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Research Paper

The Role of Identity Aspects in English Speaking Proficiency of EFL Iraqi Learners

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of identity factors on the English-speaking competency of EFL learners in Iraq. Given the growing importance of oral communication in language learning, knowing how identity effects language acquisition is critical. The study examines the relationship between personal, relational, societal, and collective identities and speaking competency in 72 intermediate EFL learners. Using the Preliminary English Test (PET) and the components of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV), the study finds significant connections between identity components and speaking ability, with a focus on the strong correlation between social identity and speaking skills. The findings emphasize the importance of incorporating identity into language educators' teaching methods in order to improve learners' communicative competence.

Keywords: Collective identity, Identity factors, Speaking proficiency

Introduction

The advent of the communicative language teaching marked a theory in which language was considered as a means of communication in which the major purpose of language teaching was to expand learners' communicative competence (Canale, 2014). Communicative language teaching led to a shift in the process of what to teach; instead of emphasizing the grammar or vocabulary in language learning, it stressed on training learners to use language forms appropriately in different contexts and for different purposes. It also made substantial changes in how to teach a language. It emphasized the idea that abundant exposure to language in use and ample opportunities to use it are vitally important for students' development and skill (Gu, 2015).

In recent years, the majority of people consider oral communication much more important than the ability to read or write. The reason for prioritizing speaking over the other skills is that the people of the contemporary society consider language learning equal with the ability to communicate orally which constitutes the bases for learning other skills such as reading and writing (Nazara, 2011). According to Rebecca (2006) speaking should be taught before any other



skills since “speaking is the first mode in which children acquire language, it is part of the daily involvement of most people with language activities, and it is the prime motor of language change” (p. 144).

Speaking is a vital skill in learning any languages; however, in spite of the major role of the speaking skill in mastering a language, it is perhaps the most challenging and difficult language skills to teach, learn and test (Luoma 2004). Alderson and Bachman (2001) also assert that mastering speaking in a foreign language is one of the problematic skills that takes a long time and entails using a number of abilities and different types of reactions on the part of teachers and learners. Learning to speak a foreign language necessity knowing more than its grammar and vocabulary. Learners should acquire the skill through interaction with each other. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs including the participants themselves, their collective experiences, the physical environment and the purpose of speaking; hence, it is difficult for EFL learners to speak appropriate English in the classroom because of the limited language use in their real lives (Islam, Ahmad & Islam, 2022). In Iraq where English language is thought as a foreign language, the opportunities for the students to practice English out of the classroom can be limited. Therefore, learners need experienced teachers that will help them master this skill in the classrooms.

One of the main goals of EFL teachers is using classroom conversation in English. Nevertheless, they may face some challenges on the part of the learners. Learners usually face difficulties in using English in the classroom which is the only opportunity for them to acquire this language. Furthermore, those difficulties are directly related to three main reasons which are psychological, linguistic, and cognitive. Thus, it is crucial to examine the issue of different factors leading to a weak speaking performance (Jenkins, 2007). If English is an international language belonging to the people who speak it and not only to its native speakers, then the big question is to what extent classroom methodologies and techniques have room for EFL learners' dynamic and multidimensional identities (McKay, 2018).

The development of English worldwide has elicited the issues around L2 English speakers' identities. Consequently, there have been more and more studies about identities of L2 English speakers and their English varieties lately. These studies focused on various aspects of identity, such as social identity (e.g. Norton-Peirce, 1995 as cited in Norton, 2014), gender identity (e.g. Park, 2009), learner identity (e.g. Park, 2011) and teacher identity (Park, 2012). Wu (2011) argues that identity is the way we view ourselves and are viewed by others and it is tied to social contexts out of which it arises. Ige (2010) argues that identity is a reflection of the various ways in which people understand themselves in relation to others. According to Norton (2012) identity refers to "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 the possibilities for the future" (P.5).

