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Conscious Reconstruction: The Effects of Second Language Acquisition on Self-Perception of Gender Identity

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CONSCIOUS RECONSTRUCTION: THE EFFECTS OF SECOND LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION ON SELF-PERCEPTION OF GENDER IDENTITY

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Geneva Ged

December 2013

CONSCIOUS RECONSTRUCTION: THE EFFECTS OF SECOND LANGUAGE
ACQUISITION ON SELF-PERCEPTION OF GENDER IDENTITY

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Gender interacts with other facets of English Language Learners' social identity like race and ethnicity to guide their learning experiences, desires, and outcomes; however, much of traditional Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) research has focused on how motivation and language learning beliefs differ between male and female English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) students with the intent to identify difference, if it exists. English Language Learners who are studying abroad or who have immigrated to the United States have already established a gender identity influenced and created by their experiences in their first language and culture. Yet, immersion in a new culture and acquiring a second language may cause these students to re-evaluate their perceptions of gender roles and influence their choice of language, as previously found by Gordon (2004) and Schmenk (2004). This thesis attempts to break from this tradition of 'differential tendencies' research in the creation of two pilot surveys, one of which was tested, that attempt to solicit information on English Language Learner's perceptions of their own gendered identity and their consciousness of the catalyst for identity change that is learning a second language. In this case, an English pilot survey asked 32 ESL students to evaluate their beliefs about their own perceptions of gender identity, their conscious choice of language utilization, and their perception of their inclusion in American culture; from that survey, a second has

been created but not piloted. A conclusion is drawn that incorporates research about the appropriateness of addressing developing gender identity by teachers inside of the classroom.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Gender identity and language acquisition are connected in a complicated, cyclical relationship that often may go underestimated by ESL teachers who are not aware of the undercurrents of meaning in the very language that they are teaching. Specifically, immigrant English Language Learners not only have to acquire the discrete language items needed to master English; they must also navigate the convoluted process of forming an identity as an English speaker. Simultaneously, as they are constructing this new gender identity, their own conceptions of gender roles and what is appropriate language use in their own native language have an impact on their second language acquisition. And even though it might seem that many English Language Learners are indeed creating a separate, new American identity, it is also strongly unlikely for this identity to not be influenced by transfer from their native language and culture.

There is still much work to do in the field of gender and language study, particularly exploring the determinants of gender identity and their direct and indirect effect on language use and production. This thesis focuses not on how discrete language skills are learned, but how language acquisition might be affected by the “larger framework of identity and context” (Gordon, 2004, p. 439). Previous research has determined that issues of social and cultural identity and context frame how a language, specifically English, is learned in everything from a student’s desired outcomes to the specific language skills that they value. Yet, there is room inside the relatively new field of gender and language study to examine the consciousness of students regarding their gender identity’s mutability after exposure to second language resources and during the language learning process. Much of the research already done in gender and language

study proclaims a certain degree of human agency, but focuses on the “differential tendencies” of gender identity in relation to language learning. This thesis attempts to break from this ‘differential’ research trend in order to truly recognize the human agency necessary in language learning and renegotiation of identity.

Definition of Terms

Because of the elusive and malleable nature of the concepts involved, there are a number of terms must be defined for their use in this thesis before being able to identify or explore students’ consciousness of how their personal concept of identity might be changed through learning a second language. Rather than an individual, isolated variable, gender actually represents an aspect of social identity and should be defined as “a complex system of social relations and discursive practices, differentially constructed in local contexts” that has a large impact on not only behavior but also the way that language is perceived and used (Norton, 2004, p. 504). Gender interacts with similar facets of social identity, like race and ethnicity, to frame “students’ language learning experiences, trajectories, and outcomes” (Norton, 2004, p. 504). As such, before discussing gender’s relation to language, a definition the term gender in conjunction with a brief history of gender and language study must be given.

Gender. The notion of gender itself is elusive because it has often been used as a synonym for the biological and medical concept of sex, but the majority of gender and language study research defines *sex* and *gender* as separate but sometimes correlated concepts. In their book *Gender and Schools*, Measor and Sikes (1992) summarize the major research on the terms sex and gender, differentiating between the two terms, sex and gender thusly:

Sex refers to the most basic physiological differences between men and women—differences in genitals and reproductive capacities. [...] Gender refers to specific social and cultural patterns of behaviour and to the social characteristics of being a man or a woman in particular historical or social circumstances. Gender is made by society. (p. 5)

This is not to say that biological sex and gender are independent of each other, and in fact for the majority of cases, biological sex initiates an etic perspective of a person's gender identity. Even though the influence of the perception of one's gender and its effects on language use is interesting for future research in the field of gender and language study, this thesis will focus on students' internal sense of gender identity. Chavez (2001) clarifies this distinction between gender and sex by using the context of "one's self-concept of what it means to an individual to be male or female" to define the term gender identity (p. 1). That sense of introspection will be the defining characteristic for this thesis' use of the term gender identity.

After the brief pioneering period of introspective research done by Robin Lakoff in the 1940s, traditional gender and language study began with the tenets of "dominance" and "difference" which were explored in empirical studies of "small-scale interaction" (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 3). "Dominance" in gender study refers to the "feminist notion of 'male dominance'—of men, over women, through language" originating from the political scene of the 1970s Women's Liberation Movement (p. 3). Because it did not work within the "variationalist paradigm" (defined as differences between genders in language use and tendencies of one particular gender), "dominance" quickly gave way to theories of "difference" which do not judge one gender as more privileged or even

dominant” and instead see “variation in the talk of women and men as the result of their being members, from an early age, of different ‘linguistic subcultures’” (p. 3). Even though they might differ in political ideologies, the unstated assumption in both “difference” and “dominance” theories is that language use “reflects” norms and functions as an unconscious choice of men and women based upon their gender identity (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 3-4). Because the theories of “dominance” and “difference” focused on the comparison and contrast of observed tendencies in either gender, comparing them as members of “two social groups,” naturally the tendency was to observe gender in Western culture as binary and exclusive of each other, as well as to focus on where men and women differ in “private talk, small group, and the *who* and *how* of communication” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 5). However, this binary construction of gender, viewing men and women as two separate but equal “homogenous groups,” is complicated and perhaps even fallible at times. This is because gender’s “dual source of biology and environment yield[s] often transient results” in which the degree of variation inside one gender is just as significant as the opposition of one gender against another and in which the difference between genders is not necessarily a construct of biology but one of society (Chavez, 2001, p. 7). Yet, this binary construction is inherent in Western culture and often implicit in the formation of an individual’s concept of their own gender identity. The hegemonic ideal of Western culture certainly is based on an understanding of gender as not only based upon biological sex but also as exclusive and binary, as discussed by Butler (1990). After all, there is an inherently cultural reason why gender and sex are so often interchangeable in not only American colloquial conversation but also medical, social work, and other official forms. This impact on the individual’s

conception of self cannot be dismissed. Perhaps serving as a loose example of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in action, men and women in Western culture still generally continue to self-categorize in a binary fashion, which is based primarily upon an etic perspective of biological sex and influenced (perhaps even created) by the binary language used to express gender. Relating to the field of gender and language study, according to Harrington et al, “differential tendencies,” which emphasizes this binary construction, “is still the current ‘popular’ understanding of gender” (2008, p. 4). And so, it is nearly impossible to conduct research without utilizing some sort of binary understanding of gender, even if it incorporates variation among groups. It is nearly impossible, after all, to determine a specific subgroup in the field of gender and language study without excluding another.

Social constructionism. In response to “difference” and “dominance,” a number of key researchers in the field of gender and language have shifted their focus from the notion that language use reflects gender norms and instead see gendered language use as “the active/interactive/negotiated construction of gender, including self-positioning” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4). Other tenets of social constructionism serve to emphasize the public sphere over the private as well as texts written by and about women, texts which Harrington et al criticize (2008) as “de-emphasizing” the agency of the human subject (p. 4). Contemporary gender and language study relies on the concept of performativity, a term originally coined by Butler (1990) who applied linguistics and language theory to gender studies in the conclusion that “gender is performed in part through ‘embodied iteration’ of particular linguistic acts” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4). This iteration comprises what are called ‘speech acts’ which are a creation of an

individual as representation of their gender identity. Speech acts then are not merely a reflection of socialization.

Performativity is not without its own complications and criticism. Green (2007) argues not for a return to the “difference” and “dominance” models, but that Butler’s formative work is merely a reiteration and a renaming of an already active current of thought in gender and language study. Green argues that Kessler and McKenna (1978) and West and Zimmerman (1987) had already deconstructed gender into a social process of ‘performing’ masculinity and femininity as a representation of moments of repetition and ascribing characteristics to a particular gender. Gender in these works hinges on the theory that internalized notions of gender result from practice and language acts (Green, 2007). However, neither set of researchers had coined the term “performativity” as a label for their observations, so credit goes to Butler for the concept in entirety. This thesis will not take sides in that particular debate, but it does serve as proof that the field of gender and language study has been concerned with issues of identity since its inception, also as represented by Lakoff (1973).

The core of gender and language study is a modified version of the social constructionist model of gender. According to Harrington et al (2008), “Most gender and language study today broadly encompasses social constructionist meanings of *gender* together with a nuanced version of ‘differential tendencies’” in a post-structuralist mentality of combining approaches and methodologies for the particular use of the researcher or to better the complete understanding of the field (p. 5). Their list of concerns of post-structuralist ideas of gender includes:

- * diversity (e.g. class, ethnicity, and their interaction with gender; multiple

masculinities/femininities; differences among “women” and “men”)

* gender being “performed” ... in an ongoing way, allowing for agency; performance being achieved partly through language (which is therefore *constitutive*); power being “done” rather than something speakers “have”

* “local” or “contingent” explanations for gendered language patterns and the importance of specific contexts... (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4-5)

This thesis keeps these tenets of gender and language study at the forefront of its primary research analysis, especially the concepts of ethnicity’s “interaction with gender,” as well as the performativity of gender and the importance of “specific contexts” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4-5). Even though, the ethnicity of students was not collected by the survey, as a way to maintain the confidentiality of participants, any future research would focus on particular ethnic or linguistic groups. As well, the specific context of post-secondary ESL education is discussed in the methodology chapter. Future research may focus on one particular gender, but diversity is represented in this thesis by the surveying of both men and women as equally as possible within the demographics of the ESL program itself. This relates to the social constructionist idea of gender and language study in that it analyzes not only women’s responses, but responses about women.

Identity. Identity is another term which has a multiplicity of meaning depending on the field and specific approaches utilized in research. For the use of the term ‘identity’ in this thesis, it is defined in relation to Norton’s (1997) discussion of the history of identity theory. In a break from technical linguistic jargon, she defines identity in a fairly upfront way as referring “to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their

possibilities for the future” (p. 410). Identity encompasses how people see their individual concept of self as relating to the social “world” around them. What is most imperative about this definition is the concept of identity’s mutability through “time and space” relating specifically for the purposes of this thesis to the introduction of second language acquisition as an adult to a person’s own concept of identity as a potential catalyst for change.

