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## The Role of Dissonance and Harmony in one L2 Learner's Identity Development during a Language Camp Experience Abroad

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### Abstract

Second language (L2) camps provide learners with a short-term and intense experience with the target language and culture. The interactions among the campers can provide the opportunity for beliefs and values to be questioned or supported as language and culture skills are developed. This study examines the identity development of one L2 learner at a language camp in Turkey, as recorded through journal entries. Using a qualitative phenomenological research approach, the data analyzed suggest that both dissonant and harmonious events can shape a language learner's concept of self. Applications for the classroom are discussed, based on the findings of the study.

**Keywords:** L2 identity development, language camp, reflection, journaling

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### 1. Introduction

Second language (L2) camps tend to be short-term experiences for L2 learners (Wighting, Nisbet, & Tindall, 2005; Dahl, Clementi, Heysel & Spender, 2007), varying in length from a weekend to an entire summer (Robison, 1998; Trujillo, Quiat, & Valenzuela, 1982). The focus of these camps is to foster further development of learners' L2 language and culture skills and use both in close proximity with others in a well-controlled and intensive situation (Reese, 2006; Wighting, Nisbet, & Tindall, 2005). Much of the time during the camp is rigorously structured to provide an optimal learning environment in the time allotted (Wighting, Nisbet & Tindall, 2005). Language camps abroad give learners the ability to interact with a variety of native speakers and to visit and experience first-hand the rich dynamics of the target culture.

During their stay at language camps, the students often see differences and similarities between their home culture (C1) and language (L1) and the second culture (C2) and language (L2). As learners consider the different and similar features of the languages and cultures, their deliberations can provide fertile ground for identity development. Block (2002) suggests this happens most starkly as the language learners examine their values and beliefs.

To aid in fostering identity development, students can use reflective journals to keep track of experiences and reflect upon their significance as they progress through the language camp (Griffin,

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1993). As students experience the aforementioned differences and similarities between their L1 and L2 and C1 and C2, they write about the experience and consider their implications. Looking at and writing about the issues that occur in the language camp experience allows the students to frame, reflect and attend to aspects of their identity as they progress through the experience (Byrd, 2010). In other words, the act of noticing variances and commonalities can provide the opportunity to question long-held ideas, add new information, and make decisions regarding them, thus changing their identity. Writing about these ideas helps to foster the process. The present study examines one L2 learner's experience and the factors that potentially contributed to "the destabilization of her sense of self" (Block, 2002, p. 4) and how she reconstructed a new identity throughout and at the end of the intensive language experience.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### *2.1 Language Camps*

Shrum declared in 1985 that the language camp "is an old idea that still works (p. 219). Although it is not the goal of the present study to provide a definitive history of language camps, it is important to note that this tool for language learning has been in place for many decades. One of the better-known camps, the Concordia Language Village has been in operation since 1961 (Dahl, Clementi, Heysel, & Spenader, 2007; Reese, 2006). Similar camps have likewise been in operation in other parts of the globe for many years (Shrum, 1985; Trujillo, Quiat, & Valenzuela, 1982). Language camps are generally described as educational environments situated away from the mainstream culture, which allows for students of the L2/C2 to be immersed in the target language and culture (Dahl, Clementi, Heysel & Spenader, 2007). These camps are generally staffed by native speakers of the L2 as well as other teachers (such as graduate students or local L2 teachers), who are well trained in providing the campers with as authentic an experience as possible. Mainly the camps are located in the native country, which provides campers the opportunity to participate in the L2/C2 at a relatively low cost (Trujillo, Quiat, & Valenzuela, 1982). However, some camps are located outside the learners' native culture, which may allow for greater interaction with native speakers in another country (Hamilton, 2004). The research on language camps is not extensive, and, thus far, has mainly focused on how the camp is constructed or on developing language skills.

Studying a three-week long English language camp experience in China, Wighting, Nisbet and Tindall (2005) surveyed native Chinese participants between the ages of eight and eighteen to ascertain the effectiveness of the camp. Findings indicated that the language camp experience differed starkly and positively from the school classroom. Campers were able to interact in English through games and other activities, instead of performing grammar-translation type work that they experienced at school. The major finding of the study suggests, however, that students were able to increase their English language proficiency through interaction and relationship building. Much of this was accomplished by interactions with other English language learners from China, but predominately with working with native speakers from the United States. Along with these findings, the researchers reported that all instructors, whether from China or the US, also increased their language and culture skills.

Hamilton and Cohen (2005), studying a German language camp experience, examined how the dynamics of the language camp that could enhance language development and explored methods that these dynamics can be implemented into other programs of instruction. The data were collected through (a) ethnographic participant-observation, (b) videorecorded language use, (c) focus groups, and (d) written questionnaires (p. 239). Findings indicated that the camp participants, both staff and campers, engaged in various forms of play to foster language use and increase motivation. Among the methods of play were to establish routines, then to playfully "fly in the face of expectations" (p. 242). For instance, campers and staffers used songs to encourage playful and creative use of the language. Hamilton and

Cohen concluded that establishing a “playworld” of language use provided learners a “suitable context for interaction and of providing opportunities to process language with a variety of situations” (p. 245). They felt that the same type of meaningful play-infused activities can easily translate into more traditional classroom as well.

