

A Thesis

entitled

Investigations in UT ESL Student Identities

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts Degree in English.

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One of the few identity studies to be done on university ESL students, this research sought to discover what kinds of identities are prevalent at UT, what are some ways students negotiate their identities in the context of UT, and to discover if deficit identity is something that UT ESL students' experience. The study took place at the University of Toledo, and involved interviews with 8 participants. The overall purpose of the study was to broaden the scope of the field's research. After analyzing the data, it was discovered that a wide range of identities were prevalent at the university among ESL students, such as athletes and musicians. Students also negotiate their identities in various ways and through various online interfaces, with emoji's being popular tools of expression. Furthermore, there were no cases of deficit identity found in this study. Therefore, the topic of ESL student identities at UT is a complex subject, with lots of variation between the participants.

For my family and friends. I never thought I had it in me, but you all believed in me regardless. Thank you.

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List of Abbreviations

EIL – English as an International Language

ESL – English as a Second Language

GPA – Grade Point Average

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

US – United States of America

UT – The University of Toledo

Chapter 1

A Review of Literature on ESL Identity

1.1 Introduction

ESL student identity is a field that has been receiving more attention lately given the influx of current studies, but it continues to be one of the more challenging fields in ESL research. Identity is essentially how one views themselves in relation to the world (Kim, 2003), and most of the research done in this field looks to explore how students identify themselves in relation to English. Researchers also explore how ESL students relate themselves to the world, and how non-native English speakers use the language. Unfortunately, there is a lack of contextual information in research regarding ESL student identity in US college environments. Because of this, more research needs to be conducted in the context of a US university so educators and researchers can better understand how students negotiate identity. Furthermore, we can use this information to design English classes that not only bring out the best in students, but foster positive growth in identity development.

Therefore, this study will consist of interviews with current University of Toledo ESL students. The focus of the interview questions is to see how international students

negotiate their identities in a given context. Specifically, the context is that of an American Midwest university, or the University of Toledo. The interview questions will ask students how they view themselves in relation to the world, in relation to English, and also attempt to see if students feel stigmatized by their ESL identities. Additionally, the interview questions will attempt to see what kind of identities University of Toledo ESL students negotiate through, how students view themselves in relation to their community, and how participants identify themselves in online media. For example, one question asks “What does English speaking culture mean to you?” in order to see how the participants look at themselves in relation to the culture they are now living in. Another question asks what being ESL means to the interviewee, and this question with its follow ups attempt to shed light on whether or not international students experience an identity stigma, or a deficit identity. Furthermore, the questions also look to see how students use the language and how they interact with different social groups.

Compared to some of the studies that will be cited in this research, there is a more diverse background of students in these interviews in order to best represent the diverse nature of the University of Toledo’s non-native English speaking student body. The goal of this study is to interview approximately 10 students, and the participants will come from a variety of English composition classrooms. To better help guide this research, several definitions will be presented below to help guide the reader and researcher throughout this project.

1.2 Definitions

To better organize this research, and to establish key terms, please see the list of definitions below:

1. Identity – Is how one views themselves in relation to the world (Kim, 2003).
2. Deficit Identity – Is feeling of perceived social stigma and delegitimization of the institutional label ESL (Marshall 2010, Ortmeier-Hooper 2008).
3. Identity Negotiation – Is when one goes through a shift in identity due to a change in environment (Oikonomidoy and Williams, 2013)
4. Multiple Identity Theory – Is when individuals have multiple ways in which they view themselves in relation to the world (Yi, 2013)
5. Agencies – Is the student’s language use, process of identity formation, and academic practices as one moves from institution to institution. (Marshall, 2010)
6. Discourse – Is when one uses language, expressions, artifacts, and general acting that one does in a socially meaningful group (Gee, 1996).

1.3 Review of Literature

1.3.1 Expression of Identity

Identity is a complex issue in ESL research, and therefore it becomes prudent that more studies on identity in various contexts to help provide clarity for researchers and teachers on how students view themselves. For example, Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2013) study on deficit identity helped to establish a clearer picture as to the nature of identity. Guiding this study were two research questions. The first looked to see how second language factors like background and prior education affect how students negotiate their identities in a mainstream first year writing course. Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2013) second research question investigates what being ESL meant to the student and whether or not they identified with the label “ESL.” The researcher primarily used an initial questionnaire, three interviews

per student, and finally writing samples from the three students (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013, p. 396).

