setting. The intensive cultural interaction in the setting unavoidably created new perspectives in the participants' minds with reference to the notion that cultural differences among people, in fact, meant cultural richness in a global scale. A participant appreciating the cultural dimension of the learning environment called attention to the advantage of learning a second language in its cultural context:

Besides learning the language, we are also learning its culture. Because language and culture are inseparable, it is really great to learn these together without spending much effort. I believe this is a great chance for us. (P6-self-report 3)

The chances for observing different cultures were also considered advantageous in the glocal setting. Since there were many students coming from different countries and representing diverse cultures, the participants interacted with each other and learned many things about other cultures. This case was regarded as a chance for the development of their cultural identity as expressed by a participant:

Here, there are many friends coming from different countries. I can interact with them and learn about their cultures. I don't have to visit other countries to learn something about their cultures. My friends are the citizens of these countries and they bring and introduce their cultures to us. So, I can expand my cultural knowledge and awareness. (P4-interview)

Sharing a similar perspective, another participant maintained that being exposed to the peculiarities of different cultures, he developed the sense of understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. He noted that learning a different language in a glocal setting was a real thing that helped him strengthen his cultural identity:

While we are learning a new language and its culture here, we are also acquainted with many different cultures. If I learned Turkish in my country, I couldn't have such a chance to know about other cultures. I believe I am lucky because I do not only learn a language but develop my cultural understanding as well. This experience really taught me a lot and contributed to my understanding and respect towards other cultures. (P2-interview)

The glocal environment also enabled the participants to introduce their own cultures to the local students and international students. Enjoying the chance to present her own culture in a different place, a participant stated that she was content to introduce her own culture to her instructors, local students around and other international students. She added that this opportunity helped her strengthen her cultural identity since she felt the responsibility of being a cultural representative of her country:

> Here, I am the representative of my country and my culture. So, I think I should shoulder the responsibility to do this appropriately. Though it is sometimes challenging, it has honestly strengthened my cultural identity because in order to present my culture, I have developed myself in that aspect. (P3-self-report 2)

The observation notes were also in line with the participant comments provided in self-reports and interviews. I observed that in the initial stages of language learning, most of the participants were shy to contribute to cultural exchanges and had difficulty in understanding some cultural aspects presented by their instructors and friends. However, as they gradually developed their language knowledge and abilities, they became more enthusiastic to be active members in cultural exchanges. They seemed to enjoy learning about diverse cultures while representing their own peculiarities.

The results regarding cultural development revealed that the glocal learning environment helped the participants develop their cultural identities as well. The opportunities to learn about the target culture (Turkish culture) presented by the locals, the global cultures presented by other students and national cultures presented by the students all contributed to the development of the participants' cultural identities.

The third aspect related to the effects of language learning experience was on the participants' social identities. The glocal characteristic of the learning context provided the participants with a social environment in which they participated in formal and informal social interactions. The participants were engaged in a formal social context in the institution for educational purposes and in informal social contexts outside of the institution for personal, social and cultural purposes. In either case, they were experiencing a social interaction, helping the development of their social identities. The glocal learning environment being a framework in which there were students from different nations, the social dimension of mutual interaction between learners was shaped in a broader perspective comprising of countless samples of behaviours and approaches. This social dimension was naturally internalised by the participants, who felt the need to establish social ties with fellow students and other people in the learning setting. Holding this perspective, a participant offered the below remark:

> Before I came here, I was a bit introverted and was not eager to attend social events. However, this learning environment changed me. Having instructors from the target culture and friends from different countries really helped me to socialize. The more I learned about them, the more I wanted to show them my culture. This glocal environment really helped me develop myself as a social person. (P10-self-report 3)

The formal classroom activities were also regarded as factors positively contributing to the social identities of the participants. A participant having this social experience in the learning setting commented:

> Mainly in our speaking classes, our instructors ask us to make presentations about our countries. I believe this really improves our social skills in addition to our language skills. We ask each other questions and make comments about what is similar and what is different in our countries. So, all these events actually help our social development as we learn how to express ourselves in front of others. (P5-self-report 2)

Besides the formal events, the informal events were among the points of appreciation by the participants. They enjoyed participating in informal social events held by their local friends and sometimes by other international students. They explained that these events offered them a relaxing atmosphere in which they felt themselves comfortable. Therefore, they willingly contributed to these events as representatives of different cultures developing their social identities. Such an

experience was shared by one of the participants stressing the role of the informal learning experience in his social development:

> I and my friends organize and participate in different events outside the institution. These events are mostly based on exchanges of cultural and social aspects belonging to our nations. Taking part in these events, I realized the improvement in my social skills. I am more open and outward now than I came here. I think I both learn the language and develop myself as a social person. (P9-interview)

The observation notes also supported the social development of the participants. One striking example in these notes reveals the positive effects of the language learning experience in the social identities of the participants contributing to their sense of humour. I encountered this example when one of the participants was interacting with a local person in an informal context. When the person asked the participant where he was from, the participant, who was from the Republic of Chad, answered that he was from 'Çat' (a town in the city where the students were receiving their preparatory language education) and then they both started to laugh. The participant realised the similarity between the pronunciations of his country's name and that of the town and used this content in his joke, which clearly indicates that the participant connected a local and a global aspect to shape his sense of humour.

Because sense of humour is peculiar to people, villages, towns, cities and countries, the glocal environment is an extraordinary milieu for people sharing life in such a space to get an idea of what seems humourous to members of other nations in words and actions. The participants in this study could observe and make comparisons between similar humourous expressions and gestures as well as contrasts between dissimilar ones. Thus, they had a chance to broaden their conception of humour witnessing innumerable examples displayed in the social life typical to the glocal setting.

The results revealed that the language learning experience influenced the way the participants developed their educational, cultural and social identities. While they were learning the language, they improved different aspects of their individual identities and reflected these effects on their behaviours, interactions and language use. However, it was not only the learning experiences that affected the participants' identities. The local and global identities of the participants also influenced their language learning experience.

The effects of learners' identities on language learning in the glocal second language learning setting

Regarding the effects of learner identity on the language learning process, one of the attention-grabbing points in the participant remarks was related to the increasing awareness towards national identity. As they were interacting with local and global cultures, the participants reported that they became more aware of the necessity to know more about their cultures. Experiencing this state, a participant commented that she realised the need to know things about her own country in order to represent it better.

> With the help of our interactions here with different cultures, I realized that I need to know more about my own culture. As I am supposed to represent my country, I should know the particulars of my nation and culture. (P9-interview)

The same participant also added that the need to know more about her culture encouraged her to learn the target language better so that she could represent it more effectively:

> As I said, I am the representative of my own culture here. I think I need to learn Turkish better in order to express myself and introduce my country. So, I try my best to develop my language knowledge and capabilities. (P9-interview)

Another participant also held a similar perspective in his effort to improve his Turkish. He noted that the desire to display and maintain his national identity encouraged him to develop his language knowledge. He believed that he could present the particular national characteristics to his peers:

> We come from different countries and we all bring our national identities to the learning environment. I believe that I should reflect my country as well as possible. So, as Turkish is the common means of communication for us, I need to develop my Turkish. (P4-self-report 1)

Experiencing concern about maintaining his national identity, another participant explained that the nested-existence of many different cultures in the new community was the main source of his concern. So, he desired to develop his target language knowledge in order to make his national existence clear in the novel community:

> When I first came here, I was concerned with the possibility to be negatively affected by the new environment hosting many different cultures. Therefore, realizing that Turkish is almost the only bridge between me and all those students and locals around, I felt the need to develop my Turkish. I thought that if I had a good command of Turkish, I could better represent myself and my country in this context. (P7-self-report)