The emergence of social identity led to a shift in the perspective toward identity. In the past, it was believed that the human behavior was directed and controlled by general and universal laws which caused identity to be considered as monolithic, static and solid entity (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). However, recently, human behavior is considered to be affected by many factors. This belief has led to the emergence of social identity theory. Based on this theory, an identity as a multi-dimensional, dynamic, flexible and temporal entity (Block, 2007). The theory assumes that “part of our self-concept is structured by our belonging to social groups” (Trepte, 2006, p. 255) In this line, Identity is considered to be something unique to each of the people and is assumed more or less consistent over time. Identity implies a relationship with a broader collective or social group (Block, 2006). The meaning of term identity has evolved



from seeing it as a stable core self to dynamic, contradictory, and multiple dimensions of a person (Pavlenko, 2016).

The concept of identity in the fields of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has gained a lot of attention (McKay, 2002; Li, 2009; Park, 2012). According to Garcia (2009), learners' identity in an ESL context is an important ingredient that cannot be ignored when examining how an individual learn. Identity includes both the contradictory attempts to "differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, gangs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, national states, or regional territory" (Bamberg, 2010, P.1). Identity markers provide a way for individuals to define themselves in relation to the world; that is, "social, discursive, and narrative options offered by a particular society in a specific time and place to which individuals and groups of individuals appeal in an attempt to self-name, to self-characterize, and to claim social spaces and social prerogatives" are the determining factors (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 19).

This importance realization of the role of identity in language learning and teaching put a heavy burden on the language teachers' shoulders. Since, it is the language teachers who are responsible to provide their students with adequate chance to express their identities when they learn a new language. In addition, as Ushoida (2011) argues, it is the teachers' pedagogical practices that either encourage or discourage them to develop and express their own identities through the language they are learning. Furthermore, it is suggested by Ushoida (2011) to encourage second language learners to be themselves and to "speak as themselves and to express and engage their identities through the language they are learning" on behalf of language teachers (p. 15).

Hornberger (2010) believes that language learning plays a major role in constructing the learners' identity and in shaping it. Norton (2014) asserts that while speaking a language, the learners do not only exchange information with their interlocutors, "they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the world. In other words, they are engaged in identity construction" (p. 165).

Brown and Yule (1983 as cited in Yule, 2013, p. 13) claim that language has two basic functions; a) transactional function, which refers to conveying information, and b) the interactional function, in which the main goal of speech is the maintenance of social relationships. Social identity forms the way in which individuals consider "who they are"; in other words, "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] membership in a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfeld, 1978, p. 63 as cited in Hattie, 2014).

Another type of identity that can affect the performance of the speakers is the gender. Language and gender research reveals that men are assumed to talk one way and women another (Bergvall, 2014). Studies by Tannen (1990 as cited in Kendall & Tannen, 2015) and Coate (2015) show that female speaking is more collaborative, co-operative, symmetrical and supportive whereas its male speaking is unco-operative, asymmetrical and unsupportive. Such studies may have serious implications for language learning and teaching since they imply that the construct of speaking competence is not gender neutral and must be taken into account.

Due to the importance carried by identity, some scholars such as De Fina, Schiffrin & Bamberg (2011) claim that the theory of second language acquisition needed to engage more in language learners' complex social identity. Similarly, Bucholtz and Hall's principles, as well as Pablé, Haas and Christe (2010) assert that identity itself cannot be directly observed, but rather is indirectly interpreted through linguistic interactions that emerge from the social context. Considering the importance of identity in learning a language as was mentioned by the scholars and any possible problems that may occur through neglecting it, this study aimed to investigate



the role of identity aspects on English speakers' proficiency of EFL learners by posing the following research question:

RQ: Is there a significant relationship between identity aspect components and English-speaking proficiency of Iraqi EFL learners?

Literature Review

One of the features of humans that affect their performance in any task is the concept of identity. In this line, Norton (2012) defines identity as the way "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" (p. 5). In a similar definition of the concept of identity, Danielewics (2001) refers to identity as "our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are" (p. 10).

According to Wu (2011), identity is the way we view ourselves and are viewed by others and it is inextricably tied to the social contexts out of which it arises. Taking the origin of identity where it is constructed, Wu (2011) social practices in which individuals are involved in their daily lives as the birth place of the identity. Because of its bound to society and context, identity can be perceived differently by people from different social contexts as Ha (2008) notes that the West and the East conceive the notion of identity differently. According to him, identity is a hybrid and multiple notions for stern scholars, the eastern ones take identity as a sense of belonging.