The difference between social identity and cultural identity is also still under debate among gender and language study research. Social identity is best understood as the concept of identity discussed above, as how an individual relates to the social world through “institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, social services, and law courts” (Norton, 1997 p. 420). Cultural identity then is defined as “the relationship between individuals and members of a group who share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world” (Norton, 1997, p. 420). Norton (1997) discusses this difference with surprising results in her introduction to the 1997 *TESOL Quarterly* focused on gender and language study; she deduces “the difference between social identity and cultural identity as fluid and the commonalities more marked than the differences” (p. 420). This is a striking similarity to the concepts of “dominance” and ‘difference,’ as compared to social constructionism, in gender and language study. It is not surprising that Norton, herself a feminist researcher interested in identity study, would perceive identity not as binary but as inclusive and varied based upon situation. She concludes that the true difference between the two terms “might be explained in terms of the disciplines and research traditions that inform” different critics’ works as well as the “different emphases of their research projects” (p. 420). Essentially, the

different needs of various fields determine the use of either term as well as the definition of the term used.

General scholarship concerning cultural identity for immigrants and other second language learners has focused on immigrant life in the United States being divided in an opposition between cultural assimilation and ethnic pluralism. This seems quite reductive considering Norton's (1997) findings on the interrelation of social and cultural identity. Cultural assimilation perspectives in immigrant research emphasize the quick and cross-culturally universal shift away from the use of the first language to the use of English and the attraction to American culture including non-verbal facets like fashion and gender presentation by the second and third generations. Alternatively, research into ethnic pluralism asserts that immigrants by the second-generation also shift towards an "ethnic identity" that exists in cohesion with an American cultural identity. English Language Learners essentially create new English-speaking identities that are both separate from and influenced by their first language and culture. However, current trends are pushing researchers to consider more subtle, nuanced views of the renegotiation of cultural identity that include how gender and other such social identifiers can impact language learning and other facets of immigrant life (Stritikus & Nguyen, 2007).

Communities of Practice. The notion of specific context is paramount for this thesis' primary research, and so the definition of Communities of Practice (CofPs) must be explored. A Community of Practice is defined in Harrington et al (2008) as:

groups of people who "come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor," when "ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations—in short, practices—emerge" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 464). We

participate in multiple CofPs, for example as members of a family, students in a classroom, employees in a workplace, ... Gender identities... are arguably produced, reproduced and contested through such participation, in particular through *differentially* gendered engagement (2008, p. 5).

According Litosseliti (2006) the theory of Communities of Practice gives researchers of gender and language the ability “distinguish between speakers’ assumed gendered behaviour and the range of identities available in the gendered communities that speakers inhabit” (qtd in Harrington et al, 2008, p. 5). The specific importance of Communities of Practice comes from this notion that some “differential tendencies” that may be observed perhaps originate in the specific context of English Language Learner’s surroundings instead of internally. Researchers must be able to look at the context of the Community of Practice involved as well as specific data. In essence, perhaps students’ conceptions of gender identity and the difference between men’s and women’s speech might originate not internally but as a result of their schooling. For this particular study, a review of literature surrounding the teaching of gender identity in the classroom will be discussed, as it relates to the findings and as a launching point for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

History of Identity Research

Before the mid-1990s, there was a dearth of research on gender and English language learning, perhaps because of the elusive nature of the concepts of both language and identity, as Norton (1997) cites in her assertion that “debates on theories of language are as inconclusive and indeterminate as debates on theories of identity” (p. 409).

Language, and especially identity, as shown in the introduction, are theories which do not have the neat concreteness of traditional fields in mathematics or science. They rely on elusive terms whose definition varies based upon researcher and situation. To further qualify this lack of research, Norton (1997) also explains that some linguists believe, perhaps erroneously, that “questions of identity are not central to theories of language,” following in the tradition of Chomsky’s theories of language acquisition (p. 409-10).

Much of traditional TESOL research in the field of gender has also followed in the footsteps of Dörnyei’s ideas of motivation and language learning beliefs in relation to male and female ESL/EFL students. The majority of early research into gender and the ESL classroom focused on the intent to identify difference if and when it existed between male and female students. When research in the field does address gender, it primarily has focused on issues of sexism in text books and the possibility of gender differences in learning styles and strategies, as discussed by Sunderland in her 1992 overview of gender issues in the EFL classroom. This ideology of “difference” is still a prevalent methodology in much of TESOL research involving gender, resulting in a majority of studies focusing on learner strategies and learning styles, identifying specific women’s issues. Few studies before the 1990s even discussed the variation of responses inside of

one gender, let alone issues of identity and language learning.

The late 1990s and 2000s saw a surge of research concerning the interplay between gender identity and language learning, which according to Norton and Pavlenko (2004) originated in a “post-structuralist framework [which] foreground[ed] sociohistoric, cross-cultural, and cross-linguistic differences in constructing gender” (p. 504). Situating gender into this framework means not only recognizing gender an important segment of social identity (which Norton and Pavlenko explain also includes other markers like “race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, age, and social status”) and its role in the development of “experiences, trajectories, and outcomes” in students’ language learning, but also recognizing when gender, especially difference, does not factor into learning outcomes or experiences (p. 504). In their 2004 updated overview of gender issues, Norton and Pavlenko (2004) focused on the transformative power of identity work in the ESL classroom, specifying the ways that “curricular innovation” in the form of addressing identity in the classroom can fulfill the social needs of the students, particularly immigrant ELLs.

Complications of Identity Research

Though gender identity and its connection to language learning is a relatively new subfield of gender and language study, there is some research concerning how the gender identity of English Language Learners changes and evolves as they acquire access to second language resources and discrete language skills. English Language Learners and immigrants living in the United States already have constructed a gender identity influenced and created by their home culture, but the very act of acquiring a second language may cause these students to re-evaluate their perceptions of gender roles. Most

of the research surmises that a new gender identity is created and constructed by English Language Learners as they acquire discrete language skills and interact with second language resources. This experience affects their own production and understanding of these facets of language, specifically including supra-segmentals such as intonation and vocabulary choice (Morgan, 1997). Specifically, English Language Learners are affected not only by their previous language experience in their first language, including such aspects as women's language in Japanese, but they also build a new English-speaking gender identity that includes new conscious and unconscious choices in language use (Norton, 1997).

Norton (1997) further explains this process of identity creation by stating that English Language Learners “are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world” (p. 410). To be concise, English Language Learners are both creating and negotiating their own identity as an English speaker, in a manner that is implicated to be both deliberate and conscious. Norton (1997) emphasizes the effect of access to second language resources on burgeoning gender identity by relating the concept of identity to other social desires in the vein of West (1992) in her conclusion that “identity relates to desire—the desire for recognition, the desire for affiliation, and the desire for security and safety” (p. 410). Access to second language resources and, in general, the process of acquiring a second language then serve as fundamental tools for identity creation and negotiation because these resources “define the terms” English Language Learners use to express their desires (Norton, 1997). Essentially, “changing social and economic relations” can and do act as catalysts for changing identity (Norton, 1997, p. 410).

Norton (2000) addressed the issue of the multiplicity of adult language learner identity after a six month long observation of immigrant women after their graduation from her ESL program in Ontario, confronting the relative slowness of language acquisition literature to recognize the interplay between facets of social identity like ethnicity and gender in ESL students' learning. Norton's (2000) work criticizes the binary division of students as "introverted or extroverted" or "inhibited or uninhibited" by calling it inadequate to represent the complications of life outside of the classroom and by specifically criticizing the assumption of theorists who dismiss the relation between language learning and social identity by saying "language is not conceived of a neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning" (p. 5). Keeping with tenets of social constructionism, language is not created in a vacuum, devoid of political and sociocultural influence. Language is neither neutral nor is it unbiased. It is by its very nature a manifestation of the society of its speakers. And so to study language learning without reference to its "social meaning" cannot represent the whole of student experience. In her review of Norton's book, Halpern summarizes Norton's importance in her exclamation that:

Unless we consider the import of pressures of gender and ethnicity on our instructional systems, it will be business as usual and not much else. But if language instruction classrooms investigate the social constructions of the language learner then they will move toward Norton's vision of education, which is 'centrally concerned with the enhancement of human possibility.' (p.745) (Norton, 2000, qtd. in Halpern, 2001).

Even though specific questions about access to second language resources are not

addressed in this thesis, the concept of changing social relations was a key influence in the formation of the research questions asked. Norton's theories on gender identity and its role in language learning specifically also represent a foundation upon which this thesis attempts to build. The importance of the cultural construction of language and transformative classroom practices is emphasized in the "Teaching About Gender" section in this chapter.

Creation of Gendered Identities

Norton's exploration of how identity is formed through access to second language resources is partially supported by current research on gender and its effects on language use. Deutsch (2007) argues that it is clear that "People act with the awareness that they will be judged according to what is deemed appropriate feminine or masculine behavior," and so they adjust their language to fit the societal norms of their current situation (p. 106). However, this situation becomes more complicated for those people who acquire a second language. Specifically, this definition of what is appropriate language use changes as English Language Learners in the United States are confronted with gender roles and behaviors that are often radically different from their previous experiences. In addition, in both the second-language classroom and the wider English-speaking culture, the expectations of English Language Learners, are often complicated by their first-language and past cultural experiences. Chavez (2001) explains this connection between gender expectations and culture by summarizing:

In a second-language classroom, students of different first-language and cultural backgrounds may hold conflicting, often gender-bound, expectations of the communicative behavior of the self, peers, and the teacher. ... This is becoming

an increasingly important consideration, with a steady rise in minority college enrollments (with females constituting a disproportionately large share) and with increasing numbers of foreign students enrolling at American universities. (p. 9).

Essentially, most English Language Learners often initially hold expectation of behavior related to experiences in their first language. However, first generation immigrant English Language Learners are faced with the unique challenge of renegotiating their cultural and linguistic understanding of gender in light of exposure to new language resources because of their immersion into the English-speaking culture. This is of most importance to researchers who study the development of English as an international language, coinciding with the concept of multiple Englishes. English Language Learners in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom do not have the same immediate need for the cultural components of the language because their classroom and real world situations are both situated within a context of their first-language. The focus specifically on immigrant English as a Second Language Learners in this thesis is developed because of their unique situation that necessitates cultural adaptation or even perhaps resistance, as discussed further in the review.