In her study of German students participating in a language camp in the U.S., Hamilton (2004) videotaped the interaction between students and their teacher and examined error correction in four camp situations: (a) a beginning level class; (b) an advanced intermediate level class; (c) a mixed-level cultural activity; and (d) a mixed-level interaction of campers cleaning their cabin. She found that the teacher-to-student speaking ratio in the first three situations was almost equal, which provided a solid situation for comparison of student error repair. In the fourth situation, the students spoke almost three times more frequently. The teacher attended to student spoken language repair more frequently in the formal classroom-type situations, but did not repair errors as often during the informal cabin interactions. The students, on the other hand, made no distinction among the four situations and self-corrected at approximately the same rate in all of them. It was noted that the amount of English spoken increased dramatically during the informal cabin cleaning activity.

## *2.2 Reflection and Journals*

Reflection is a frequently used tool in many branches of education (Griffin, 1993; Moon 2004; Porto, 2008). Griffin (1993) defined reflection as “a conscious effort on the part of an individual to carefully consider the beliefs, theories and personal experiences that affect his or her action,” while providing the opportunity to “recapture experience in order to evaluate it” (p. 35). Fendler (2003) suggests that reflection has a Cartesian basis, which sees knowing about the self or self-knowledge as a legitimate manner to create knowledge. By reflecting, therefore, the participant is taking part in a positive activity, which will lead to greater self-understanding. Moon (2004) states that reflective activity allows people to re-examine ideas, reorganize them and consider how they fit into patterns of a context. Similarly, Inchausti (1991) feels that reflective knowledge will develop in the practitioner an intrapersonal knowledge the can lead to self-actualization; thus, allowing for a richer, fuller life.

In order to facilitate the reflective process, journals (aka diaries) are a common format that allows participants to record their thoughts, actions and feelings. It is an ideal format in which to examine their beliefs and values as a learner or language user. Hoover (1994) suggests that keeping a journal or diary provides permanence for the events learners experience and a forum in which to reflect on their beliefs and values. Work done by Emig (1977) and Knecht, Deppe, Dräger, Bobe, Lohmann, Ringelstein and Henningsen (2000) shows that writing is a strong mode of learning, combining both logic and creativity; it also provides an excellent data source for research. Bailey and Ochsner (1983) propose five purposes of diary studies: “(a) research tools, (b) a source of research findings, (c) a process of self-evaluation, (d) a language learning technique, and (e) a means of working out frustrations with the language learning (or teaching) experience” (p. 193)

In L2 learning, various journal studies have been conducted throughout the years (cf. Bailey, 1980; Rivers, 1983; Schmidt & Frota, 1986). In a case study about an older learner of Spanish, Schulz and Elliott (2000) report on the former’s experience of learning Spanish as recorded in a diary while she participated in a Fullbright fellowship in Columbia when she was 57 years old. Schulz used her diary to monitor her language learning abilities as she examined the difficulties and successes she encountered. Findings of this study suggested that in spite of her frustrations in learning Spanish, she was able to improve her abilities, but also that much of the research about older learners experiencing difficulties in some aspects of language learning was supported.

### 2.3 Identity development

The social nature of the camps allows for the opportunity for interaction and development of the self. Self-identity is viewed by researchers as “a highly fluid, sometimes incoherent, fragmented, multiple and conflicting” process that gradually develops into a social context (Luk & Lin, 2007, p. 50). Norton and Toohey (2002) state that the construction of identity involves the person seeking an answer to the question, “Who am I?” in relation to his/her world (p. 115).

The L2 learning situation complicates this search by providing the learner with the influence of two (or more) culture systems whose values and beliefs may differ greatly from each other (Lin, 2009). Gu (2010) points out that, although much of identity development is connected to social interaction, the individual ultimately acts as the agent him- or herself who fosters change and continuously develops a sense of self.

In her study of a Japanese exchange student, Iteleji (2008) looked at the student’s narratives to track her development in a one-year study abroad experience. She asked: (a) How does learning a new language in a new culture affect the development of the high school student’s cultural identity? and (b) What factors of her cultural identity hinder and/or enhance language learning during her stay in the study abroad context (p. 230). Three main ideas emerged from the findings: (a) the student became aware of her multidimensional cultural identity through experiences that were sometimes unpleasant; (b) the student’s strong desire to learn English motivated her to give up some of her own culture and beliefs; and (c) the student’s perception of her satisfaction with her developing language skill was linked with her social position and power within and without her social groups.

The previous research conducted in reflective journal writing and language learning does not address the development of identity of the language learner in the language camp experience. It is the aim of the present study to examine this aspect of language and culture learning. Catherine’s journal in the present study gives insight into both areas of identity development. As she participates and writes about social interactions, she also provides insight into her own thinking as she examines her beliefs and values in the language and culture learning arena(s). The guiding principles of the current study are to examine one L2 learner’s experiences and the factors that contribute to the questioning of “Who am I?” (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 115) in a specific language camp situation and how her sense of identity throughout, at the end of, and after the intensive language experience changed.

## 3. Methodology

Because of the descriptive nature of the present study, qualitative analysis, being recursive and inductive, is appropriate for the investigation (Merriam, 1998). We used hermeneutic phenomenology perspective to analyze the data sources (Gadamer, 1989). According to this perspective, both the researchers and the researched are inevitable participants in the research process. This perspective attempts to look at details of the experience than the details of what the participant believes that the experience means (Van Manen, 1990). We sought to build a network of themes consistent with hermeneutic phenomenology that seeks the essential underlying message related to identity development contained within the data source texts.