Her study finds that the terms ESL and Generation 1.5 create difficulties for students, and her data, gathered primarily by interviews, questionnaires and writing samples, supports her argument. While her study is mainly focused on how her three participants dealt with deficit identity, it does show the importance of writing in identity negotiation. Essentially, writers often have key elements of their writing as part of their identities (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013, p. 391). For example, Misha used English writing to find his voice and develop his identity as an English user, and he did this by writing about his experiences as a Russian immigrant. However, another student named Jane was more guarded in her writing about her identity as a Chinese immigrant, and in interviews said that she considers herself more of a native English speaker since she thinks in English and not Chinese. These examples show that writing was not only used to develop their identities as English users, but also their writing was a key part of their identity itself.

Furthermore, Burke (2013) states that identity is a dynamic entity, and that it is constantly changing. Burke's (2013) study involved a similar data gathering approach as Ortmeier-Hooper (2013) with interviews, but was focused on how students develop their identities in online contexts. In her findings, the researcher notes that her two participants used various literacies to navigate online discourse communities and develop their identities. Primarily, Burke (2013) looks at identity construction using Gee's Discourse theories. In sum, Gee states there are primary discourses and secondary discourses in which one lives in. Primary discourse is the one learned at home, and secondary discourse would be other social groups or institutions that one experiences outside of the primary discourse

(Delpit, 1995). Burke's (2013) two participants demonstrated dynamic identities that changed dependent on what Gee would define as the secondary discourse. One instance of this is when Lourdes, one of the two participants, engaged in online communities in a different manner than in her classroom. This demonstrates that identity is not a stagnant entity that stays constant, but that it is dynamic and changes based on the environment of the person. A stronger example would be Aamir from the same study. Burke (2013) notes that "he engaged in a number of identities in school that depended on the social situation, the peer group with which he was interacting, and the activity in which he is participating (p. 42). Burke (2013) notes that Aamir would separate himself from the primary discourse at home, which was religious based, and his secondary discourse at home, which he developed an identity as a sports lover. The researcher noted that Aamir also separated himself from friends related to his primary discourse at home, and chose instead to associate with friends more relatable to his identity as a sports lover (Burke, 2013, p.42).

1.3.2 Nationality and identity.

While these two previous researchers show how identity in ESL students is a complicated and dynamic construct, it is important to note the role that nationality plays in ESL identity construction given that English is being used more and more as an international means of communication. While some ESL students from the studies mentioned above may have identified more with an English speaking country, such as Jane from Ortmeier-Hooper's (2008) study, English as an International Language (EIL) students may identify more with their native country. Some students at the University of Toledo may be classified as ESL, but they may in fact identify themselves as EIL learners. Essentially, the distinction lies in how the users of English view their relationship to the

language, and how they intend on using English. ESL learners are more apt to view English as a tool to help them in an English speaking country, while EIL learners are looking to use English in international settings. Dewi (2014) states that “EIL speakers will not treat the language as a means of identifying themselves with the language’s countries of origin because they view the language as a means of international communication” (p. 4). Putting this all together, if students are being given a label they do not identify with, then this factor can contribute to deficit identity.

The research above reinforces the point that identity is a complex construct, and people can have multiple identities that they negotiate through on a daily basis, as seen with Aamir in Burke’s (2014) case study. This is also prevalent in Gao’s (2011) study which shows us the complicated nature national identity plays in the identity negotiation process. Gao’s (2011) study is a report on how Chinese students reconstructed their national identities in Britain using observations of the participants everyday lives as they used English. The researcher found that the participants reconstructed their identities in various ways, and in some cases even reinforced their own national identities. The individual identities of a person can be as complex as the concept of identity itself, and this is further evidenced as we transition to the concept of multiple identities.

1.3.3 Multiple Identity Theory

Multiple Identity Theory, which is when one views oneself in multiple different ways in relation to the world, is equally as complex as identity theory. This theory draws a lot of its roots from Gee’s discourse theory as evidenced in Hong and Cheong’s (2010) study about literate identities among Korean ESL students in the United States. This study used interviews and writing samples during the data gathering process. While the

researcher's findings demonstrate through student writing examples the characteristics of multiple identities, they also reinforce their concept with Gee's concepts of identity and discourse theory. Hong and Cheong (2010) found that their participant Sue-Jee had an internalized identity where she had her own feelings, and then a separate identity that she expressed in her classroom writings to avoid judgment (p. 145). In order to negotiate through the classroom discourse, Sue-Jee had to negotiate and change her expressed identity in order to best fit the classroom discourse.