Specifically for female immigrant English Language Learners, public, especially post-secondary, schooling is often the major catalyst for “the development and initial formulation of contrasting ideas and beliefs regarding traditional gender roles and expectations” (Stritikus & Nguyen, 2007, p. 854). Schools can serve as “liberating spaces” for women to explore their own concepts of gender identity and other aspects of life that “patriarchal cultures” might not have encouraged (Stritikus & Nguyen, 2007, p. 855). If this is true, then the renegotiation of gender identity occurs simultaneously with

language learning because of the encouragement of exposure to second language resources which foster this type of exploration of cultural and gender identity in the new context of living in America. This relates directly to Norton's (1997) concepts of identity change being initiated through exposure to second language resources. This explanation of public schooling as inherently transformative and "liberating" is not without its own complications, including the limitations of such approaches and the implication of patronization as discussed further in the "Teaching About Gender" section.

However, just as school is not the only place the English Language Learners encounter new discrete language skills, it is not the only place that sparks this exploration of gender identity. English Language Learners reconstruct their gender identity and language use through everyday events and access to second language resources, which despite its deceptively technical name can include everything from popular magazines to talking with coworkers (Gordon, 2004). Norton (1997) emphasizes the importance of second language resources, as discussed previously, but more specifically these more social second-language resources as opposed to classroom material. Whichever way, it seems that no matter the level of education or involvement in a traditional classroom, all immigrants must go through the process of creating a new English-speaking identity to pair with their acquisition of the English language. This process of reformation has been investigated in a few studies, mostly case studies of a single class or group by their instructor. They all focus on a primarily ethnographic style of research, emphasizing the individual experience and the anecdotal as well as what empirical data can be collected. One vital case study was done by Gordon in 2004, focusing on a group of working-class Laotian immigrants to the United States.

The Creation of a New Gender Identity by Lao Immigrants. Pragmatically, Gordon (2004) discusses how these working-class Lao men and women redefined gender identities through language after immigrating to the United States. Upon coming to America, the men and women both lost their traditional gender roles because of economic opportunities that afforded women the opportunity, and sometimes necessity, to work outside the home. This changed both their language environment and their access to second language resources, which included female coworkers. When teaching English to this group of Lao men and women, Gordon found that there was a shift in gendered cultural and language practices, affected by their immigration to the United States. He also found that this access to outside resources affects not only specifically the perception of gender identity particularly by the women in the group but also the way that these women perceived, used, and processed language. For example, his students told him that “I’m tired. You clean and cook.” is something that might be said by a Lao wife returning from a “long day at the factory” (p. 437). But, although this seems completely normal in the United States, this statement would be “unthinkable within a Lao cultural context” (p. 437). Even though it is not necessarily empirical, this data serves as proof that the differences between culture can result in differences in language use and that the perception of what is appropriate and even necessary language use changes based upon societal expectation. Also, this shows the human agency that female English Language Learners have in determining whether to accept or reject traditional gender roles and in creating a new American, English-speaking identity with a completely new vocabulary at their beck and call. This human agency is of particular importance to researchers in the field of gender and language studies and poses complications for studies that focus on

“differential tendencies.” What is also interesting in Gordon’s (2004) work is that these interpersonal negotiations are not only happening in the English Language Learner’s first language, but also in English which indicates that cultural identity perhaps carries over into language production and choice of language.

Language Socialization

It is clear then that language learning is far more than acquiring a list of discrete language skills and is far more related to issues of behavior, identity, and culture than would otherwise be assumed at first glance. Because of this relationship between language and culture, ethnographic research has worked to redefine “language learning as language socialization rather than language acquisition...” (Gordon, 2004, p. 439). In layperson’s terms, learning a language is not only a matter of acquiring grammar forms and vocabulary, but a complicated dynamic of culture and socialization. To be even more concise, Gordon states frankly that “Language is learned through social interaction” (2004, p. 439). This revolutionary simple concept challenges traditional theories of second language acquisition. Social interaction has been emphasized in second language acquisition theories in an abstract manner, but Gordon reduces this convoluted relationship between discrete language items and social interaction to an almost mathematical formula. English Language Learners seem to be consciously and unconsciously constructing a new gender identity as they acquire English as a second language, with new language that may or may not comply to the traditional English rules, though Norton and Pavlenko (2004) conclude that often without directly speaking about this process, female English Language Learners are socialized into learning and using the gendered language rules already found in English.

Stereotyping as Socialization. Even linguistic stereotypes about female English speakers seem to be applied to female English Language Learners as they negotiate the minefield of identity. For instance, Stritikus and Nguyen's (2007) work with Vietnamese youth reflects that the stereotype of talking too much is often applied to female immigrants as they acquire English. In their study, one Vietnamese male youth said of his talkative classmate that "Girls in America are so brave and outgoing. She talks a lot, too. Her mouth would not stay shut. All day long she yaps about things" (p. 885). Though this stereotype is certainly found in a myriad of other cultures including Vietnamese, the emphasis of his complaint about his classmate is that she "talks a lot" because she is American—because she is speaking in English. This thesis does not focus on the effects of stereotyping on female English Language Learner's own concept of their identity, but the inclusion of Stritikus's and Nguyen's (2007) article serves as a call for future research into the this little studied subject because of its potential formative impact on gender identity as it coincides with second language learning.

Cultural Transference. Even though there is much research that documents that the transfer of skills and knowledge from native languages causes a minimal amount of the errors associated with adults acquiring English as a second language, there is a deficit of academically minded research that focuses on how cultural transfer affects the acquisition of a second language. Little anecdotal evidence exists to talk about the reluctance of some female English Language Learners to use certain phrasings because they did not match their cultural ideal, but there seems to be few studies dedicated to exploring the impact those preconceived notions of appropriateness have on language production in English (Morgan, 1997). In a general sense, transference of first-language

grammar has mostly been dismissed by scholars as only having a minimal impact on acquisition of discrete language skills in English, yet issues of identity are not as clear cut, nor are they necessarily appropriate for the same type of empirical study as simple grammar transference (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). Cultural transference would seem logical, considering that adult language learners already have a fully formed concept of self, which is simultaneously a reflection and a creation of their first-language experiences.

From the little research that has been done, it seems to be clear that as students are concurrently constructing an identity as an English Language Learner and English speaker, their identity in their own language affects how they process, comprehend, and use English. The research that does exist about gender identity transference shows that there are carryovers that affect supra-segmentals like intonation, though this is often not a conscious decision on the part of the learner as with the traditional idea of first language transference being an intentional application of grammar rules from the first-language to similar second-language situations. Cultural or gender identity transference perhaps operates on a subconscious level in addition to conscious choices on the part of the speaker. Determining this consciousness about identity is one of the primary goals of this research and future endeavors. Similarly to Gordon's (2004) case study of his students, a group of recently immigrated Laotian women and men, Morgan discusses one such instance of transference and highlights the need to teach discrete language items in their cultural context by exploring one of his own lessons about intonation with his class of Chinese nationals. Intonation has several grammatical functions and is used to determine statements from questions as well as inferring emotional context to the sentence. After

discussion of traditional gender roles in a class prior, Morgan decided to use a dialogue with similar themes in which a Chinese husband and wife discussed the wife's decision to take ESL classes. This lesson did not begin as one focusing on intonation, but Morgan soon found that his class placed emphasis on entirely different words inside a sentence than he, as a native English speaker, would have considered natural. For instance, in the sentence "You are so busy" Morgan (1997) explained that he expected the emphasis to fall on the word "you" but that his students insisted the emphasis should be on "so busy" representing the difference in values carried over from their own culture (p. 444).

Another more concrete example of cultural transference is found with female Japanese English Language Learners. These students often begin speaking English in a high falsetto voice with rise and fall in intonation that might sound strange to native speakers of English. Yet, this higher voice is actually reflective of the Japanese cultural ideal of women's speech, and so Japanese women learning English often have to reconcile their own views of an ideal intonation and the American ideal which tends to be lower in pitch and less lyrical. In this same way, Japanese women's language encompasses far more than simple intonation, extending to different verb forms to indicate politeness and different, "softer" sounding exclamations (Inoue, 2013). There is no research that would indicate this type of women's language directly transfers into vocabulary choice by female Japanese English Language Learners, but it can be hypothesized based on the previous research into gender identity, cultural identity and language learning that students may be aware of the differences linguistically between their native language and American English and make conscious and unconscious choices about their own language use based upon these differences. Yet, it is possible that English

Language Learners, as human subjects with human agency and independence, do not necessarily conform to the gender roles or gendered language use of their new second language.

Resistance to New Conceptions of Identity. Chavez (2001) succinctly begins the discussion of resistance to a shifting gender identity by asking, “Is it appropriate or realistic to expect learners to leave behind their first-language persona, including its gendered aspects?” (p. 9). Though Chavez might be discussing an EFL classroom specifically, her question is easily applied to ESL classrooms, especially ones for adult language learners, as in this thesis’ research. For adult learners in a majority English-language speaking setting, the issues of identity and language are more complicated, as Chavez (2001) asserts: “Learners would thus find themselves members of various speech communities, including those based on first language as well as interlanguage genderlects” (p. 9). In specific, Chavez quotes an analysis by Ehrlich of Siegal’s 1994 and 1996 study of the resistance to adoption of Japanese women’s language by Western women learning Japanese while living as immigrants in Japan. Ehrlich explains “Siegal’s work portrays female second language learners as active agents who use the second language to resist a social positioning that is ‘foisted’ upon them” (Ehrlich, qtd. in Chavez, 2001, p. 9-10). This concept of the active agency of learners is critical to this thesis and to gender and language study in general. To look at language learners as passive receptacles of culture and gender is to remove their conscious and unconscious freewill concerning language use and production; it removes any sense of intrinsic motivation in the broadest sense.

In a more pragmatic sense, Chavez (2001) also argues that students have practical

difficulties associated with shifting gender identity and the addressing of such in the classroom:

“Second, even students eager to embrace the linguistic gender roles of the target language will find that their ability to do so largely depends on their level of linguistic proficiency in addition to their knowledge of specific characteristics of female or male target-language roles” (p. 11).

Learners might be willing to explore alternate gender roles or to re-examine their own concept of gender, but without the concrete language skills and knowledge of the target-language culture to do so in the target language, it is impossible for them to proceed. This is a particularly important concession for the researcher to make, as negative results might originate not in choice, whether unconscious or conscious, but from a lack of skills. To potentially rectify this for the purposes of this thesis, the language learners involved were in their last semester of intensive language study and preparing for graduation from the ESL program and entrance into traditional university classes.