### 3.1 Research Design

Based on the literature review, the present study focuses on how the participant’s, Catherine’s, view of her identity as a language and culture learner changed as she examined her language camp experience in-depth. She was in a unique position at this language camp with a two-way dynamic. She acted both as a language learner of Turkish and Armenian, who would be aided in her development by native speaking

peers of those languages. Similarly, she was also a language facilitator, being a native English speaker, who would help the European campers increase their English L2 skills.

Case study methodology is ideal for this study as it allows for the researchers to examine the situation in context, using multiple data sources (Nunan, 1992). Reflective journal writing allows people to focus their thinking and, in many cases, examine it in a critical manner (Garmon, 1998; Hoover, 1994). This study analyzed one L2 learner's experience and the factors that contributed to her answering of the question "Who am I" (Norton & Toohey, 2002, p. 115).

### 3.2 Participant

The participant of the study is one of the co-authors of the article. She was a sixteen year-old student who had just completed her sophomore year of high school (tenth grade). During that year, she had been enrolled in an Advanced Placement (AP) European History course. The teacher of this course was contacted by a businessman who had been establishing a company that would provide language camp experiences for American students. A two-week long language camp was to be held in Çanakkale, Turkey. The original participants were to be teens from Turkey, Armenia and Greece. At the last minute, the Greek students pulled out and the businessman was asked to find Americans to take their place. Catherine applied for a position and was selected. In addition to the camp experience, she would also be provided the opportunity to travel around the area of Çanakkale and interact with the native culture.

Up to this point, Catherine's knowledge of Turkey's and Armenia's cultures and history far outweighed her language experiences, due to her study of these subjects in her high school social study courses. However, she was well acquainted with the study of languages from earlier experiences. Most recently, she had finished a second year of German at her high school. Previously, she had also studied German, Chinese, Arabic and French in summer enrichment programs. She had also traveled to Germany, Switzerland and Mexico on both school-related and family trips.

### 3.3 Language Camp Structure

Language camps tend to be highly ordered, but they also allow for a significant amount of interaction among the campers in both structured and unstructured activities (Dahl, Clementi, Heysel, Spenander, 2007; Hamilton, 2004; Shrum, 1985; Trujillo, Quiat, & Valenzuela, 1982). Activities like language classes and directed discussion are aimed at providing campers with guidance in their learning. Unstructured discussions or recreational/sport activities allow the campers to practice their language skills in a realistic environment with peers (Hamilton, 2004; Hamilton & Cohen, 2005). The camp at Çanakkale followed a basic daily routine to meet these goals:

8.00-8.45	Wake up and breakfast
8.45-9.05	Whole camp meeting
9.05-10.00	Small Group Meetings (Circles)
10.10-11.00	Recreational Activities I
11.10-12.00	Recreational Activities II
12.00-13.00	Lunch
13.00-13.30	Base Groups
13.30-15.00	English/Turkish/Armenian Lessons
15.00-16.00	Free time
16.00-17.00	Games
17.15-18.15	Base Groups
18.15-19.45	Dinner
19.45-22.00	Various Group Activities

The final evening activity included some structured and some unstructured events. At this time, the campers participated in international trivia contests, cultural sharing, movie nights and talent shows.

### **3.4 Data sources**

#### *3.4.1 Journal*

Before leaving, Catherine was encouraged to record her experiences in a detailed reflective journal (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983). She both noted and reflected on events that occurred during the language camp. Her diary entries are the primary data source for the present study.

#### *3.4.2 Journal reflection paper*

Although Catherine had done some reflecting in her initial diary entries, it was felt that a deeper reflection of the diary as a whole was warranted to help make connections that were not immediately apparent (Sunstein & Potts, 1998).

#### *3.4.3 Photographs*

Catherine took many photographs that recorded her experience, especially in regards to relationships and culture. The photographs were also an effective resource to remind her of experiences about which she wrote in her journal.

#### *3.4.4 Interview*

The interview was semi-structured and face-to-face, where Catherine discussed the content of the other data sources, expanding on some themes. The interview was recorded and transcribed by David. Catherine was given the transcribed interview and was allowed to make further comments.

#### *3.4.5 Interview Reflections*

While Catherine checked the accuracy of the transcribed interview, she took the opportunity to reflect and extend on the data. These reflections added insight into what had been discussed during the interview.

### *3.5 Data collection procedures*

The journal and the pictures were collected before, during, and after the language camp in which Catherine participated in Turkey. Schulz and Elliott (2000) and Bailey and Ochsner (1983) both indicate that such materials are an effective data sources. Further data were gathered through face-to-face interaction with the subject during interviews and analysis. These interactions helped extend and clarify issues that arose during analysis.

### 3.6 Data analysis

Upon returning from the language camp, copies of the journal were made for analysis purposes. David initially read through the journals twice to become broadly acquainted with the information written in them. As he read, he wrote questions and marked areas that he felt needed clarification. These questions and markings formed the basis of the interview that was conducted after these initial readings. Concurrently, Catherine read through her journals and wrote a reflection on what she had experienced both linguistically and culturally.