Furthermore, the researchers sum up Gee's ideas on discourse nicely by stating "language in discourse enacts different identities at different times in different settings with different styles of language, according to the tasks and participants of the talk (Hong and Cheong, 2010, p. 133). What this essentially means is that when one is in a different discourse setting, like a school for example, their identities will be different than another discourse setting such as the home. However, it would be best if examples of multiple identities were shown so that way it can be clearer that identities form themselves around different social constructs.

One of the best examples of multiple identities is a student named Hoon from a qualitative case study by Yi (2013). Yi's (2013) case study was a longitudinal case study. His focus was to look into the multiple identities of one participant, named Hoon, by using interviews, observations, and writing samples. The author found that Hoon was unable to extensively participate in academic literacy programs while negotiating his "stigmatized ESL-student identity" (Yi, 2013, p. 216) on top of his identity as an academic achiever. Hoon's perception of his ESL identity was so negative that he felt embarrassed, and this played a big role in his development as an academic achiever. As a coping mechanism to

deal with his lack of proficiency with academic English, Hoon did not take literacy rich classes such as history or literature. Instead, Hoon took classes that did not demand advanced English skills. Instead of taking a class on history he would take a class on drawing or computers.

Furthermore, the qualitative case study by Yi (2013) shows that Hoon negotiated his stigmatized identity, or deficit identity, with his identity as an academic achiever. Hoon's competitive identity gave him the desire to compete with his American peers. His academic achiever identity also caused him to form strong relationships with his ethnic peers, who would give him notes in academic literacy rich classes like history. While the University of Toledo may not have a student exactly like Hoon, it is possible that there are ESL students who have had to find their own similar coping mechanisms. Identity negotiation is a complex process, and the more examples of multiple identities the easier it will be to identify their characteristics throughout the execution of this study.

While mostly a study on deficit identity, Ortmeier-Hooper's (2008) critical research on deficit identity also stated that her subjects struggled "between a classroom, home, and social identity" (p. 392). The researcher further elaborates that we should look at identity not as a singular thing, but as an entity with multiple elements like what Hoon demonstrated in Yi's (2013) study. Furthermore, multiple identities can even extend to national identities, as Atay and Ece (2009) found in their study of Turkish students at a public university in Istanbul. Primarily, the researchers were attempting to shed light on how non-native English speakers negotiate their multiple identities when learning English in a non-English context, i.e. Turkey in this example. Atay and Ece (2009) mainly used interviews to gather data, and the subjects did not have an overall clear dominant identity, i.e. Islamic/Turkish

or Western identity, and instead there were as mishmash of dominant Islamic/Turkish identities, Western identities, and transitions between the two as the dominant identity. Atay and Ece (2009) state that this is because the participants viewed English as a way to become more flexible as a person, and navigate a more globalized world(p. 32). Therefore, the two studies discussed above demonstrate that multiple identities can be present in a variety of different ways, such as an identity at home, at school, or even be non-locational like national identity.

Despite the research on multiple identities, these studies are not really generalizable, and they may not specifically apply to the context of the University of Toledo. However, they do shed light on the complexity of identity, and have been used to guide the formation of the research questions in my study that will be used to determine participants' national identity, and identities that come from the home or social life. For example, two of my interview questions seek to find out what kind of people the participants like to be with in and out of class, and another question specifically asks if students act differently in front of different groups of peers. This is to see what participants view as their main identities, and also to gather information as to what they view as their national identity. Furthermore, there are some other questions earlier in the interview that seek to find out how the participants view English, and this is to gauge how much weight they put on their English speaking identity.