In another analysis of what identity is composed of, Bamberg (2010) claims that identity includes both the contradictory attempts to "differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, gangs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation states, or regional territory" (p. 1). Simply put, when one wants to take a certain identity for himself/herself, he/she tries to resemble herself/himself to a particular group or class, and at the same time, differentiates oneself from others who do not belong to that group or class. Furthermore, proposes sameness of a sense of self over time in the face of constant change, uniqueness of the individual and the construction of agency as constituted by self and world as three main features of identity.

According to Woodward (1997), identity theory is concerned with representation and the represented meanings are produced through signifying practices and symbolic systems. She also continues that one of the symbolic systems in the society is language, therefore, language is a social practice and as a symbolic system through which identity is created. Hence, the language used in the classroom can represent and mark the speaker's identity.

Regarding the importance of identity and its relation to language learning different scholars such as Block (2007) and Deckert and Vickers (2011) claim that identity is now one of the most significant concerns by the researchers in the domain of English teaching/learning. In this vein, Kanno and Norton (2003) believe that students' "identities ... must be understood not only in terms of investment in the 'real' world but also in terms of investment in possible worlds" (p. 248). In addition, Ben Rafael and Schmid (2007) assert that people perform their identity through the languages they speak suggesting that "language is one of the most important factors of identity and identification: people speak like the people they want to be like, and use the way they talk to signal aspects of their own personalities" (p. 20). In other words, as Schmid (2002) argues, people select and adopt certain patterns of linguistic behavior in order to resemble the group of people to which they wish to belong.

There are several types of identity such as role identity and personal identity that are considered as individual-level characteristics. According to Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin (2010) asserts that role identity is related to specific social positions, such as mother, teacher, and supervisor while personal identity is attached to individuals such as unique identifiers like nationality and religion (Owens, 2003). The common point between these two types of identity



according to Cote and Levine (2002) is that their identity construction and reconstruction are driven from the personal characteristics of a person i.e. how one perceives himself/herself and how he/she wants to be perceived.

On the other side of the continuum, there stand the group-level identities which mainly focus on how the social bound influences the individual's identity construction. To be to the point, group-level identities deal with how the society perceives an individual and how he/she wants the society to perceive him/her. One example of group-level identity type is social identity which as Hunnum (2007) defines is "our way of thinking about ourselves and others based on social groupings" (p. 8). In another explanation of social identity, Owens (2003) claims that social identity is "derived from the groups, statuses, and categories to which individuals are socially recognized as belonging" (p. 224).

Cote and Levine (2002) elaborate more on social identity stating that in this type of identity, people are influenced by "the pressure to fit into the available identity molds which are created by social and cultural factors" (p. 8). Another example of group-level identity is collective identity which is defined by Taylor and Whittier (1999) as "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences, and solidarity" (p. 170). Based in the definitions of these group level types of identities, it can be claimed that the social groups to which the individual belongs is the birth place where this group-level identity is constructed.

Investigating the relation between language and identity Wierzbicka (2015) argues that "the acquisition of each language is combined with the adoption of specific ways of thinking, styles and norms of behavior, and manners of expressing our feelings" (p. 115). In other words, to acquire a language necessitates the inclusion of an individual into the second culture, rather than simply the assimilation of a linguistic code. Simply put, the use of a language in daily interpersonal interactions is closely related to identity at the personal, as well as cultural and ethnic level (Ng & Deng, 2017).

Methodology

Design of the Study

The study employed a quantitative research design involving 72 male and female intermediate EFL learners from the College of Language in Baghdad, Iraq. Participants were randomly assigned to four classes, and their English proficiency was assessed using the Preliminary English Test (PET) to ensure homogeneity. The Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV), consisting of 45 items across five identity scales, was administered to evaluate the learners' attitudes towards their identity aspects. Additionally, the Test of Speaking English (TSE) was conducted to measure speaking proficiency. Data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software, employing Pearson correlation tests to explore the relationships between different identity components and speaking proficiency.

Participants

The participants of the study composed of 72 male and female participants studying general English at intermediate level in one of the English institutes named College of Language in Baghdad, Iraq. The participants were within the age range of 16-24. All of these learners had Arabic or Kurdish as their first language. The participants were randomly assigned into four different classes.