Afterwards, we began examining the data sources for emerging themes related to her identity development as an L2 learner. Analytic notes were written throughout the reading, which allowed us to examine ideas broadly and to start making connections among the data sources. Catherine arranged photographs, so that they aligned with the sequence of the journal. We communicated constantly through the data analysis and the ideas from the conversations guided the identification of the codes. Two subsequent readings allowed us to code the comments and ideas for emerging themes, and a final reading gave us the opportunity to refine these codes and themes, which are listed below.

Through this recursive process, two main themes surfaced from the data: (a) harmonious and (b) dissonant instances of identity development. The harmonious instances of identity development coincide with Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) concepts of positive psychology, which is concerned with well-being, contentment and satisfaction, as well as hope and optimism (p.12). The dissonant events concern themselves with the conflict of one or more opposing thoughts (Block, 2002; Festinger, 1957). Catherine had written entries in her journal that suggested that her identity as an L2 learner occurred when her beliefs and values were either supported or challenged by activities and encounters within the language camp or during excursions. Five identity-related categories emerged from these two themes as well: (a) open-mindedness, (b) American, (c) student, (d) teenager, and (e) global citizen. With the themes and categories identified, we looked at all data sources again for common and discrepant themes (Merriam, 1998). We extracted quotes from the artifacts that related to each category and created a document that allowed us to see patterns as the themes and categories manifested themselves.

## 4. Results

Entries from the data connected to the five themes showed both harmony and dissonance associated with identity development. In the next section we address each of the categories, showing how they relate to the two emerging themes. It is important to remember that manifestations of identity are not always clear cut, but can overlap in various areas, such as social interaction (Luk & Lin, 2007). Care was taken to distinguish one aspect of identity from another, but some crossover can be expected.

### 4.1 Open-mindedness

The first aspect of identity development showed that Catherine is an open-minded individual. Open-minded in this context refers to accepting new ideas and welcoming different points-of-view. Predominately, this aspect of her L2 identity development is shown in a harmonious manner.

In her first journal entry, Catherine wrote, "We are on our way to Eurasia!! (Yeah, it needed to be in bold and underlined. It's just that impressive sounding. In my mind I've got the announcer guy with a big voice saying it)" (17/7). Catherine furthered this idea in the interview, "I knew something was going to change because I was going to a new place and I was going to experience new things." In her interview reflection, Catherine provided more insight:

“By knowing about a month in advance of where I was going, I was able to anticipate and become excited for a new experience. From past travels, I also knew that going to a foreign country changes your way of thinking. When I went to Eurasia, I was able to already have an open mind to change and I knew that something about me was going to change while I was there.”

Although this aspect of her identity manifested itself in positive ways, one instance was found in the data where this aspect of her identity had been challenged. As she reflected on the entry about the closing ceremonies she noted:

“Before I left I thought I was open minded, but I realized during this experience that I was not so much. It took time to become comfortable around people who came from a completely different culture than me, and a while to try to explain things because I realized that they might not know what I was talking about” (Interview reflection).

Due to her excitement for the trip, this aspect of Catherine’s identity emerged to help prepare her to for events that were to come. She anticipated that differences in culture and language exist and she was willing and able to look at others’ points-of-view. She found that the intensity of the language camp experience had challenged this aspect of her identity, but that she was still able to use the experience to her advantage.

#### 4.2 American

Deeply engrained in Catherine was the identity of being an American. Although she knew that she would encounter new experiences and she needed to be open to them, sixteen years of living predominately in the United States, this part of her identity readily manifested itself during the language camp experience.

As part of a harmonious expression of her American identity, Catherine pointed out how cartoon characters helped her adjust to the new environment. In her journal she stated that the room where they stayed “has several Smurf scenes pointed on the walls” (18/7). She expanded on this feature by stating, “The dorm walls were covered with paintings of Smurfs, as well as other characters such as Disney characters, but the Smurfs were most prominent. They provided a sense of ‘familiarity’ in connection to the US” (Interview).

Other harmonious manifestations of her American identity occurred as the various groups prepared for culture and talent shows.

“We got our cultural night program together. The girls are starting with some hip hop-low rider and a few other songs, then the boys are doing “Boot, Scoot and Boogie” and then everyone (including the audience) is doing the YMCA. And we’re ending the Hokey Pokey” (22/7).

As she and her fellow campers tied to decide upon the material for these shows, they needed to examine their beliefs of what represents America to them. Catherine stated during the interview that the dances for the culture night were chosen because. “Some of them were current pop culture. The YMCA and Hokey Pokey were classic.”

Catherine’s identity as an American also showed itself when her belief and values were challenged. One of the first instances of this challenge came as she noticed the frequent occurrence of pictures and statues of a Turkish national hero, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. She wrote various journal entries about this presence. She stated during the interview:

“I was able to see the difference between America and Turkey in a passive way about who we regard our military heroes. Whereas in America we have George Washington as a hero, we don’t have him on every corner. [This realization] made me very aware that I was an American in a foreign country.”

As she reviewed this part of the interview, Catherine added a little more insight into the presence of this Turkish hero and how it seemed to make her feel like an American.

“It seemed like most of the Turks didn’t notice him anymore, they were so used to his presence, but the Armenians and Americans definitely minded. I never realized how much the rest of the world views their war heroes of the after affects of big events, like world wars. It really opened my mind to seeing events from different points-of-view” (Interview reflection).