It is important to note that these previously mentioned studies shed little on identity negotiation in different contexts compared to the University of Toledo, and also contain participants with profiles that may not match Toledo's students. These contexts are places like high school environments, like in Hoon's case, or overseas universities like in Atay

and Ece's (2009) article. Additionally, there may not be many Generation 1.5 students at the University of Toledo, and these are the types of students that made up Ortmeier-Hooper's (2008) study. Also, the University of Toledo takes students with generally lower TOEFL scores, but this factor will be changing in the future. This means that the University takes in students who generally have lower proficiencies than other universities in the State of Ohio and the rest of the US. For example, The University of Toledo accepts students with a TOEFL score of 500 (or a score of 450 after passing advanced level American Language Institute courses), while Ohio State University accepts students with a minimum of 550. Furthermore, many of the cited studies in this research are smaller case studies that specifically examine one aspect of identity, though other aspects of identity negotiation are identifiable in these studies. Compared to previous studies, this study aims to interview up to 10 participants, and the questions of this study will allow the identification of various types of identities, negotiation strategies, and how students cope with these things in a setting that is most likely completely foreign to them. Furthermore, research on identity negotiation among students labeled ESL at the university level is reportedly low, according to Fincher (2011). For this reason, it is important that research is carried out in a context like the University of Toledo, because added context in the field of identity study will be valuable to the pool of research already available. Not only does this study seek to add to the field of identity study, but it also seeks to understand more about deficit identity in an American university.

1.3.4 Deficit Identity

Deficit identity is a term that has recently been researched by Marshall (2010) and Ortmeier-Hooper (2008). Marshall's (2010) key study focused on how multilingual

students have to re-become ESL due to an institutionally placed label. Primarily, Marshall's (2010) research involved surveys, interviews, and writing samples, and the researcher found that his participants often coped with their deficit identity in different ways as they developed their own voice throughout their journeys as university students. Deficit identity is when one feels disconnected with an institutionally placed label, but it is not just a mismatch of the label ESL on the student. The student will provide negative descriptions of the label ESL, and will try to avoid or escape the label as quickly as possible. It is important to note that a student can identify with ESL, but ascribe the label negative attributes. This has been seen with Hoon in Yi's (2013) study, and several participants in Marshall's (2010) study.

Furthermore, Marshall (2010) notes that "many do not identify with the ESL label because of previous institutional experience with the term" (p. 45). This could mean that a student faced negative comments from other students, instructors, or has done so well that the student has a more native like ability with English. The student could also come from a linguistically diverse background like India, and could have learned English as a first language, but be labeled ESL by a university. Throughout his study, only 15.3% of his participants gave negative descriptions of the label ESL, while 33.4% gave neutral and 35.3% gave ESL course descriptions. Another 11.8% gave the term definition, while 3.3% gave a positive description.

While Marshall's (2010) study mostly involves generation 1.5 and immigrant students, the lack of research on international students means there has been little information gathered on the identities of these students. As Marshall (2010) states, "Re-becoming ESL sounds like an unusual phenomenon, but it is, in fact, a common feature of

many multilingual students' university experience" (p. 54). While Marshall (2010) may be talking more about immigrant or Generation 1.5 students, it is quite possible that some international students feel this way. University of Toledo students come from a large variety of linguistic backgrounds, such as students from the Middle East, Japan, China, Europe, India, and other various countries. A student from India, for example, could have a different institutional experience with the term ESL than a student from Japan. Without research we will never know how international students feel about being ESL, and how they negotiate their identities. For example, Soreya, a student in Marshall's (2010) study, had no problem defining her identity with the ESL label because she could define her first and second languages. However, two other participants in his study had trouble defining their second languages, and both were from Chinese backgrounds with knowledge of English, Mandarin, and Cantonese. It is possible that some international students don't exactly fit the institutionalized label of ESL, and without research into the matter we will never know for sure.

Another researcher who writes about deficit identity is Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) in her article "English May be My Second Language, but I'm Not 'ESL.'" She states that some students will spend years in secondary-level mainstream English classrooms to find themselves not ready for the demands of university level reading and writing requirements. While her study discusses Generation 1.5 students, our international students spend a lot of time in English classrooms. The main difference between a Generation 1.5 student and an international student is that a Generation 1.5 student came to the US, or another English speaking country, at a young age with migrant parents. An international student is coming to the United States on a student visa without explicit purpose of permanent residence, and

may express desires to return back to their home country. With varying proficiencies some may not feel like they are ESL, or belong in ESL classrooms such as the ALI. Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) even observed this trait in her study, and even noted that some are “offended when labeled ESL” (p. 392). This is one of the many factors that lead to cases of deficit identity, and Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2008) article provides a detailed account of deficit identity through the three participants of her case study. The first participant, Sergej, was a student who studied in America before going to university and felt that he no longer fit in the ESL label and that his English was good enough to be placed in mainstream English classes. However, there was also Misha, who negotiated his identity in a manner that enabled him to re-align some of his beliefs with that of the instructor, and looked at how the writing could benefit him outside and inside the classroom. For example, Sergej felt he did not fit the ESL label, but the instructor of the class did, so he compromised his identity to gain benefits in the classroom. Some of these benefits included more forgiving grading on errors in his writing and speech (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008, 10).