Instruments

To fulfill the purposes of the study, the following instruments were used:

Preliminary English Test (PET)



According to the official website of Cambridge ESOL, PET is an exam for people who can use every day written and spoken English at an intermediate level. It covers all four language skills, that is, reading, writing, listening and speaking. It is composed of four parts i.e. reading, writing, speaking and listening which is conducted through two forms, paper-based and computer-based consisting 67 items. PET is a standardized English test for an intermediate level qualification which is administered to show that a successful candidate has the ability to use English language skills to deal with everyday written and spoken communications.

Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV)

For the purpose of current study, the researcher utilized a 45 item Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV) developed by Cheek and Briggs (2013) assessing five different identity scales as following:

PI = Personal Identity Orientation

RI = Relational Identity Orientation

SI = Social Identity Orientation

CI = Collective Identity Orientation

SP = Special items

This questionnaire consisted of 45 statements in Likert scale (extremely important to my sense of who I am = 5, very important to my sense of who I am = 4, somewhat important to my sense of who I am = 3, slightly important to my sense of who I am = 2, not important to my sense of who I am = 1) and was used to investigate the learners' attitude their identity aspects. The questionnaire was given to the students at the end of the term and they were given ample time to answer the questions. In the case of any difficulty in understanding or misunderstanding the items, the researcher provided appropriate clarification.

Test of Speaking English

TSE is an oral proficiency language test for non-native speakers of English and is a member of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) family of tests developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS). This test is designed to measure the ability of non-native speakers of English to communicate orally in English. TSE is a semi-direct audio-taped test which needs to be administered in a language laboratory with a microphone and a voice recorder.

Regarding the components of the test, it consists of 12 questions which are written in the test book and recorded at normal speed on the test audio file. Each of the questions in the test requires test-takers to perform a particular language function, such as narrating, persuading, and giving an opinion. It worth mentioning that the questions are of general nature and the language used is context-embedded everyday English, without any specialized technical vocabulary. Besides the linguistic and functional competence, the test-takers have to pay attention to different audience and social contexts provided in the questions in order to carry out those mentioned functions appropriately. The test has also utilized non-language visual stimuli, such as maps, pictures, graphs, and charts as part of input. The required instruction is given by the interviewer on the audio file and also printed in the test book as well. Each function is allotted a time ranging from 30 to 90 seconds to be completed and some questions allow the planning time for the response from 30 to 60 seconds. The total testing time is approximately 20 minutes.

In the current study, while the test-takers' responses were recorded, each response audio file was rated independently by the researcher and another experienced teacher and was assigned a score level using descriptors of communicative effectiveness related to language function, linguistic accuracy, coherence, use of cohesive devices and appropriateness of response to



audience/situation. The score scale is from 20 to 60, divided into 5 levels. The scores of the two raters were averaged and reported.

According to the Educational Testing Service Committee (1999) the TSE score consists of a single score of communicative language ability, which is reported on the following scale:

- 20 No effective communication: no evidence of ability to perform task
- 30 Communication generally not effective: task generally performed poorly
- 40 Communication somewhat effective: task performed somewhat competently
- 50 Communication generally effective: task performed competently
- 60 Communication almost always effective: task performed very competently

It should be mentioned that the raters scored the test-takers' recorded speech holistically which means, they did not think about the individual components of the speaking ability or count the number of errors that the examinee made. For example, the test-taker would get the score of 60 if s/he communicated effectively regardless of his/ her minor errors. In the present study, TSE was used at the end of the study to check Iraqi EFL students' speaking proficiency.