Practical Value of Identity Research. This discussion of gender identity and its implications for the language learning process may seem too philosophical to be applicable to most ESL classrooms, but there is practical use for the exploration of gender identity, especially, its relation to desired learning outcomes and value beliefs inside the classroom as well as the consciousness of students concerning their own gender identity. Morgan argues that “identity work is not just descriptive but fundamentally transformative” by emphasizing the paramount role that language practices have in defining social identity (p. 432). His view of the ESL classroom is one in which students develop a sense of community where “students (re) evaluate the past (i.e. the rules of

identity) in the context of the present and through classroom reflection and interaction, forge new cultural traditions, histories, and solidarities....” (p. 432). He goes on to explain that language practices profoundly shape meaning and that they are implicit in an English Language Learner’s self-view and how they subsequently use language themselves (p. 432). It is not enough then to be taught grammar or vocabulary; in order to be truly fluent speakers, English Language Learners must be able to recognize the social meaning implicit in language practices. By using this form of Halliday’s (1985) social-semiotic approach to language, Morgan is able to emphasize the social positions, purpose, and location of dialogue through the concrete instruction of specific linguistic skills necessary for acquiring English (intonation in this particular case) (p. 435). He concludes that in order for language instruction to be as effective as possible and the most useful for English Language Learners, “ESL teachers would need to conceive of their students as having social needs and aspirations that may be inseparable from their linguistic needs” (p. 435).

Another practical application for identity research in the ESL classroom comes from research into the relationship between anxiety and gender. In general, female ESL students experience more anxiety in the classroom than male students, and they worry more about the consequences of poor performance which in turn limits their successful production and leads to “reticence, self-consciousness, and even panic” (Knapp, 2008, p.4). This anxiety about language production, as explored by Krashen (1985), hinders female students’ abilities to be successful in acquiring a second language. Knapp (2008) concludes by urging that different learning strategies and a focus on exploring different learning styles might lead to a reduction in this anxiety, but perhaps discussion of identity

and the pressures specific to female English Language Learners would also do a fair amount of good in reducing anxiety. If language production is shaped by the way that students view themselves as Morgan (1997) asserts, of which gender identity is a large aspect, then here is a place where discussion of the development of and honest communication about identity would be useful in giving students vocabulary in which to speak about their anxieties.

Teaching About Gender Identity. Identity is vital to the acquisition and development of a second language, but research is divided on how and even if teachers should address the developing gender identities inside of their classrooms. Most researchers agree that issues of identity are fundamental to becoming a truly fluent speaker of a second-language (Morgan, 1997). As discussed earlier, because of the access to second-language resources, the ESL classroom then is a place where students can discover how these language practices affect their concept of self and re-evaluate their rules of identity and their cultural past in the context of their lives in the United States in order to create new notions of culture and traditions (Norton, 1997; Morgan, 1997).

Yet, there is a caution about using texts that explore the concepts of identity, and Norton advises that teachers not “expect students to passively accept... Western feminist notions” (2004, p.506). Even though teachers have been steeped in a post-colonial landscape of cultural tolerance and respect, it can be very easy to fall back on the ethnocentric thought of the superiority of Western culture. Schenke (1996) explores the position of ESL instructors who emphasize social and cultural identity in the classroom, especially those whose philosophies focus on student’s “transformation, liberation, or ‘coming to voice,’” through her warning that instructors must be able to reflect upon their

motivations for accepting an “ethics of care” approach to teaching philosophy (p. 155). ESL instructors must evaluate their own supporting of certain “complacencies of power” and hegemonic ideals when expressing that the ESL classroom can become a “safe, nurturing” space for identity exploration (and ultimately transformation) (p. 155). Are instructors and texts patronizing in their current approach to gender and women’s issues? Schenke seems to think so, citing the “infantilizing approach to learning activities” that solely focus on the experiential approach without any sort of “critical analyses of the cultural/gendered production of our everyday lives” (p. 155). In this way, personal histories and “memory work” are not transformative because they do not emphasize the student’s own analysis of their situations. Instead of leading the discussion of identity, instructors should encourage our students to “consider on their own terms why they might hold certain views and how women have come to be positioned in a given context” (Norton, 2004, p. 506). Succinctly, the conversation of gender identity should be a student led one if it is to be effective at all.

Already many EFL/ESL instructors use gender and texts written about gender as springboards for students to analyze their own language. Some explore the stereotypes of female speakers, asking their students to ponder the question if women do indeed “talk too much.” By exploring the meta-language of social identity, teachers can help to encourage awareness of developing identity and to demonstrate that identity is “culturally situated” and “culturally constructed” (Norton, 2004, p. 507). In the same way that giving students the metalinguistic tools for grammar can help them to understand the functions of grammar rules, discussing identity in directly the classroom gives students the

metalinguistic tools to explore their own identity and how it affects their perception and production of language.

CHAPTER III: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGIES

In their introduction for *Gender and Language Research Methodologies*, Sunderland and Litosseliti (2008) emphasize the interdisciplinary and subjective nature of gender and language study in their statement that “Gender and language, best seen as a topic or a field, is investigated through an increasing range and diversity of theoretical and methodological approaches,” and they impress that “no approach is, can or even should be objective” (qtd in Harrington et al, p.1, 3). This is only logical for the study of language which, as defined by Norton (2000), is not a “neutral medium of communication, but is understood with reference to its social meaning” (p. 5). The subject of study itself is by its nature subjective and elusive in definition, the very issues that Norton (1997) also cites as the problems in research into the subject of identity. To define the parameters of research or the goals of a linguistic study, one must use the same tools that are being defined. To be impartial or objective about language is nearing the impossible. Therefore, instead of attempting objectivism or de-emphasizing the role of the researcher, the methodologies in both gender and linguistics research, chosen for use in this thesis, necessitate a reflection on the part of the researcher as well as reaffirm the benefits and validity of solicited data. A researcher’s choice of approach or combination of approaches must be evaluated just as much as the data resulting from such research (Harrington et al, 2008). In this spirit, the following headings represent a reflection upon the choice of methodologies and approaches for this thesis project as well as an argument for their relevance in the field of gender and language study.

Emphasis on Human Agency and Subjectivity

As revealed above, one of the complications that arises when choosing

appropriate methodologies for use in research concerning gender identity and language learning comes because of the inherent subjectivity of the field and the emphasize on the human element of research. Norton (1997) explains this when she constructs her own definition of the term *identity* in its relation to language learning, “The subject, in turn, is not conceived of as passive.... The subject has human agency. Furthermore, and of central importance, subjectivity and language are theorized as mutually constitutive” (p. 411). Language learning as an adult in contemporary society is almost always an intentional and conscious act. Therefore, unlike studies of children who acquire a second language during the critical period, studies of adult language learners must be aware of the human agency and conscious process that are implied in the learning process. Not only do adult learners rely more often on extrinsic motivation factors, but the politics of language play a far more integral in motivations for acquisition and even choice of second language (Dörnyei 1994, 1998). This thesis does not attempt to deal directly with the effects of motivation on second language acquisition, yet it does serve as a concrete example of the human agency involved with linguistic study. This conception of human agency is at the core of the research questions for this thesis. Prior research into identity and language learning has tended to focus on quantifiable data in relation to the influence of identity on language production, commonly using discourse analysis as a primary methodology. This research tends to utilize a nuanced view of “differential tendencies” as a beginning for analysis. Yet, this focus on “differential tendencies” negates the human agency in adult language learning. Little research has given importance to the consciousness of English Language Learners of their own shifting perception of identity. There are notable exceptions, primarily found in Norton (1997, 2000) and those who

share her focus on identity as relating to social positioning.

One of these exceptions is McMahonill's (1997) case study of a group of Japanese women acquiring English as a second language in a "grassroots" style classroom which focused on both language skills and "feminist language education" (p. 612). McMahonill (1997) focused on solicited data from language learners instead of observing conversations, asking participants to answer a survey about their perceptions of identity and feminism. Even though her study did not involve English Language Learners in the United States, its relevance to theories of identity and language learning is paramount. The primary hypotheses in the study focused not on "differential tendencies" but on participant's motivations for acquiring English, specifically as it related to "feminist goals for oneself and other women" (p. 613). McMahonill theorized that these Japanese ELLs might perceive "English as allowing or requiring them to express themselves more directly and specifically than Japanese" and that the language classroom, particularly one focused on feminist or gender issues would serve as a "site for personal disclosure between women from different backgrounds..." and that it would allow the women involved to "reflect more critically on their own gender socialization and resist the aspects of it they just as oppressive by drawing on the lived alternatives of others," essentially by changing their language practices (p. 613). Even though this thesis does not focus particularly on feminist pedagogy in the ESL classroom, McMahonill's findings on shifting identity were of particular interest. When asked "Do you feel you express yourself differently in English than in Japanese?", eight of the fourteen participants answered in the positive, mentioning issues of gender equality and, interestingly, cognitive dissonance (p. 614). One participant elaborated, comparing her perception of

English's relative "straight-forwardness" to the "imprecise expressions" of Japanese, stating, "But in English, I'm forced to straighten out my normally vague thoughts logically and express them all in words, which is painful" (p. 617). This became an inspiration for the thesis' emphasis on human agency and participant's own thoughts, and the surveys piloted were modifications of McMahonill's study, placing more emphasis on issues of identity and less upon the particulars of a feminist classroom. This sort of revelation on the part of a language learner is often overlooked in favor of more quantifiable data, but its importance cannot be overstated when studying issues of identity's intersection with second language acquisition.

Feminist Research. Norton's conclusion about the "subject having human agency" and McMahonill's (1997) exploration of feminist second language pedagogy are not isolated. Gender and language study from its origins has always had a connection with feminism in that both fields accentuate the ability of research to be led by both the "subjects" and the researcher, not solely by the researcher in isolation. This tendency in feminist research is not without problem, and the "possibility of participant's perspectives actually taking precedence over those of an 'expert' researcher" is highly contested in academic arguments concerning feminist research (Harrington, et al, 2008, p. 17). In her summary of feminist research, both its own field and an approach to supplement other fields of research, Litoselliti defines the three tenets of feminist research and emphasizes this ability to include the human element in research:

1. Characterized by self-reflection, self-reflexivity, even conscious partiality.
2. Done by researchers who 'locate themselves within, rather than outside the research topic and the participants.'

3. 'Informed by feminist politics.' (2006, p. 151-2).

The second attribute of feminist research is obvious in its relation to 'human agency.' Researchers who intentionally avoid the label of "objective observer" do so in order to connect directly with the participants and subjects of research, giving emphasis to the subject's own insider knowledge of the topic being studied. This seems to be a natural facet of identity research because of identity's innately interior nature. Locating oneself inside the research allows for a more nuanced analysis of identity. At first glance, the first tenet, self-reflection, may not seem to connect with this conception of 'human agency,' but it relates to the concept of the researcher as intrinsically partial and unable to remain completely objective. Feminist and gender and language research with feminist aims do not penalize the research for this impossibility, but incorporate self-reflection into the research process in order to achieve specific goals. A researcher should be able to reconcile their partiality and to reflect upon it in their research, particularly to "ensure that it does not inadvertently perpetuate rather than subvert the inequalities it tries to address" (Harrington, et al, 2008, p. 17). This connects to the third tenet, promoting "feminist politics," particularly referencing the drawing of "connections between gender-related linguistic phenomena and gender inequality or discrimination" (Litosseliti, 2006, p. 152). By its definition, feminist research has a political goal and researchers must reflect upon whether their studies meet this goal before declaring them 'feminist.'