Food influenced Catherine’s identity as an American. Although she was open to trying a variety of the cuisine offered her, occasionally, she wanted to add an American twist to a local dish, as seen in these two examples:

“Whitney<sup>i</sup> and I went up to the food place to get *tost*. It’s bread, cheese and a meat substance which is grilled—kinda like a panini. I like it but it would be better with mustard” (29/7).

“We walked around awhile trying to find lunch. We had these chicken wraps that would have been better with ranch (dressing)” (1/8).

Food plays a significant role in a person’s cultural identity, so it is not surprising that Catherine expressed her identity as an American by wishing to add a bit of ‘home’ to her food.

#### 4.3 Student

Understandably, Catherine identified herself as a student throughout this experience. Up to this point in her life, she had mainly been a student in her life in the US and was able to draw upon that prior knowledge. This experience, however, provided her the opportunity to widen her ideas of where learning can take place. This, of course happened with both harmonious and dissonant events.

One of the most common activities that provided Catherine with a harmonious experience related to being a student was the daily base group and small group activity: “After lunch, everyone got in a circle in the gym and played ‘step forward if...’ to find similarities. We also had to find 10 things in common with our neighbors” (19/7).

Similarly, on 21 July she recounted, “After breakfast, we played Trust games. The one where you fall and the others catch you, where one person runs through and everyone else raises their arms and the human knot.” Later that day she wrote, “In base groups, we played a game where we had to guess our occupation by talking about what we’d think about piercings. I was a truck driver.”

These types of activities primarily are used to build relationships of trust, essential to the learning environment (Freeman & Freeman, 2011); they foster interaction in a positive way as students learn to communicate with others, some who share an L1, some who do not.

Catherine’s identity as a student manifested itself, very understandably, as she took part in Turkish and Armenian lesson during the camp. She wrote about positive learning activities in her language class experiences.

“In Turkish and Armenian, we played the cross out game, where 2 people have to cross out the word on the board first. We also played a game where the teacher blows a bubble and we have to count as high as we can before the bubble pops. We also have conversations and sing songs” (28/7).

The final and perhaps most poignant events that provided Catherine the opportunity to see herself as a student in a positive light came from field trips. On one trip, she was able to describe new knowledge about two cities that she visited. “We went to Troy and Assos. Troy was very interesting. There were nine cities of Troy and there are ruins of all of them. Assos is a little village, but it has a church/mosque that was built in the 1300s” (23/7). Her journal entry for this day was significantly longer than previous days had been with more detail, as she was recording the new information that she was learning and did not want to forget.

During her interview, she elaborated about her learning by traveling, “We were able to go around and see Turks in their own environment. And, while we did practice our minimal Turkish skills, some of the

camp counselors were able to come to be our tour guides.” The camp provided interaction with the natives, but also gave support as Catherine put her new knowledge to use.

Finally, in her interview reflection, she wrote, “I wish I could have spent more time visiting the cities. I really had fun. I was able to see how the people were in everyday life and see what was the same and what was different.” Her identity as a student allowed her to maintain a desire to gather information, in a safe environment.

Not all events that are related to Catherine’s identity as a student were harmonious. One aspect of the camp that challenged Catherine’s beliefs and values as a student occurred in base groups. Although she had had positive experiences in these groups, sometimes the design of the group meeting was to challenge the students’ thinking and learning. In one base groups session Catherine describes the “Bakal game.”

“We were split into 6 groups and we had to get certain fruits to make a potion and save our king. But the Bakal were from different cultures and couldn’t understand us. So we had to figure out what to do w/o instructions and we couldn’t talk to our group either. Eventually we realized that we had to do exactly what the Bakal did to get them to talk to us” (24/7).

Later, during another base group session, the campers participated in a debate that challenged their thinking of various ideas, but eventually led the two of the sub-groups to debate ideas to the point of being a bit absurd.

“After dinner we had base groups, where we discussed politics, religion, sex and history. Apparently the Armenians invented everything, including the apricot. We kinda started a debate about which country invented what. It was just between the Americans and the Armenians, though--the Turks stayed neutral. Michael and I said that the piano was invented in America. To which Ashot [an Armenian] replied, “That’s not possible. The piano’s older than America” (28/7).

Catherine’s identity as a student was manifested here as she was challenged in her thinking, but not necessarily in a negative way. Other times, she felt that her beliefs and values as a student were confronted in a manner that was not so positive or fun.

The final event that challenged Catherine’s identity as a learner was much more serious in nature. The campers were taken on an excursion to Gallipolis, a World War I battlefield near Çanakkale. In her journal, she gives a lengthy account of the visit to both the Turkish and New Zealand memorial sites. In her interview statement, Catherine explains, “When we were learning about [the battle] in AP Euro [history], we could distance ourselves from all the battles, but actually being there made realize that people died fighting for their countries and the horrible conditions they were in.” This was the first battlefield that Catherine had ever visited. She adds to the account,

“Learning about war in a safe classroom during school, able to be distracted and forget about what you learned after the class is over, a person is able to distance themselves from what actually happened. Going to Galipoli, and other battle-fields, and the memorials there, brought it much closer to home. We were actually able to go into the trenches that were dug. It brought many emotions to everyone who was there, especially the Turks who had relatives that fought in the battles” (Interview reflection).

Catherine’s previous learning experience in relation to history, in general, and war, in specific, was accomplished in a classroom. This type of experiential learning had not been available to her previously and was a challenge to how she perceived learning about the battle.