Procedures

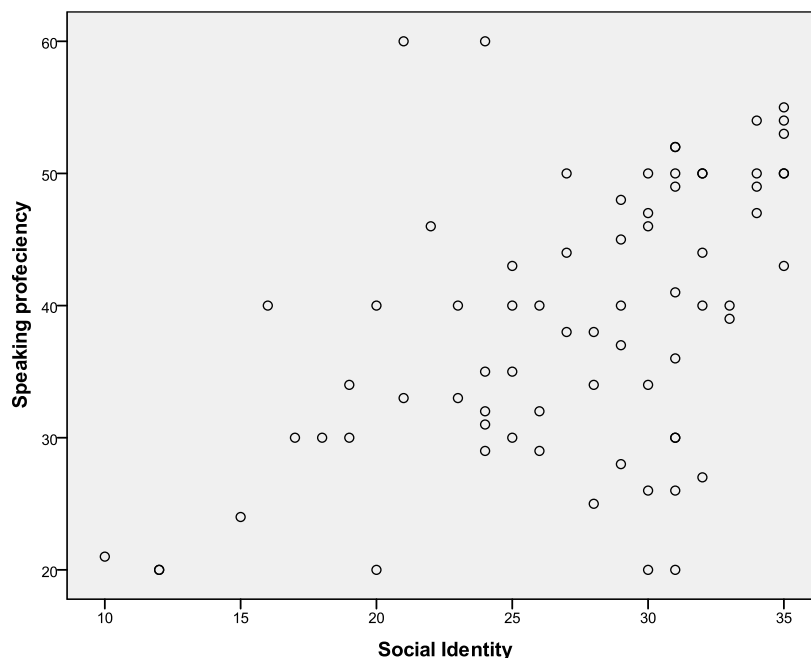
First of all, since the researcher is an English teacher at school and is not teaching in any private English institutes, she selected an institute named College of Language for the purpose of data collection and conducting the study. The researcher participated the classes but intervened in the case of necessity.

Before the treatment, 83 male and female intermediate EFL learners were selected from 4 intact classes studying English at College of Language institute, later, to get assured of the participants' proficiency regarding their language proficiency, the researcher administered the Preliminary English Test (PET) as a homogeneity test to the participants at the beginning of the term based on which 72 homogeneous intermediate learners were selected. All the participants were informed that their identities would be kept private and no information revealing their identity would be used in the study. Then, the researcher gave the TSE test to all the participants under the study and scores their speaking proficiency based on their performance as discussed in earlier parts of the study. For the last phase of the study, the researcher distributed the AIQ-IV questionnaire to the participants to obtain their attitude toward the identity aspects. During the term, all the participants were taught using the same material and received the same amount of instruction. This took 4 sessions to complete. Finally, the questionnaire scales were scored and the data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 19.

Results

After homogenizing the sample of the study and choosing the participants, they were given the speaking proficiency test and identity questionnaire. Later, the scores of social identities and speaking proficiency tests were analyzed first to check the statistical assumptions by observing one-sample K-S once more for normality of distribution.

Based on the results, it was concluded that the scores follow a normal distribution pattern, accordingly, the researchers decided to run parametric statistics. To check the existence of any correlation between general social identity score and the speaking proficiency of learners, first their scores were contrasted using a plot.

Figure 1*Contrasting the Scores of Social Identity and Speaking Proficiency using a Scatter Plot*

Scatter plot shown in Figures 1 was used to inspect the existence of any possible correlation between the participants' social identity scores and their speaking proficiency. According to the above scatter plot diagram and inspecting the distribution of the data, it seemed that there was a correlation between both students' social identity scores and their speaking Proficiency. Therefore, the researcher used the Pearson moment correlation test to analyze them statistically. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1*The Correlation between Learners' Social Identity and Speaking Proficiency*

	Social Identity	Speaking proficiency
Social Identity	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.507**
	N	72
Speaking proficiency	Pearson Correlation	.507**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	72

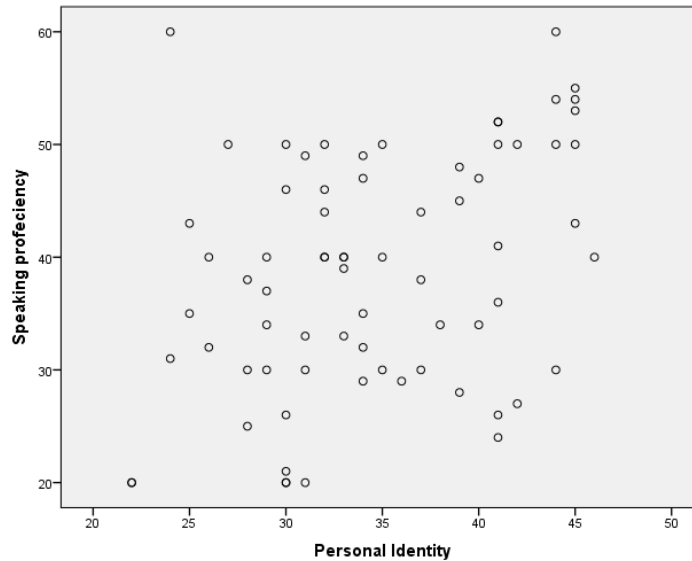
According to the results depicted in Table 1 which examined the observed relationship between the participants social identity and their speaking proficiency, it was revealed that the correlation was a statistically significant and positive one since the significance level was $P = .00$. to determine the strength of the relationship, the researcher used Cohen's (1988) classification of magnitude of correlations. Accordingly, the current correlation is within the $=.50$ to 1.0 range and is considered to be a strong one. However, since the study was carried out on components of identity questionnaire, in the following the relationship between the aforementioned variables