In that spirit of reflection, it would be stretching to consider this thesis to be a piece of feminist research because at its core is not a preoccupation with "gender inequality or discrimination" but rather an exploration of gendered identity without in-depth exploration of the sociopolitical goals of language production. However, in a post-

structuralist sense of intersectionality, this thesis heavily borrows from the second tenet of feminist research, placing emphasis on the ability of participants, who might have been previously disenfranchised in research, to act as ‘experts’ in the realm of their own identity, examining the self-perception of identity instead of attempting to use conversation or discourse analysis to observe the same items. This utilization of solicited data is discussed further in the section “Sociolinguistics and Its Relationship with Ethnography.”

Emphasizing the Community of Practice. Overall, emphasis on the ‘human element’ of research and inherent ‘expertness’ of the subject might seem contradictory when considering the broader tendency of social constructionist theories to “de-emphasize gendered speakers (and writers) as agents, focusing rather on *what* is communicated *by, to, and about* women, men, boys, and girls” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4). However, contemporary, post-structuralist ideas of gender and language study encompass a combination of both “social constructionist meanings of *gender* together with a nuanced version of ‘differential tendencies’” (Harrington et al, 2008, p. 4). As well, as the shift from broader quantitative studies transitioned to ones that focused on “local, contextualized, qualitative explorations of gender”, naturally specific communities of practice became more relevant to gender and language study. (p. 6). Norton (2000) asserts that of the ‘subjects’ or participants of research that “...she or he is conceived of as both subjects of and subject to the relations of power within a particular site, community, and society....” (p. 411). The importance of specificity in community, site, or society represents the connection between social constructionism and ‘human agency.’

The “what” of communication is influenced not only by the “who” but also by the “where.”

Sociolinguistics and Its Relationship with Ethnography

Expanding past its origins in “differential tendencies” and a “variationalist paradigm” which solely concerned itself with “large-scale surveys, comparisons, and unproblematised notions of gender,” sociolinguistics has grown as a field to incorporate a multitude of different methodologies and approaches to gender and language study, including feminist research (as mentioned above) (Harrington et al, 2008).

Sociolinguistic approaches to gender research have emphasized the importance of context and subjectivity since Gal’s 1978 seminal study of gender and bilingualism in a city on the border of Austria and Hungary. Overall, as the field has shifted away from identifying gender ‘differences’ in learning strategies or skills, approaches have arisen that are aptly defined as “local, contextualized, qualitative explorations of gender as intersecting with other social identities” (p. 8). These approaches emphasize a utilization of ethnographic methodologies in sociolinguistic research, including one-on-one interviews, personal histories, solicited reflection upon aspects of language and culture, and a broad theme of holistic approach to language research.

This directly relates to the notion of human agency’s importance in the field of language and gender study because ethnographic methods generally include a variety of solicited interpretations, including personal histories and accounts of events. Utilizing ethnographic approaches when researching gender identity and language learning directly involves the participant in the process of research and “considers what can be gained from enabling participants to provide an ‘insider’ perspective on linguistic data”

(Harrington, et al, 2008, p. 6). Fundamentally, this refers to the power relations between the researcher and the “subjects” of research, de-emphasizing the expertness of the researcher and emphasizing the inherent expertise of the speaker in their own language practices. Even though solicited responses are seen by some researchers, especially in the field of discursive psychology, as invalid and irrelevant, ethnographic approaches value the cognizant consultation of participants in research, to provide a “solicited interpretation” of “reported understandings” (p. 11). This thesis heavily relies on the intentional reflection of language learners upon their own concepts of identity, asserting that the individual speakers, not solely the researcher, are experts in their own language practices.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Previous gender and language study research has determined that second language resources and the language learning process can and do act as catalysts for a shifting of the self-perception of social and cultural identity as well as the perceived identity of others concerning the manner in which it relates to language production. Issues of social and cultural identity have an enormous impact on the language classroom, which include aspects such as: students’ desired outcomes, perceptions of culture, valued language skills, and motivation (Gordon, 2004; Norton, 1997). Much of the research concerning identity has focused on these impacts on the classroom, mostly investigating the differences in gendered language learning strategies. Some research has focused on determining the exact facets of language that are impacted by identity (Gordon, 2004) or a general understanding of the correlation between second language learning and issues of identity, primarily with the intent of ending gender discrimination and inequality

(Norton, 1997; 2000). Even though 'human agency' is emphasized in such studies, there has been very little research that solicits interpretations of gendered identity change from language learners themselves. This thesis attempts to break from this trend in order to truly recognize the human agency necessary and inherent in adult second language learning and renegotiation of identity.

The fundamental research questions involved in this study are as follows: Are English Language Learners conscious of the process of identity change involved in second language learning? If so, do some English Language Learners resist this type of social positioning and in what ways might this resistance manifest? Do English Language Learners recognize the same facets of gendered language production that native English speakers recognize and use instinctively? In either case, do they perceive language production in other students, particularly females, as differing between English and their first language?

Following research (Norton 1997; 2000) that already confirms second language acquisition's catalytic effect on gender identity change, I hypothesize that English Language Learners are indeed conscious about their interaction with the sociopolitical aspects of language learning, choosing to reconstruct their self-perception of their own gendered identity or perhaps even resisting this social positioning. English Language Learners are conscious of the perceived differences in their own language production in their first language and English, and they also consciously perceive the differences in language production of their peers based upon language, gender, and ethnicity. Also implicit in this hypothesis is the conscious recognition of shifting opinions in both first language culture and American culture.

Community of Practice

It is imperative to situate this thesis inside its particular context and Community of Practice. Participants were chosen from the advanced classes of Western Kentucky University's English as a Second Language Institute (ESLI). A four semester intensive language and immersion program, the ESLI functions as a bridge for English Language Learners to official acceptance into "mainstream" university classes. The debate of intensive or immersive language instruction is not broached in the following research, but it is important to the full understanding of the community of research participants.

Students chosen for participation are in the last semester before graduation from the program and matriculation into the larger university population. Most students noted on the survey that even though they had been learning English for longer, they had only lived in America for a year and a half or less. Only one participant indicated they had lived in the United States for longer than 18 months. These students may not be a typical representation of American immigrant life, as many participants in the ESLI return to their country of origin after degree completion, but they do function as a community of adult English Language Learners. The 32 students surveyed represent a range of first language. Participant's gender and first language are represented in Table 1 below in alphabetical order according to first language. Chinese and Arabic represent the most common first languages, though there are 7 total languages represented by the participants. Gender breakdown is skewed slightly towards male participants with a total of 19 males, 12 females, and 1 participant who self-identified as "other." Age, ethnicity, and marital status were not collected in the survey tool.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants by Gender and First Language

Number First Language Participants	Gender			Total of
	Male	Female	Other	
Arabic	8	6	1	14
Azerbaijani	2	0	0	2
Bangali	1	0	0	1
Chinese	6	2	0	8
Indonesian	1	0	0	1
Spanish	1	1	0	2
Vietnamese	0	2	0	2
*Did Not Specify	0	1	0	1
Total	19	12	1	32

Creation and Explanation of the Survey Tool

In order to evaluate this hypothesis, a modified open-ended survey was piloted by the researcher. Due to the relative newness of gender and language study as well as the lack of prior research focused on the *consciousness* of participants about their language production and identity, it was decided that a new survey would be constructed after reviewing similar studies that were inspired by ethnographic approaches. The survey was partially based upon McMahonill's (1997) case study of Japanese nationals learning English as a Second Language. Sections of the survey will be referenced as appropriate, but a full original text of McMahonill's survey is available in Appendix A. McMahonill's study focused

upon issues of feminist pedagogy inside the ESL/EFL classroom, specifically focusing on Japanese “grassroots” voluntary classrooms which incorporated feminist goals for language learning and consisted primarily of female language learners (p. 612). After evaluating the unique Community of Practice these women represented, McMahonill developed the hypothesis that “Native Japanese-speaking women in particular may perceive English as allowing or requiring them to express themselves more directly and specifically than Japanese does,” which might perhaps give “rise to an association between English and feminist discourse” (p. 613). The second aspect of McMahonill’s hypothesis focused on the potential resistance found in such language classroom in which women were “able to reflect more critically on their own gender socialization” and “aspects of it they judge as oppressive” by comparing their own world view to the “lived alternatives of others” (p. 613).

In her case study, McMahonill asked participants to respond to a series of open-ended questions that focused on their perceptions of feminism and women’s issues, motivation for language study, and self-perception of identity. Even though feminism and women’s issues are complicit in any gender and language research, this thesis chose to focus on the last two questions asked by McMahonill’s (1997) survey:

10) Do you feel you express yourself differently in English than in Japanese? If so, how?

11) Do you ever feel any contradictions about yourself as an English learner? If so, how? (p. 613)

These two questions concentrated on issues of identity, perhaps with the intent to connect identity to the feminist language classroom on McMahonill’s part, but they resonated with

me as a language learner, particularly of Japanese, and harkened back to my own conflict of identity when speaking Japanese both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, though in English I define myself as a direct person, I often find myself hesitating before speaking a direct opinion in Japanese, not necessarily in fear of making a grammatical mistake so much as a perception of inappropriateness. After reviewing similar studies of both conscious identity change (Gordon, 2004; Morgan, 1997; Norton, 1997) and resistance to change (Siegal, 1996), it was discovered that there was a lack of survey tools that would potentially answer the previous research questions. In order to further the study of identity in second language acquisition, a pilot survey was created, branching out from McMahon's original two items to include questions about cultural adaptation and assimilation, language production differences, and identity conflict/change.

Likert Scale Justification. A 5-point Likert scale was chosen to replace the open ended answers of the original McMahon (1997) survey. This choice was made in an attempt to modify the original survey for use with participants who might have limited English proficiency (LEP). Because the participants in McMahon's survey were given the option of responding in their first language, the open-ended questions were able to be more detailed and nuanced without guiding the participants in any way. When modifying the tool and expanding it for use in this thesis, it was modified to be given solely in English due to the inability to translate the survey into the first-languages of all possible participants. The addition of the Likert Scale allowed for students with less proficiency in English to complete the survey and still give a similar nuance of responses by asking for explanations of participants' non-neutral responses

Table 2

Example Question and Answer Options from Thesis Survey

6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

As illustrated by Table 2 and in Appendix B, which contains the full text of the survey, participants were asked to evaluate their agreement or disagreement with the questions by indicating their response on the following scale that was chosen to replace a traditional numeric scale in order to clarify instructions for students with limited English proficiency:

(Strongly Agree=SA, Agree=A, Neutral=N, Disagree=D, Strongly Disagree=SD)

Participants were then asked to elaborate at their discretion on any of the items with which they agreed or disagreed beneath the item. In the informed consent process, participants were reminded that it was permissible to leave blank or not respond to any question they did not feel comfortable answering, as an attempt to avoid intentional neutrality or false agreement/disagreement in response to what might have been perceived as the wishes of the researcher. The effectiveness of these procedures are discussed in Chapter IV: Results and Analysis.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Because this was a pilot project, the survey was given to a select, smaller group of advanced English Language Learners in one of their language classes during the day. Students completed the survey in approximately 20 minutes and returned it that day. Table 3 shows the responses to each item arranged in order from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, with the number of blank responses listed in the furthest right column.