Maintaining their national identities was a priority for the participants while participating in the global community. But at the same time, they showed the desire to contribute to the richness of a global culture. They were willing to take their share in enriching the global culture bringing their local identities, as reflected in the following comment:

> Here, there are students from many different cultures and I am really happy to be a part of this atmosphere and contribute to its richness introducing my local characteristics. I am aware of the necessity to develop my knowledge and skills in Turkish in order to be an active member in this community. (P8-interview)

Combining these two perspectives, another participant stated that he felt the responsibility to improve his Turkish as a representative of his nation's local identity and as a world citizen reflecting his global identity:

> Of course, we are from different nations so we hold different national characteristics which should be protected and reflected when we are away from our countries. However, we are world citizens at the same time, so we need to contribute to the richness of a global culture. In order to accomplish both, we need to learn Turkish as the common language for us in this context. (P2-self-report 3)

The results related to the effects of national identities on the language learning process revealed that it was essential for the participants to maintain their national identities in the new learning environment. The participants felt the responsibility to both to maintain and reflect their national peculiarities. The common notion in these experiences was that the participants expressed the need to develop their knowledge and skills in the target language in order to maintain their national and local identities while contributing to the richness of a global culture.

Discussion

The results of this longitudinal case study pointed at the bi-directional effects of the language learning experience in the glocal setting and learners' identity development. In terms of their language learning experience, the participants reported that this experience in the glocal setting positively contributed to their educational, cultural and social identities. As regards the effects of identity on language learning process, raising national awareness and national identity took place among the highlights in the data.

Several points of discussion and conclusion can be drawn in the light of these results. The first aspect is related to the effects of language learning experience in the glocal setting on the development of educational identity. The participants expressed that they become motivated and willing to learn Turkish in the language learning setting. It can be argued that the glocal nature of the learning context combining local and global characteristics presented the participants with different chances to interact not only with local people but also with students from other cultures. Since Turkish was the common medium of interaction for these participants, they naturally put willing effort to improve their Turkish. This result pointing at the effect of glocal context in increasing learners' language learning motivation was also reported by Takkaç Tulgar (2018b) who referred to the

richness of the chances for interaction and practice in glocal communities as factors promoting language development.

The second area of discussion is related with the effects of language learning on the participants' cultural identity development. In the glocal environment, the participants were in constant formal and informal interactions with local people and their friends coming from different countries. They were, naturally, exposed to different cultural values represented by the people around them. Such an environment helped the participants develop their cultural identities through exposures. It can be concluded from the participant comments that the more they interacted with others, the more they expanded their cultural knowledge. This expansion of cultural knowledge was observed in the development of cultural identity not only in the global sense but also in the local sense. As Pavlenko (2002) suggested, the participants lived cross-cultural transformations in the glocal context promoting their cultural identities.

The third point of discussion has to do with the effects of language learning on the participants' social identity development. Each interactive case on a formal or informal basis offered the participants a chance to engage themselves in contexts of social exchange. In these contexts, the participants were exposed to the target language and practiced it participating in social interactions. These interactions can be considered as sources stimulating the development of the participants' social identities. As Gao (2011) maintained, the participants went through 'intercultural secondary socialization' (288). Attending to the social cosmos (López-Deflory and Juan-Garau 2017) in the glocal atmosphere, the participants can be said to feel the joy in enacting their social identities.

The effects of language learning in the glocal setting on the participants' educational, cultural and social identity development can also be evaluated within the concept of agency. Norton (2000) and Block (2007) maintained that agency may hold a central role in the process of constructing new identities in the language learning process. Agency can be regarded as language learners' voluntary attempts to put effort in learning and it is subject to the influence of the social and cultural environment (van Lier 2008). In this sense, Jones and Norris (2005) define agency as a dynamic taking place 'between individuals and their social world' (170). From this perspective, the educational, social and cultural identity developments of the participants in this research can be defined as the reflections of their agency in language learning. The way they voluntarily engaged themselves in developing their target language knowledge and skills can be evaluated as the result of their agency as they were influenced by the social and cultural atmosphere in the glocal learning context.