was analyzed separately. To continue with, the scores of personal identities of participants were analyzed.

Figure 2

Contrasting the Scores of Personal Identity and Speaking Proficiency of Participants using a Scatter Plot



According to the scatter plot shown in Figure 2, which was used to inspect the existence of any possible correlation between the participants' Personal Identity and Speaking Proficiency, it seemed that there was a correlation between the variables. The same for more in-detail investigation of any possible correlations and the researcher used the Pearson moment correlation tests on the obtained data to analyze them.

Table 2

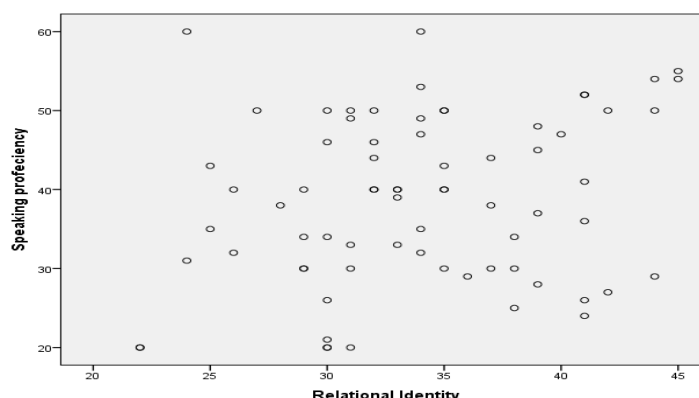
The Correlation between Learners' Personal Identity and Speaking Proficiency

		Speaking proficiency	Personal Identity
Speaking proficiency	Pearson Correlation	1	.380**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	72	72
Personal Identity	Pearson Correlation	.380**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	72	72

Table 2 shows a significant ($p = .00$) at the .05 significance level. Therefore, the researcher concluded that the participants' Personal identity scores and their speaking proficiency are positively and moderately correlated. Contrasting the students' relational identity to their speaking proficiency, the same procedure was adopted to analyze the participants' scores. The following scatter plot checks the possible relationship.

Figure 3

Contrasting the Scores of Relational Identity and Speaking Proficiency of Participants using a Scatter Plot



According to the distribution of identity scores against the speaking proficiency ones shown in Figure 3, there seems to be a relationship between the scores. Hence, the statistical significance of the relationship was tested by another Pearson correlation coefficient test.

Table 3

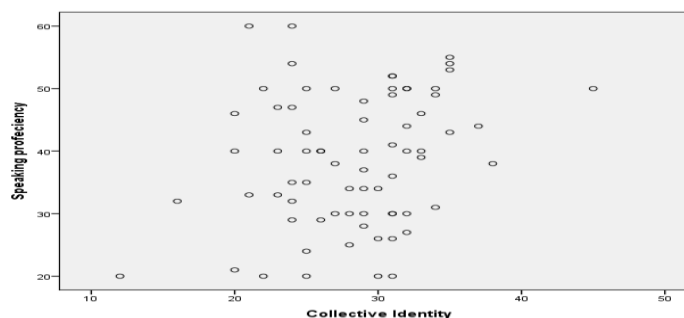
The Correlation between Learners' Relational Identity and Speaking Proficiency

	Speaking proficiency	Relational Identity
Speaking proficiency	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.240*
	N	72
Relational Identity	Pearson Correlation	.240*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042
	N	72

Interpreting the data depicted in Table 3 shows a significant ($p = .04$) at the .05 significance level. Based the correlation coefficient, it can be observed that the participants' relational identity scores and their speaking proficiency have a significant weak but positive correlation. The other identity type investigated in this study was the collective identity of learners. Accordingly, the collective identity of learners was compared against their speaking proficiency for any possible relationship. Figure 4 and Table 4 show the results of analyses done on the data.