Table 3

Survey Items and Responses Arranged in Order from Strongly Agree-Strongly Disagree

Survey Item and Number	SA	A	N	D	SD	Left Blank
6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.	4	8	14	3	2	1
7. I feel confused sometimes about my identity as an English Language Learner.	2	12	11	4	2	1
8. My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed...	3	9	11	3	5	1
9. I think that men and women speak differently in English.	2	11	10	6	3	0
10. I think that women speak differently in English than they do in my native language.	1	12	15	4	0	0
11. I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture.	7	9	14	1	1	0
12. I consider myself a part of American culture.	2	5	16	5	4	0

Table 4

Questions on Survey and Percentage of Responses by Gender

Question Number	Gender	SA	A	N	D	SD	LB*
6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.	M	5.2%	26.3%	52.6%	10.5%	0%	5.2%
	F	25%	25%	41.6%	8.3%	0%	0%
	O	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%
7. I feel confused sometimes about my identity as an English Language Learner.	M	5.2%	42.1%	36.8%	15.8%	5.2%	0%
	F	8.3%	25%	41.6%	16.6%	0%	0%
	O	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
8. My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed...	M	10.5%	36.8%	50%	10.5%	15.7%	0%
	F	8.3%	10.5%	33%	8.3%	16.6%	8.3%
	O	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
9. I think that men and women speak differently in English.	M	10.5%	21%	42.1%	21%	5.2%	0%
	F	0%	41.6%	16.6%	16.6%	16.6%	0%
	O	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
10. I think that women speak differently in English than they do in my native language.	M	0%	26.3%	57%	15.7%	0%	0%
	F	8.3%	50%	33%	0%	0%	0%
	O	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%
11. I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture.	M	21%	21%	47.3%	5.2%	5.2%	0%
	F	25%	41.6%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%
	O	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
12. I consider myself a part of American culture.	M	10.5%	15.7%	42.1%	15.7%	15.7%	0%
	F	0%	16.6%	66.6%	8.3%	8.3%	0%
	O	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%

*Left Blank

Table 4 shows a breakdown of the responses by gender, as an attempt to see where participants might have differed in their response to particular questions, and if this difference was allied with gender. What is immediately apparent in Tables 3 and 4 is the overwhelming number of neutral responses. This is problematic because it skews the other responses and complicates any sort of statistical analysis of the data collected.

However, the inability to recover much valid statistical data answering the research questions does not invalidate the entire premise of the survey.

Even though there are flaws in the quantitative ability of the survey because of the inflated number of “neutral” responses, the written comments provided a glimpse into ESL student perceptions of language’s connection to social and cultural identity, perception of men’s and women’s speech, and the cultural interests of adult English Language Learners.

Analysis of Written Comments

Perceptions of Language and Identity. Despite the overwhelming neutral answers (43.75% for item 6; 34.37% for item 7), the written comments from participants reveal that their response to item 6 “*I express myself differently in English than in my first language*” and item 7 “*I feel confused sometimes about my identity as an English Language Learner*” were anything but neutral. Emotional response was seen by two participants in particular as being specifically connected to language. Both participants expressed reluctance or inability to express emotions as fluently in English as in their first language, as illustrated in these excerpts from their written comments:

The way to express emotional responses sometimes requires my native language
(Male Bangali Speaker [1], response to item 6).

Because sometimes I feel strange and have difficulties to express my feeling with
English. (Male Indonesian Speaker [1], response to item7).

This could be a matter of limited English proficiency and lacking the necessary vocabulary to express emotional response, vocabulary which is not necessarily emphasized in traditional ESL classrooms. However, it does express that English

Language Learners may perceive ways of expressing emotions as differing between their first language and English. This difference was perceived in a more general way by an Arabic speaking student, who wrote, “because people in my first language understand more” (Arabic Speaker, Gender self-identified as other, response to item 6). This response might not be directly connected to emotion, but it implies a level of connection with other speakers of Arabic that were found lacking in English-speaking communities.

Some responses denied any perceived connection between identity and language, citing that they either did not personally “feel” different or a generalized observation of universal human elements not connected to language. Of these comments, the following were of most interest:

I don’t think language or different environment changes somebody’s personality or identity.... (Male Azerbaijani Speaker (1), response to item 7).

I don’t think any language is different. Language just is a tool to communicate with other people. We just want to express our thoughts. Language is only a form of thoughts. (Male Chinese Speaker (1), response to item 7).

This is an interesting retort to linguistic theories that correlate and imply causation between language and identity. Though certainly the participants’ opinions may not be informed by research, this does speak to the consciousness of students about identity’s connection (or disconnect) with language. One participant even admitted an intentional attempt at “disconnection” from associating herself with either culture: “I have different identity even for my culture and I try to disconnect myself ...” (Female Arabic Speaker [6], response to item 6). These responses imply almost a type of resistance against any perception of identity shifting, a resistance which was also found in participants’

comments about American culture.

Cultural Interest and Resistance. Written comments for item 11 “*I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture*” and item 12 “*I consider myself a part of American culture*” revealed that even though 50% of the respondents marked a neutral response on the Likert scale, there is a stark division in interest concerning learning about American culture, specifically gender roles, and the perception of their own inclusion in American culture.

Resistance. Resistance to being considered part of American culture was a common response. One participant in particular cited patriotism for his country and culture, writing “Never ever I will consider myself par[t] of American culture. I love with all my heart my culture and country.” (Male Spanish Speaker [1], response to item 12). This is quite a visceral reaction, but it is not an isolated one. Another male participant cited his first-language connections in the U.S. as the reason for his separation from American culture, writing, “Because there are a lot of Arabic speakers in USA, so that is why my first language will not be changed or even my culture” (Male Arabic Speaker [4], response to item 11).

Interest. Despite these comments, there were some participants who considered themselves part of American culture. Perhaps more interestingly than this broader concept, all of the female participants responded either neutrally or affirmatively to item 9, shown in Table 4, which asked for participants to gauge their interest in learning about American gender roles. One Arabic speaking participant elaborated on her agreement thusly, “I want to know more about how I should treat American men because in my culture we most of the time don’t have any kind of relationship with men.” (Female

Arabic Speaker [6], response to item 11). These responses support McMahon (1997), Norton, and Pavlenko (2004) in their shared vision of an ESL/EFL classroom which concerns itself with matters of social equality and women's issues. It reaffirms that there is interest on the part of female students which reflects the feminist concerns of the instructors.

Men's and Women's Speech. Once again, the perception of men's and women's speech was varied, even though the neutral responses to the Likert scale would have implied otherwise. What the Likert scale did reveal in this instance was that all of the female participants were either neutral or agreed with item 10 "*I think that women speak differently in English than they do in my native language.*" Specifically, 50% of female participants responded with 'agree' to item 8, representing one of the few items in which 'agree' and/or 'disagree' outweighed 'neutral' by a significant margin. In their written comments, both male and female participants elaborated on the differences perceived between men's and women's speech in English and the differences between women's speech in their first language and English. These comments may be general, but they provide an insight into the 'subject' perspective of much of the identity research done in the past fifteen years. Some comments were simple confirmations of the perceived differences, with examples like the following, "in my native language women most of the time they are shy and more quite [quiet]" (Female Arabic Speaker [6], response to item 10) One cited a specific woman in the participant's social circle, explaining, "Because one of my friends, she is a female and she speak[s] differently in English" (Male Chinese Speaker [5], response to item 10). This relates to Stritikus & Nguyen's (2007) exploration of English Language Learner's perceptions of their classmates, though the participant in

this survey did not express any thoughts of negativity towards the differences, only a seemingly impartial observation. This is an instance where perhaps an interview approach would have elicited more information to provide a more nuanced understanding.

Other participants directly referenced culture in their written comments to explain the differences between women's speech in English and their first language. In perhaps as close to an innate understanding of Norton's (1997; 2000) theories as possible, one participant explained that "The way they speak depends on their culture. If they keep Chinese culture in mind all the time, they will speak the same in both English and Chinese. If they [are] used to English culture, they may change the way [they] speak." (Male Chinese Speaker [6], response to item 10). Another response echoed a social constructionist view of gender and language, "Gender is a very special feature that has connection with many areas, such [as] sociology, history, and so on. Different gender[s] can have different social behavior and psychology" (Male Chinese Speaker [1], response to item 10). These responses represent the consciousness that adult language learners have when navigating the often choppy waters of identity and culture.

Focus on Grammar and Phonetics. Perhaps because there is no overtly prescribed women's language in English, though researchers have confirmed differences in men's and women's speech acts, some participants noted that there were no apparent differences in men's and women's language production in English (Gordon, 2004). One speaker elaborated his disagreement with item 9 on the survey with "No because spelling/pronunciation of letters is [the] same" (Male Azerbaijani Speaker [2], response to item 9). This indicates that without prompting, some students may not notice the

difference in men's and women's speech in English, further supporting Chavez's argument against the modeling of gender roles by instructors in the ESL classroom.

Politeness Issues. Another difference noted by participants in men's and women's speech and between languages was politeness. One woman commented on her observation of her male cohorts in the ESLI, "When I hear Saudi men speak in English they become more polit[e] [than] to speak in Arabic" (Female Arabic Speaker [1], response to item 9). Another Arabic speaker commented on "control" of the language used, "In my language women have more control about some word but in USA I heard some women don't have any control about them [their] word[s]." (Female Arabic Speaker (3), response to item 10). Because the surveys were anonymous, it is impossible to be certain, but she might perhaps be responding to the use of slang, or even obscenities, by women in American culture, something that would be a source of culture shock for a woman from Saudi Arabia where blasphemy and obscenity are subject to strict religious censure and considered a serious crime (An-Na'im, 1996). This issue of politeness represents an area where future study is needed, especially as it pertains to English as a global language of commerce and trade.

Motivations. Only 4 of the 32 participants indicated that their motivations to learn English as a second language were because of personal interest in culture or the language itself. Of these four, not one participant solely cited intrinsic motivations for his or her desire to learn English. All respondents included at least one external factor which motivated their English study. These responses ranged from concerns about job placement to finishing degrees, but they all shared the theme of external factors and requirements as the primary motivation to study English. English was seen by a majority

of the responses as a necessary tool for furthering their education or career. Eight participants even used the word “tool” or “required/requirement” in their comments to the question “Why are you studying English now? What are your motivations for studying English?” Issues of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation may seem more suited for studies of “differential tendencies” than of this type of identity research, but this overwhelming extrinsic response may indicate that adult English Language Learners are not primarily concerned with issues of identity. This view of English as a simple communication tool instead of a cultural experience may be related to the resistance found in participants’ responses to item 10 which asked about their self-perception of inclusion with American culture.