The discussion also involves aspects related with the effects of the participants' national identities on their language learning. The participants expressed the need to improve their target language proficiency in order to present the social and cultural richness of their countries. Gao (2011) is of the opinion that this need is natural 'when people learn a second language, they do so as individuals with their multiple and dynamic identities and social histories' (288). The participants also supported the perspective, proposed by Soldatova and Geer (2013), that local identities can be maintained within the global framework. Previous research also provided examples of the co-existence of the local identity with the global basis (Erling 2007; Kang 2012; Sung 2014a). Upon this glocal co-existence, Hahn (2001) expressed that language learning does not impose the adoption of a particular identity and commented that 'language learning does not have to imply a choice between one's own native identity and a foreign identity' (262). Based on their experiences, the participants in this study reported that they desired to maintain and reflect their national identities in their participation in the global environment. Their efforts in searching for ways to develop their Turkish, therefore, can be linked to their wish to represent their national, cultural and social values effectively.

Another highlight in the results was the increasing national awareness the participants experienced in the glocal environment. Gao (2011) reported such a case of increasing cultural awareness experienced by Chinese learners of English in Britain and noted that the language learning experience helped the participants encounter themselves and their national identities. Similarly, the participants in this study felt the inner necessity to stick to their original culture while developing

their glocal social and cultural identities. They stressed the sense of national belonging as they were away from their counties during the language learning process. To represent their countries in an effective way constituted a source for the participants' increasing awareness of their national identities and their language development.

Conclusion

This longitudinal study, examining the bi-directional effects of language learning in the glocal setting and learners' identity, revealed that the identity and language variables affected each other reciprocally. The overall evaluation of the study indicates that, valued from the perspective proposed by Socrates, the development of a glocal identity as a result of the language learning experience can be considered as a sign pointing at the concept of world citizenship. The participants in this study held the desire to develop global identities as world citizens while maintaining local identities as citizens of particular countries. In this sense, it can be stated that they developed not conflicting but complementary identities as language learners who aimed to develop their target language with the hope to create an effective and interactive social and cultural cosmos within the glocal atmosphere.

Two main implications can be reached based on the results of this study. The first implication is related with the glocalisation movement. University campuses are moving towards a more cosmopolitan nature day by day throughout the world. Therefore, it is essential that learners are provided peaceful educational and social atmospheres where they can contribute to the social and cultural richness while still preserving their original national identities. Since language is the common means of interaction among international students, language education should also be a field supporting healthy identity (re)construction for students. The second implication has to do with the necessity for needs analysis. Since an increasing number of international students are enrolled in universities worldwide, it is essential that their educational, social and cultural needs should be analysed to enhance the effectiveness of international communication along with higher education.

The results of this study also point at some pedagogical implications for language instructors and learners. As the directing agents in the learning process, language instructors are expected to create friendly environments where the foremost aim is to establish and maintain respect towards cultural, social and linguistic peculiarities. They should be role models receiving differences among citizens of the world as richness. They are also supposed to contribute to the process of language education by motivating their students to be glocal citizens in language learning contexts. In addition, institutions offering glocal language learning environments should be in touch with each other to share perspectives for better cultural and social enrichment as well as quality language education.

This study is not out of limitations. The foremost limitation is the number of participants. Future research can be conducted with more participants to reach more comprehensive results. The second limitation is about the generalisability of the results due to the sampling size. Therefore, future research can also integrate quantitative research design and reach generalisability.

As regards the suggestions for future research, since identity (re)construction is a process which can be affected by different conditions, the possible variables having influence on the identity (re)construction in the language process can also be examined. In addition, the bi-directional relationship between language learning context and identity (re)construction can also be investigated in foreign language learning contexts where learners can be observed to develop new learner identities because of the lack of language exposure and practice.

Disclosure statement

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