#### 4.4 Teenager

The fourth aspect of identity found in the data sources is that of Catherine being a teenager. The age of the campers ranged from thirteen to seventeen years old. Catherine was sixteen and viewed life from the perspective of a young person, who liked to have fun and interact with others, especially those of her

own age. Most often during the camp, this part of her identity manifested itself in a positive manner. Though the participants in the camp interacted throughout the experience, most of the time, these interactions were very structured. One night, a spontaneous event occurred that involved many of the campers and happened predominantly in English, although the groupings were often mixed culture.

“We were all supposed to go to bed early, but everyone stayed up past 1 [o’clock] talking. People got hungry, so the guy from the kitchens brought us all loaves of bread. So, in the middle of the night, over 40 kids were outside on the playground, talking, laughing and eating bread. It was really fun!” (24/7).

During the interview, David asked Catherine what they had talked about, “Everything. We talked about our homes, families, and friends. And the camp, what we liked and didn’t like about it.”

Similar instances happened where the beliefs and values of being a teenager were supported through interactions in the camp. Mostly, these were impromptu gatherings, like a “girls’ party in Adele’s room” (28/7). Catherine reported one of the most interesting events related to her teenager identity occurred after a field trip, “When we got back to the dorms, we hung out on the third floor for a while. The boys were playing Rockband and the girls were gossiping and writing in our journals. All was good until Justin (a counselor) made everyone come inside” (29/7). Because everyone was inside the dorms, Catherine and some others moved to a different part of the dorms. They decided to play a game in one of the boys’ room. Catherine continues: “Around 12.30, Justin came in and kicked all the girls out and made everyone go to bed (29/7). The next day during the initial base group meeting:

“Justin called all the girls who were in [the boys’] room last night to come to the center of the circle. Then he put signs on all of our backs that say, ‘I’ll will not go into the boys’ room any more’ in all three languages. I’m more amused than anything. It certainly won’t keep me out of the boys’ rooms” (30/7).

In the interview, Catherine discussed the event further when she was asked about why she had been amused, “Because they were taping a sign to our back. One of the girls, Selena, was mortified by it. I was amazed that Justin was so concerned about girls being in a boy’s room. Everyone was laughing except for Selena. It was a common experience we all shared and could laugh about.” Catherine drew this conclusion in her interview reflection, “This just re-emphasized the point that, although from different parts of the world, teenagers have the same feelings.”

One significant dissonant instance of being a teenager arose during the camp. In the second week, a new Armenian teacher took over instruction. The students did not like the change in teaching style, “After lunch we had class. We got a new Armenian teacher. I don’t really like her. When she writes words on the board, it’s in Armenian phonetics—not English. We were all kind of brats to the teacher” (26/7). Teenagers are sometimes known to be resistant to change. This manifestation of her identity showed that, although she was in a different country, learning a new language, she (and her campmates) were challenged by what they perceived as a particularly ineffective teacher.

#### 4.5 Global Citizen

The final manifestation of Catherine’s identity was one of viewing herself as a global citizen. A global citizen is a person who is ready to interact on a worldwide level (Dahl, Clementi, Heysel, & Spenader, 2007; Reese, 2006). With the exception of one instance, this part of Catherine’s identity in this area appears in her reflection on the camp. This may be due to the fact that she was taking part in the world of global citizenship to see that it was happening.

On the flight to Turkey, the students stopped in Paris to change planes. In an amusing entry on being in Paris, Catherine states, “But I’ve been shopping in Paris. They accept dollars, but they’ll only give change in Euros” (17/7). She is excited by the idea that she has been in a famous world capital and interacted with natives of that land.

Catherine's only encounter with the Turkish and Armenian languages before attending the camp had been to peruse a few books, while her grandfather, a linguist, explained some concepts. Overall, therefore, her instruction in the linguistic aspects of the two languages was not extensive, but she did enjoy the opportunity to learn more, "The classes were one of the things on the schedule that we were given that I was most excited about. I enjoy learning to *understand* people from different parts of the world" (Interview reflection, emphasis added).

Catherine's identity as a global citizen manifested itself as she considered her interactions with native Turks during field trips, "They were a lot friendlier than Americans are. It's a friendly country" (Interview). This interaction extended the development of her identity that had shown itself when she had limited interactions with natives in the Paris airport.

Finally, the base groups, where the campers discussed a large variety of topics, provided the format for the Catherine's identity development as a global citizen. She wrote:

"We did cover a lot of good, deep, topics in base groups. Other times in base groups, we discussed different political ideas and our differences in ideas. In base groups I learned the most about the different cultures" (Interview reflection).

However, the camp did not always provide a positive environment for the development of Catherine's identity as a global citizen. Some aspects of being abroad challenged her beliefs and values, as well as her physical comfort. This was evident from entries like this one, "Everyone was feeling sick and in a bad mood" (26/7). In the interview Catherine extended her thinking on this point, "We all got sick mostly because of the water. We weren't told that we couldn't drink it, but by the end of the first week all of the Americans were sick and quickly going through the anti-nausea medicine that the counselor brought." Later Catherine clarified that "[w]e were able to drink the water the kitchens provided for us, but not out of the taps outside like everyone else" (Interview). In considering her identity as a global citizen, Catherine found out that not all interactions will carry positive results.