Most interesting of the three participants was Jane, who considered English to be her first language because she no longer thought in Chinese, and felt singled out by the ESL label. Furthermore, Jane had lived in a predominately English speaking country for a large period of her life. As such, Ortmeier-Hooper’s (2008) interview questions include one that asks what language the participant thinks in. Furthermore, the participants Jane and Sergej acted in a guarded manner towards revealing their culture, which it is speculated was to hide their native identity and embrace their English speaking identity. This may not be the case with international students like the ones that populate the University of Toledo,

but some students may be more culturally guarded in the attempt to embrace a more English speaking identity either permanently, or temporarily.

As such, the interview questions and goal of this study is to investigate whether similar attitudes among international students can be discovered. Furthermore, Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) argues that we should understand that to some students, the labels like ESL, bilingual, and bicultural can be unwelcome (p.410). Granted, some of these attitudes may be more prevalent in immigrant or Generation 1.5 students, but without research we will never know if similar cultural detachment is prevalent among the international students at the University of Toledo. Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) also argues for the importance of the context of the students' history with English and coming to the US in regards to their identities in composition classrooms. Marshall (2010) also makes the claim that many students don't identify with the label ESL, and makes a strong case that it is primarily an institutionalized label. These two authors, Marshall (2010) and Ortmeier-Hooper (2008), are two of the most commonly cited sources in deficit identity research. This study on University of Toledo ESL students has adapted its research questions in an attempt to better understand the issues facing ESL identity negotiation in the context of an American university.

Yi's (2013) case study involving Hoon, who was a Jogi Yukak student in a Midwestern high school, is another example of deficit identity in an ESL student. To clarify, Jogi Yukak students are defined as those from Korea that are sent over to North America by themselves to become educated. Jogi Yukak is not a concept as much as it is a label for the type of student described above. Therefore, in a sense, he was an international student at an American high school which makes Yi's (2013) study applicable to the context that

my research is taking place. Yi (2013) found that Hoon had a strong negative stigma attached to his ESL identity, and used a double edged sword coping manner to deal with his identity deficit. This coping mechanism involved the student compensating for his poor English ability by taking classes that were low in English requirement. He looked at his grades competitively and took easy elective classes to compete on an even level with his native speaking counterparts. Unfortunately, by coping that way Hoon's English did not see much improvement because he had effectively removed himself from situations that would have required him to increase his English skills. It was also noted that Hoon said he would write long sentences "in order not to 'sound stupid' or 'look too stupid'" (Yi, 2013, p. 221). So some students may not identify with the ESL label because they feel they are too proficient or native like in the language for the label, but Hoon felt the label was not suited for him out of academic pride due to his high GPA. This negative construction of the ESL identity was created both by the institution, for failing to appropriately teach Hoon the literacy skills he needed, and by Hoon through adopting avoidance strategies to literacy intense activities.

Another study by Waterstone (2008) shows a student who displayed several identities and felt a disenfranchisement with the ESL label, because of her extensive background in English. Like Marshall's (2010) study, Waterstone (2008) argues that labels may affect how a student experiences academia, and she challenges us to think outside of the established norm of identity. Therefore, this is why researching identity within the University of Toledo's context will be so beneficial to the field of identity study as we may find more challenges to what we know about ESL students and identity.

1.3.5 Identity Negotiation

Finally, the concept of identity negotiation is important to discuss before moving on to the research questions of this study. There have already been some instances of identity negotiation mentioned already, such as Hoon from Yi's (2013) study. He negotiated his identity deficit with that of a strong academic achiever identity when he focused really hard on his grades and took classes that he felt would not be too much of a challenge for him due to his low English proficiency. Another researcher, Duff (2002), demonstrates that students have difficulty negotiating their identity in the classroom when it comes to pop culture, as some students just don't get involved, and others try and still feel left out, so they cannot negotiate the classroom discourse. This is why some of the interview questions ask the participants about their relationship with pop culture, since that can be a difficult thing for those new to an English speaking culture.