CHAPTER V: WEAKNESSES OF THIS STUDY, AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

Because this thesis piloted its own survey after finding no satisfactory tools already created and tested, examining the weaknesses of the study is especially important for future research. Originally, the intent was to survey approximately 60-70 students in the English as a Second Language Institute at Western Kentucky University. However, after the first round of surveys, it was determined that it would be more effective to evaluate the weaknesses of the survey tool and develop a revised version for future research. Even though there were several minor weaknesses found in the adaptation of the McMahon (1997) survey, they could be grouped into two major categories: 1) the adaptation of the Likert scale with optional written comments and 2) issues with adaptation for use with ESL students who have a limited English proficiency.

The Use of a Likert Scale

In conjunction with the neutral option on the 5-point Likert scale, by making further explanation on the part of the participants voluntary and only associated with either agreeing or disagreeing (strongly or not), the data was skewed towards the “neutral” response. All items had a neutral response rate of over 30% of total responses, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Percentage of “Neutral” Answers to Each Survey Item

Item Number	Percentage of Neutral Answers (out of 100%)
6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.	43.75%
7. I feel confused sometimes about my identity as an English Language Learner.	34.37%
8. My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed...	34.37%
9. I think that men and women speak differently in English.	31.25%
10. I think that women speak differently in English than they do in my native language.	46.87%
11. I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture.	43.75%
12. I consider myself a part of American culture.	50.00%

This was perhaps an attempt on the part of participants to skip the explanation, “written comments,” stage of the survey because the instructions only asked students to elaborate on items where they either expressed agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Seven of the participants (21.87%) did not respond with written comments to any of the items, and only nine participants (28.12%) wrote comments on a least 6 of the 7 items in the survey. The average number of written comments was 3.53, only 50.42% of the total possible responses. Because the written comments collected provided valuable insight into the self-perception of English Language Learner social and cultural identity as well as gender identity, a higher rate of completion would have allowed for more concrete conclusions about the research questions. While the Likert scale itself might be useful for

future studies, the manner in which it was paired with written comments needs to be revised to encourage both truthful response and further elaboration on the part of participants.

Design Flaws. There were also some smaller design flaws in the adaptation of the survey for use with a Likert scale. One such flaw came with using a single item approach for the original survey in which each research question was only paired with one item on the survey. This was done in order to further explore participants' thoughts on gender identity and change, and to use the responses to form the basis of a second survey, which was successful, but this came at the sacrifice of validity in the original survey. More than one item per research question is necessary in order to address "mental variables (e.g. attitudes, beliefs, etc.)" which are not easily observable because minor differences in the wording of questions can and do impact the "levels of agreement or disagreement" found in response (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012, p. 76). This is further explained by Dörnyei and Csizér (2012) when they assert that "more than one item is needed to address each identified content area, all aimed at the same target but drawing upon slightly different aspects of it" (p. 76). This has already partially been incorporated into the second survey, and it will be incorporated into the research after the second survey has elicited more information from participants in the form of the written comments, in order to see where the responses vary, in the hopes of building towards a viable survey tool for future identity research.

Other questions were changed in the second survey to avoid "ambiguous or loaded words" which Dörnyei and Csizér (2012) explain must be avoided in order to have valid data. One such example of this came in the deletion of the item "I feel confused

sometimes about my identity as an English learner.” The word “confused” was commented on anecdotally by participants as having various shades of meaning and negative connotations which were unintended on the part of the researcher. After piloting the second survey, further investigation as to any other loaded or ambiguous words will be completed. This also relates to another of Dörnyei’s and Csizér’s (2012) assertions about second language acquisition research that factual or demographic information should be held until the end of the survey. “Personal background questions” may set off “privacy alarm bells” in students, rendering them less likely to give truthful and thorough answers to questions (p. 78). Even though the second survey still has demographic information at the beginning of the survey, future renditions of this research will explore the benefits of collecting personal information at the end, especially if more detailed information like age or race is collected by future surveys.

Limited English Proficiency

Perhaps related to some issues with ambiguous wording, a number of the participants focused on the grammatical aspects of English language learning in their responses to questions 6 and 7. Some cited a lack of proper vocabulary in English and others a lack of knowledge about grammar rules. These responses reiterate not only the extrinsic motivations of adult language learners but also the importance of context and subtle shades of meaning in language, especially when speaking about a concept as elusively defined as ‘identity.’ If this research is continued, ideally it would be preferable to have first-language translations available for participants who may not feel as comfortable with the English survey. This is of particular importance when working within the context of immersive/intensive language programs because participants may

not have the breadth of language exposure of students who have studied for a longer time. However, there is worry that the results of the study would be skewed by the act of translating the questions themselves. ‘Linguistic relativity;’ a term defined by Hill and Mannheim (1996) as the influence of the structure of language on its speakers’ perceptions of both self and the world; is an issue that arises when dealing with works in translation, especially when comparing results across languages. Another way to solve this issue would be to focus on English Language Learners with more proficiency in English and/or to focus on one specific linguistic group which would enable the author to translate the survey into the first language of the Community of Practice. Either solution has its benefits and drawbacks; to solely focus on advanced English Language Learners would be to ignore the crucial first steps in gender identity change and to dismiss any ability to explore its origins, and to focus on one specific first language would not have the same research goal of discovering which facets of gender identity change are universal, if any. As well, Dörnyei and Csizér (2012) warn that there may be instances in which “a close or literal translation will not express the real meaning and the pragmatic function of the text well” (p. 79). In these cases, it is necessary to have a team-based approach with multiple first languages represented in order to negotiate meaning in either language.

Creation of the Second Study and Areas for Future Research

In order to potentially rectify the weakness of the pilot survey, a second survey has been created and will be piloted with a similar group of ESL students at Western Kentucky University in the spring of 2014. The full text for this survey is available in Appendix D. This second survey was created after reviewing common written comments

on the first survey to find common observations among participants and evaluating the weaknesses of the first survey, in the use of the Likert scale, instructions to participants, and the phrasing of specific questions. The Likert scale presented a particular challenge not only because of the substantial amount of ‘neutral’ responses which created issues in validation before but also because research varies on the most effective number of answer choices, especially for information that might be perceived as controversial or politically sensitive by respondents (Allen & Seaman, 2007). By reducing to a four-point Likert scale, the neutral choice would be eliminated, and the item would “force a choice” from participants. However, this loses the nuance of a five-point scale and, may skew responses for “socially acceptable” items towards the positive and “negative-impact” items towards the negative (p. 64). Further reduction to a two-point Likert Scale (“agree” or “disagree”) would remove the central tendency bias common in Likert style surveys, but it would again reduce the ability of the researcher to explore subtle nuances in responses. However, with the addition of required written comments on each item, it was determined by the author that this subtlety would still be able to be upheld in the participants’ own voices. This will also have the added benefit of removing the correlation of ‘neutral’ responses with lack of written comments. Though interviews may be completed as a portion of this second survey, the inclusion of written comments allows for a more truthful exploration of gender identity by participants because there is no possibility of backlash or judgment on the part of the researcher or other interviewees. The final determination is to reduce the 5-point Likert scale to a 2-point scale with the inclusion of instructions that request each participant write at least one sentence about each item on the survey. An example survey item is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Example Item from Second Survey

For each of the following items, please circle the response that matches your opinion. Afterwards, please write an explanation of your answer, at least one sentence for each item.

Agree Disagree 4. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.

Survey items were developed based upon common written comments on the original survey as well as refining wording that was anecdotally considered confusing by survey participants during the survey process. The following survey items represent an expanded exploration of social and cultural identity as it relates to second language acquisition:

- I express myself differently in English than in my first language.
- I have a separate English-speaking ‘personality.’
- I feel comfortable expressing my emotions in English.
- I feel comfortable expressing my opinions in English.

These survey items, as with ones on the first survey, would be analyzed both as a group and separated by gender in an attempt to further a nuanced understanding of “differential tendencies” in gender identity formation. Additional items concerning the comfort level of students with expressing both opinions and emotions in English were added after observing the tendency in written comments to include both terms. Survey items involving identity change were refined to allow for a more nuanced view of students’

consciousness in the process:

- Learning a second language has changed the way I view myself and the world around me.
- My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed while studying English at Western Kentucky University.

Both of these items still allow for the resistance found in the original survey and will also allow for separation between self-perception of identity and change in perception of issues outside of identity. Cultural interest, another area where resistance was found in the original survey, has stayed much the same:

- I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture.
- I consider myself a part of American culture.

These questions seemed to elicit the most written comments, even though they also had 50% neutral responses on the Likert scale. This is the reason why they were not changed much from the original wording, if at all. Some items on the second survey represent an expansion of the original items to include more prompting about specific aspects of men's and women's language. These new items are intended to reduce the burden of output on participants from the original survey which asked for generalized concepts of men's and women's speech:

- Women use more polite language than men in English.
- Women talk more in English than they do in my first language.
- Women curse more in English than they do in my first language.
- Men and women speak differently in English.
- Women speak differently in English than they do in my first language.

- Men speak differently in English than they do in my first language.

These items were taken directly from the written comments of participants in the first survey and from the identity research of Stritikus and Nguyen (2007). The emphasis in these items is not necessarily to specify the differences between men's and women's speech in various languages, but to explore English Language Learners' perception of these differences.