## 5. Discussion

The guiding principle for the current study was to examine one L2 learner's experiences and the factors that contributed her identity development at a language camp experience abroad as recorded in her journal. Catherine entered this experience excited at the unknown prospects that it would bring. She readily used journaling as a way of examining her beliefs and values while experiencing a language and culture in an intense learning environment. This finding supports the idea that reflective journaling in language learning is an effective tool in providing a forum for examining their experiences (Bailey, 1980; Bailey & Ochser, 1983; Schulz & Elliott, 2000) and their identities (Kinging, 2004). In writing about her experiences at the camp, Catherine was able to work towards justifying and making sense of her relation to the others with whom she interacted in a language learning situation. This finding supports work done by Jiménez (2000), Norton (1995) and Yoon (2007) who suggest that language learner identity development and negotiation occurs in social situations. Much of her examination of her identity occurred as she interacted with her fellow campers, teachers, counselors, and natives of Turkey. We saw this occur when she interacted in her base group meetings and during games and performances. The results also support the work done by Gu (2010) that suggests that the language learner is ultimately responsible for fostering his or her own identity development. In this present study, this concept is shown when Catherine was able to extend her open-mindedness through the experiences in the new culture. Although a group interaction brought her to this realization, she had to work through the new idea for herself in this instance. Catherine expresses this concept in these words, "Although I was in a social situation, ultimately, my decisions were my own. I needed to synthesize all that I thought about and learned, and make it a part of myself" (Interview reflection).

Previous research on identity development in various situations emphasizes that the process is generally accomplished through the participant's being confronted by a given situation and finding that they must, in some way, overcome the challenge to their beliefs and values (cf Galman, 2009; Gu, 2010; Kinginger, 2004; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Brooks and Brooks (1993) suggest that, as a tenet of constructivist learning theory, previously held beliefs must be challenged to engender change. Indeed, it was the anticipation of the researchers that this would be the case as we based much of our thought around Block's (2002) idea of "the destabilization of the individual's sense of self" (p.4). Catherine's beliefs and values were certainly confronted numerous times throughout the camp. This can be readily seen in her interactions with the culture, such as coming to terms with how other cultures honor their heroes and how other cultures structure their educational environment. However, it became clear, as the themes emerged from the data, not all instances of identity development were accomplished with Catherine needing to confront and solve a dire problem. Drawing on the work of positive psychologists, we find that identity can be formed as people take part in positive activities, where their thoughts and actions are supported by such activities. The identification of familiar cultural items, like the drawings on the walls in her dorm room and many of positive social interactions during base groups, where she participated in activities that were already familiar to her as a student are two instances of this aspect of identity development. Such activities support the identity that she had already developed and supported her already existing values and beliefs. The reinforcement of identity features supports the concept of building competency in an area suggested by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). Seligman, Steen, Park and Peterson (2005) also found that reinforcement of positive beliefs led to a more productivity in daily life.

We do not discount that fact that dissonance does play a role in identity development as well. Catherine experienced many times that her identity was challenged by the interactions at the camp. The happenings at the camp that made her re-examine her identity supports much of the research on learning (Galman, 2009; Schulz & Elliott, 2000). The intense nature of the camp certainly added this dimension of identity development. As the data show, Catherine left for the camp feeling that she was very open-minded and willing to interact with others. However, this aspect of her identity was challenged relatively quickly, forcing her to examine her beliefs in this area.

One of the major goals of language camps is to help students move away from being a citizen of their local community to becoming an effective global citizen (Dahl, Clementi, Heysel, and Spenader, 2007; Hamilton, 2005; Reese, 2006). Arnett (2002) posits that even beginning language learners can develop identities that entail both a local and global aspect that "gives them a sense of belonging to a worldwide culture" (p. 777). For Catherine, this happened in small ways, such as shopping in Paris. More significant and meaningful interactions at a global level as she was able to study the Turkish and Armenian languages at the camp and to interact with native speakers of both. Although her ability to use the languages was limited, she was introduced to new ideas and ways of thinking as she worked with her fellow campmates, the counselors, teachers and Turkish natives. Her desire to continue this quest is stated in a philosophical entry in her journal:

"I don't know if I'll ever see any of these people again, but Josh put it this way, 'meet → love → apart.' I really want to go back to Turkey one day, but I need to see more of the world first, so I can learn and experience as much as possible in this life" (1/8).

Overall, this study supports the idea that the identity development of the language learner is continually in flux (Yoon, 2007) and, as Mantero (2007) describes it, negotiable (p. 4). Kumaravadivelu (2003) claims that language education, more than other areas of education, requires students to continually re-negotiate their identities. Likewise, Lin (2009) suggests that the interaction of two (or more) cultures creates a situation where a newer, more universal identity can be developed. The experiential nature of the language camp provided Catherine with an ideal situation to examine and negotiate who she is and look at her beliefs and values in light of interactions with new people and places. The intense

nature of the camp also added to the examination of her beliefs and values. Catherine sums up the situation very well in one of her final journal entries: "It's amazing how your thinking can change in just two weeks (1/8).