Figure 4

Contrasting the Scores of Collective Identity and Speaking Proficiency of Participants using a Scatter Plot



Based on the speculation made using the Fig. 4 inspecting the existence of any possible correlation between the participants' Collective Identity and Speaking Proficiency, it seemed that

there were correlations between the variables. The researcher used the Pearson moment correlation tests on the obtained data to analyze them.

Table 4

The Correlation between Learners' Collective Identity and Speaking Proficiency

	Speaking proficiency	Collective Identity
Speaking proficiency	Pearson Correlation	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.249*
	N	72
Collective Identity	Pearson Correlation	.249*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.035
	N	72

Table 4 shows the relationship between participants' Collective identity and speaking proficiency which was investigated using Pearson correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality. Based on what can be interpreted from the above table, there is a weak but positive correlation between two variables, $r = .24$, $n = 72$, $p = .03$.

Discussion

As the learners and their psychological, linguistic, and cognitive are highly related to their learning management, it is crucial to examine the issue of different factors leading to a weak or strong speaking performance (Jenkins, 2007). Among the mentioned factors is the issue of identity which is a reflection of the various ways in which people understand themselves in relation to others (Ige, 2010); hence, the present study aimed to find the role of identity aspect components on English speakers' proficiency of EFL learners.

Taking all the above figures and tables into consideration, it can be figured out that learners' identity levels and their speaking proficiency are correlated. However, it can be concluded that different components have got different levels of correlation, that is social identity is strongly correlated, personal identity moderately, while relational and collective identities are correlated but weakly. As a result, it can be claimed improving social identity of a learner can lead to improvement in her/his speaking proficiency.

The results concerning the positive relationship of identity and speaking proficiency agree with findings of the one carried out by Amble (2016) who tried to investigate identity construction and language learning/use among newly immigrated Pakistani English as Additional Language (EAL) students attending an elementary school in Saskatoon. Similarly, the findings of the study revealed that social categories such as race, religion, gender, and social class tend to influence processes of socialization in students during language learning, which in turn have effects on their identity construction and language learning/use.

In the same vein, the findings of current study related to the positive relationship between identity aspects and speaking proficiency are in line with Yu (2015) that investigated the relationships among heritage language proficiency, ethnic identity, and self-esteem in the American-born Chinese (ABC) children who go to Chinese language schools for Chinese language learning on weekends. As a positive relationship was reached in current study, the results of their study demonstrated that there are positive relationships between language proficiency and ethnic identity, language proficiency and self-esteem and ethnic identity and self-esteem.



Conclusion

This study's findings show a substantial association between identity features and English-speaking skill in EFL learners. Specifically, social identification was found to be the largest predictor of speaking skill, followed by personal identity, whereas relational and collective identities had lower correlations. These findings imply that cultivating a positive social identity can improve learners' speaking abilities, highlighting the necessity of including identity considerations into language teaching approaches. Language educators are encouraged to foster inclusive environments in which students can express their identities, resulting in more successful language acquisition and communication abilities. Future research should delve deeper into the complexity of identity in various educational situations in order to better understand its impact on language learning.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for language education, particularly in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The strong association between identity features and speaking skills underscores the critical role that social identification plays in language acquisition. This suggests that educators should prioritize the cultivation of positive social identities among learners, as doing so can lead to enhanced speaking abilities. By integrating identity considerations into language teaching approaches, educators can create more effective and engaging learning environments. Specifically, fostering inclusivity allows students to express their unique identities, which can boost their confidence and motivation to communicate in English. Moreover, the study calls for further research into the intricate dynamics of identity across various educational contexts, which can provide deeper insights into how these factors influence language learning. Ultimately, these findings advocate for a more holistic approach to language education that recognizes and values the diverse identities of learners, thereby promoting more successful communication and language acquisition outcomes.

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