Areas for Future Research

Men's Issues. Specifically in the field of second-language acquisition as it relates to gender and language study, there has been a tendency to focus on women's issues and the perception of women by men and others in general. This might originate in gender and language study's association with feminist research, sharing a common goal of exploring "connections between gender-related linguistic phenomena and gender inequality or discrimination" (Litosseliti, 2006, p. 152). However, this focus on women's speech acts and gender identity change has had an isolating influence the study of male English Language Learners. There is very little research dealing solely with the self-perception of gender identity by male English Language Learners. The majority of gender and language research either deals with the perception of women by men, as in Stritikus & Nguyen (2007), or women as a separate entity, as in Norton and Pavlenko (2004) or McMahill (1997). Despite the author not feeling comfortable or skilled enough to create a new survey tool and to shift to a completely new demographic in this thesis, (male English Language Learners) even in the original survey, the comments by the men surveyed revealed just as much about their own perceptions of identity as they did their perceptions of their female cohorts. Gordon's (2004) article exploring the gender

identity of Lao immigrant English Language Learners is an example of research which focuses both on male and female experience both separately and comparatively. Simultaneously, Gordon (2004) emphasizes the “increased opportunities” available to women immigrants in the form of economic opportunities for work outside the home and the narrowing of opportunities for Lao men and the loss of traditional power sources and subsequent shifting of gender identity for men in navigating their interpersonal relationships as well as on their own. Perhaps there is a lack of research about male English Language Learners’ identity change because of this difference in social status change. Women immigrants often experience a widening of economic and social opportunities, which appeal to a feminist audience interested in exploring traditional ideals of Western feminism. Yet, the loss of “traditional power sources” for male immigrants may function as the same catalyst for identity change in addition to access to second language resources. Further exploration of this loss of identity and the need for reconstruction on the part of male English Language Learners is a necessary part of understanding the complete picture of gender identity change initiated by second language acquisition

Conclusion

The creation of a second survey does not represent an end to this research. After piloting the second survey, it is the author’s intention to continue development of this survey tool for use in future gender identity research. Gender and language study is still a relatively new field within sociolinguistics, especially as it pertains to English Language Learners, and there is much room inside of this field to explore the intersection of gender identity and second language acquisition with the intent to connect this research to ESL

classroom practices and the inclusion of identity work in the classroom. Though it has been perceived as an isolated individual variable, gender actually comprises a complex system of interpersonal relationships, self-perception, and discursive practices which has a monumental impact not only on behavior but also the perception and utilization of language. Even though they were not fully successful, this thesis and the two surveys represents a beginning to the author's course of identity research which emphasizes the human element of identity research by using feminist and ethnographic research approaches to explore the interconnectedness of gender identity and language learning, specifically identifying the ways in which English Language Learners consciously choose and resist aspects of gender identity change during the process of acquiring a second language.

APPENDIX A: McMAHILL'S (1997) ORIGINAL SURVEY

Questionnaire for Students of Eikaiwa Terakoya

Dear Students:

I am writing a short report for an English teacher's journal on Japanese women studying English conversation. My interest is in gender issues in language acquisition. I would very much appreciate it if you could answer the following questionnaire for me anonymously. You may write in English and/or Japanese, whichever you prefer. Please understand that I may include your comments in my report in English. Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation. Your opinions may help English teachers become more sensitive to the needs of Japanese women students. I will attend your class to directly collect the questionnaires on June 25.

- 1) Length of time you have studied English conversation at Eikaiwa Terakoya:
- 2) Why did you choose Eikaiwa Terakoya out of the many English conversation schools available?
- 3) Have you ever studied English conversation or another foreign language before? If so, when and for how long?
- 4) Are you interested in feminism or women's issues? If so, which issues and why?
- 5) Why are you studying English conversation now?
- 6) In what format are you combining the discussion of feminism and the environment with English study in your classes? Please give examples.
- 7) Would you refer to yourself as a feminist? Why or why not?

- 8) Have your opinions about anything changed while studying at Eikaiwa Terakoya? If so, how?
- 9) Do you think the feminism of Japanese or Asian people differs in any way from the feminism of other countries' cultures? If so, how?
- 10) Do you feel you express yourself differently in English than in Japanese? If so, how?
- 11) Do you ever feel any contradictions about yourself as an English learner? If so, what?

APPENDIX B: FIRST SURVEY

Please do not write your name or any other identifying information on this survey

1. Length of time you have studied English at Western Kentucky University:

2. What is your first language?

3. I identify as: Male ___
Female ___
Other ___

4. Have you ever studied English or another foreign language before? If so, when and for how long?

5. Why are you studying English now? What are your motivations for studying English?

For the following questions, please circle the response that matches your belief as closely as possible.

SA= Strongly Agree A=Agree N=Neutral D=Disagree SD=Strongly Disagree

6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

7. I feel confused sometimes about my identity as an English learner.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

8. My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed while studying English at Western Kentucky University.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

9. I think that men and women speak differently in English.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

10. I think that women speak differently in English than they do in my native language.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

11. I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

12. I consider myself part of American culture.

SA A N D SD

If you agree or disagree with this statement, please explain how:

APPENDIX C: RAW DATA FOR FIRST SURVEY

Gender and Native Language	# 4	# 5	# 6	# 7	# 8	# 9	# 10	Total # of Written Comments	Responses of Particular Interest to the Researcher
Female Arabic Speaker (1)	N	N	A	A	N	N	N	2	7. When I hear Saudi men speak in English they become more polit[e] that to speak in Arabic
Male Spanish Speaker (1)	D	SD	N	D	N	SD	SD	7	10. Never ever I will consider myself par[t] of American culture. I love with all my heart my culture and country.
Male Chinese Speaker (1)	N	A	A	N	N	A	A	5	4. I don't think any language is different. Language just is a tool to communicate with other people. We just want to express our thoughts. Language is only a form of thoughts
Male Arabic Speaker (1)	D	A	A	D	A	D	D	7	9. Gender is a very special feature that has connection with many areas, such [as] sociology, history, and so on. Different gender[s] can have different social behavior and psychology
Female Chinese Speaker (1)	A	D		SD	SA	SA	N	0	8. This is fact. 10. Because I feel proud to [of] my culture.
Female (Did not include first language)	N	SA	N	N	N	N	N	0	No written comments
Male Chinese Speaker (2)	N	N	N	D	D	N	N	0	No written comments
Male Chinese Speaker (3)	N	N	SA	N	N	N	A	2	10. I catch some American cultures , and then I want to see more.
Arabic Speaker (1) (Gender marked as other)	SD	A	N	A	D	N	D	7	4. because people in my first language understand more
Male Arabic Speaker (2)	N	A	A	N	N	N	D	2	10. I love my culture.
Male Chinese Speaker (4)	N	N	A	N	N	A	A	0	No written comments
Male Arabic Speaker (3)	N	A	N	A	A	A	N	3	7. Women speak faster and their voices are lower. 9. Because both genders have the same right[s] or almost.
Male Chinese Speaker (5)	N	N	A	N	A	SA	N	3	8. Because one of my friends, she is a female and she speak[s] differently in English
Female Spanish Speaker (1)	A		SD	SD	N	N	N	3	4. Because you don't know the same words in English that you know in your native language. 7. I don't notice any difference.
Male Arabic Speaker (4)	N	A	D	D	D	A	N	5	6. Because there are a lot of Arabic speakers in USA, so that is why my first language will not be changed or even my culture
Male Arabic Speaker (5)	N	N	SD	A	N	N	N	3	7. Not only in English, any language
Male Arabic Speaker (6)	N	SA	N	SA	N	N	N	7	4. I don't see any different between my language and English 7. Women usually talk softly [softer] than men. That [is] what I saw.
Male Bangali Speaker (1)	A	D	N	N	A	N	N	6	4. The way to express emotional responses sometimes requires my native language
Male Azerbaijani Speaker (1)	A	D	SD	SA	N	SA	SA	6	5. My identity does not require english or bangali to be exact. 8. The english speaking women are more expressive than female native Bangali speaker
Male Indonesian Speaker (1)	A	A	A	A	A	SA	SA	7	5. I don't think language or different environment changes somebody's personality or identity.... 10. Now that I am [a] student in American I can feel myself as the part of it, but not so active yet
Female Arabic Speaker (2)	SA	N	N	A	A	A	N	0	4. Because some words in English/any language can not describe my feeling 5. Because sometimes I feel strange and have difficulties to express my feeling with English. 10. Because my background like my mom, my sister, and my brother went to [the] United States and affect my whole life....
Female Vietnamese Speaker (1)	A	A	A	A	A	A	N	0	4. I am still learn (New Word)-some time difficult to find specific word explain what I want 7. women more clear 8. talk and explain more here
Male Azerbaijani Speaker (2)	A	A	D	SD	N	N	D	5	No written comments
Male Arabic Speaker (7)	A	N	N	A	N	N	SD	4	4. Because it is not my native language. 7. No because spelling/pronunciation of letters is [the] same
Female Arabic Speaker (3)	N	A	SD	A	A	A	SD	4	4. In English speaking, I be more formal than Arabic 7. I think that their style when they speak different 10. Because I have completely different culture
Female Chinese Speaker (2)	SD	N	N	D	A	A	A	4	7. Because the women don't use the slang language 8. In my language women have more control about some word but in USA I heard some women don't have any control about them [their] word[s].
Male Chinese Speaker (6)		SD	SA	N	D	SA	N	6	10. I think I can adapt to the American life, I like this country because it's open-minded anything, and the people are independence anything [more independent?]. I envy American people what they want to do, and they will do it soon.
Female Arabic Speaker (4)	N	N	SD	A	A	N	N	0	5. I know who I am. 8. The way they speak depends on their culture. If they keep Chinese culture in mind all the time, they will speak the same in both English and Chinese. If they used to English culture, they may change the way [they] speak.
Male Arabic Speaker (8)	SA	A	A	N	N	N	SD	3	No written comments
Female Vietnamese Speaker (2)	SA	A	SA	A	N	A	A	0	10. Because I have my own personality.
Female Arabic Speaker (5)	SA	N	N	N	A	SA	N	2	No written comments
Female Arabic Speaker (6)	D	D	D	D	A	SA	D	6	7. I don't see any difference.
									5. I have different identity even for my culture and I try to disconnect myself ... 7. ... not only in English 8. in my native language women most of the time they are shy and more quite [quiet]. 9. I want to know more about how I should treat American men because in my culture we most of the time don't have any kind of relationship with men.

APPENDIX D: REVISED SURVEY

Please do not write your name or any other identifying information on this survey

1. Length of time you have studied English at Western Kentucky University:

2. What is your first language?

3. I identify as: Male ___

Female ___

Other ___

4. Have you ever studied English or another foreign language before? If so, when and for how long?

5. Why are you studying English now? What are your motivations for studying English?

For each of the following items, please circle the response that matches your opinion.

Afterwards, please write an explanation of your answer, at least one sentence for each item.

- | | | |
|-------|----------|--|
| Agree | Disagree | 6. I express myself differently in English than in my first language. |
| Agree | Disagree | 7. I feel comfortable expressing my emotions in English. |
| Agree | Disagree | 8. I have a separate English-speaking 'personality.' |
| Agree | Disagree | 9. Learning a second language has changed the way I view myself and the world around me. |
| Agree | Disagree | 10. My opinions about my first language culture or American culture have changed while studying English. |
| Agree | Disagree | 11. I am interested in learning about gender roles in American culture. |
| Agree | Disagree | 12. I consider myself a part of American culture. |
| Agree | Disagree | 13. Women use more polite language than men in English. |

- | | | |
|-------|----------|---|
| Agree | Disagree | 14. Women talk more in English than in my first language. |
| Agree | Disagree | 15. Women curse more in English than in my first language. |
| Agree | Disagree | 16. Men and women speak differently in English. |
| Agree | Disagree | 17. Women speak differently in English than in my first language. |
| Agree | Disagree | 18. Men speak differently in English than in my first language. |

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