## **6. Limitations/Further Research**

Although this study demonstrates some interesting observations about the development of identity of an L2 student, there are limitations that the reader must consider. One limitation of hermeneutic phenomenology is that it focuses on the experiences of an individual that are unique to her. Likewise, the results of case study research are descriptive in nature. These two facets mean that the results are not generalizable to language learning as a whole. Further studies that include a larger sample size can provide varying perspectives of the camp members and add to our understanding of their identity development. Also, the camp lasted only two weeks. Future studies should look at identity development over a longer period of time to understand more fully the nuances of identity development. Keeping these limitations in mind; however, the findings of the present study deepen our understanding of certain aspects of identity development during a language camp experience. Therefore, due to the language teaching and learning nature of the camp, some ideas can be brought forward to inform L2 teaching at all levels. De Jong (2011) points out that the link between language and identity exists regardless of the proficiency level in the language, which certainly was the case in this study. Furthering that idea to various L2 learning levels and situations can add to the current knowledge and practices of teachers.

## **7. Conclusion/Implications for teachers**

As L2 learners are negotiating their identity in the classroom, teachers need to help them by creating an atmosphere that is conducive to providing positive, reassuring experiences to aid them<sup>ii</sup> as they learn both academic and social language skills. Cummins et al. (2005) suggest that when teachers are able to provide positive environments that affirm the L2 learner's identity, they will be more engaged in language and literacy activities (p. 2). This means that teachers must provide the opportunity for students to express their views, beliefs and values without fear of being judged. It also means that speaking and writing assignments need to be carefully crafted, so that students' identities are supported and challenged through both academic and non-academic situations.

In academic situations, teachers provide prompts that allow students to interact with each other in a meaningful manner. A first step is to find out what interests that students have and find prompts, such as readings or videos that provide a basis for discussion. Catherine, in her camp experience, found that much of her growth came as she participated in meaningful activities and discussed meaningful topics. Providing time in the class, despite curricular restraints, will provide students the opportunity to articulate what they believe. Other students need to be shown how to interact well by learning words and phrases that will demonstrate respect for others' opinions, such as "I respectfully agree/disagree with the ideas expressed, because....". It is not possible to establish a civil environment, if the students do not have the linguistic tools to express their opinions.

Another significant area of academic learning that provides fertile ground for identity development in language learning is the learning of culture of the target language. Students' identities, as has been shown in this study, are closely tied to their culture. Cross-cultural study often focuses on how the C1 and the C2 are different. However, this view is limited. Trumball, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, and Quiroz (2001) point out that teachers must also focus on the commonalities of cultures. By looking at both commonalities and differences, identity development through language learning can be accomplished through harmony and controlled dissonance (as dissonance in culture learning is inevitable). Both ways

of approaching culture will provide a more positive experience for students. Catherine's identity developed and her culture knowledge increased as she encountered culture in both a positive light and in a manner that challenged her thinking.

Likewise, teachers can provide less structured, albeit meaningful activities during instruction, where students can be made to feel free to express themselves. This type of activity happened at various times for Catherine at the camp, which allowed her to grow and develop. Kinginger's (2004) study of a minority learner of French suggests that much of her true acquisition of the language came not from participating in daily interactions with others who challenged and/or confirmed her beliefs. Such time in the classroom is not a 'free-for-all', rather ordered social interaction opportunities that allow students to talk freely about ideas that are important to them. However, the topics for such discussion must come from the students. If teachers provide academically and socially activities, students will feel validated in their identity development. If done correctly, teachers will find what Cummins et al. (2005) suggest: "students will engage academically to the extent that instruction affirms their identities and enables them to invest their identities in learning" (p. 3)

Similarly, teachers need to provide experiential learning activities for students. Much of Catherine's identity development as a language learner occurred as she was able to experience the culture and/or interact with others. Providing time for activities like discussions and reading can create a solid foundation for further activities that are experienced based. For instance, if available, students can visit pertinent settings, like museums or historical sites. Also, after reading a text from the target language, students can take part in acting out an interview with the author or characters from the text. Similarly, students can write letters to significant people, like those mentioned above. If the text is politically based, for example, students can write letters or emails to local, national or international leaders. Such assignments will move learning beyond the walls of the school into the real world, allowing students to express their beliefs and values. Any responses received will further support of challenge their beliefs and values as well. Teachers should create culturally authentic situations to the extent possible.

Finally, classroom activities should provide opportunities for students to reflect on their L2/C2 learning and identity development, so that they can move from social learning to making their identity development their own, which will allow them to ultimately become accountable for their own identity development (Gu, 2010). Sometimes this is not possible, since the students are actively engaged in the process. Setting time aside by means of meaningful journal activities will provide the opportunity for learners to see how they have developed as they learn their L2. Some of Catherine's growth was realized after she was afforded the opportunity to reflect after she had distanced herself from the initial learning situation.

Lin (2009) posits that students who can embrace a positive cultural self that integrates their new identity with their existing one moves towards a more universal view. Hamilton (2004) and Reese (2006) suggest that language camps potentially provide L2 students the opportunity to see themselves as global citizens. Catherine ultimately saw herself in a new light as a global citizen based on her experiences that supported and challenged her identity. Allowing students to express and examine their identity in the L2 classroom will move them similarly along this path.

### **Biostatements**

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<sup>i</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout.

<sup>ii</sup> Teachers must be open to the differing ideas that the students will bring to a discussion or a writing exercise.

Fernsten (2008) found that often, teachers and peers were trying to re-write the ideas of her students to conform to the accepted classroom discourse without trying to find out where the ideas were coming from. Students need to know that they have voices that can respectfully contest the authority of authority figures (including authors) and peers, which allows them to affirm or challenge their identity in the academic setting.