Burke (2013) also looked extensively at identity negotiation, and found the importance of out of school activities in identity negotiation. Primarily, Burke's study aimed to describe how ESL learners create/negotiate their identities online, and she primarily uses interviews, writing samples, observations, and discussions with the participant's parents for validity. The researcher looks at Gee's discourse theories, and how multiple discourses lead to multiple avenues of identity negotiation (p.32). Therefore, it is important to look at different areas of a person's life in order to get a better sense as to how they develop their identity. The participant in Burke's (2013) study, Lourdes, was involved in online literacies to express herself, and these online literacy activities are what the researcher studied to get a better sense as to how Lourdes negotiated her identity. Lourdes ended up having to mimic the writing styles of the other authors on her board to fit in with

the discourse community. She felt her identity as a writer needed to be clear and show no errors in her writing to compromise her identity as an ESL student and a member in this community. Aamir, the second participant, engaged in a lot of posting on gaming boards when he was interested in certain topics, and the researcher stated that this was because he was still acquiring the discourse. Essentially, this means that Aamir was negotiating his identity while attempting to acquire the discourse of the online discussion board. These examples are simply a few in sea of identity studies, but these examples come from some of the reputable since they tend to source authors like Gee, and Marshall's (2010), and Ortmeier-Hooper (2008) research.

1.4 Conclusion

Overall, my research aims to provide future researchers an idea as to the kind of identities, and how ESL students negotiate their identities, in an educational context like the University of Toledo. This context is a public university that accepts students with generally lower TOEFL scores than others, and also students who have been taking English classes for a long time. Furthermore, another goal is to gather as much information as possible about different types of identity negotiations, rather than look into extreme detail as to how those negotiations take place. Instead of the traditional Generation 1.5 or immigrant student, this study will look at the unexplored context of a school with a large international student body. This is not a case study, but more of a sampling of students from English classes at the University of Toledo in interviews with carefully crafted questions in order to answer the research questions above. These questions have been drafted based on previous research on identity, and have also been drafted based on the kinds of questions that have been asked in previous identity studies. Chapter 2 will state

the methodology and research questions of the study, while detailing how the study will be carried out.

Chapter 2

Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to document the types of identities that UT ESL students have, how UT ESL student negotiate those identities, and whether or not they experience deficit identity. Chapter 2 provides an over of the methodology of this research study.

2.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this research study:

1. What kind of student identities are prevalent at UT?
2. What are some ways students negotiate their identities in the context of UT?
3. Is deficit identity something that UT ESL students' experience?

2.3 Context

This research study took place at the University of Toledo, which is in Ohio, USA. The university has a large international student body, with a majority of the international

student body coming from Middle Eastern or Asian countries. As previously stated the University of Toledo accepts international students with a TOEFL score of 500 (or 450 if they complete courses at the American Language Institute). International students at UT come from a large variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and generally the higher the score the greater the linguistic capabilities of the student.

2.4 Researcher Background

The researcher, Sam Londrico, received his undergraduate degree from the University of Toledo at the end of 2013, and is working towards his master's degree in Teaching English as a Second Language. The researcher created the research materials, and carried out the execution of those materials during the data gathering procedures.

2.5 Participants and Recruitment

The participants of this study were eight undergraduate University of Toledo ESL students. One participant each was from Bahrain, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Malaysia, and three participants were from India. Furthermore, most of the participants were first year students, with only one student reporting being in the second year, and another in their third year.

With English Department staff approval, the researcher visited multiple ESL College Composition 1 classes, and one native speaker College Composition 2 class. Instructors for the course were asked permission by e-mail from the researcher to make a brief presentation to their class about the study. Students were asked if they would like to participate, and afterwards appointments were scheduled and e-mail contact information was exchanged if the student agreed to join the study.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedures

Data was gathered using qualitative interviews with the students. The recorded interviews were 42 questions long and lasted approximately 20 minutes. At the start of each interview some brief demographics information was collected. Overall the interviews were short because many of the interview questions did not require in depth or detailed answers. Students also opted out of answering questions they were uncomfortable with, which shortened the interview time as well. For example, question 42 “How do you feel about American pop-culture in relation to the culture from your native country?” made a few participants uncomfortable, so they opted out of answering. Question 39 asks “Do you use any specific emoji or emojis more than others?” and was responded with a “no.” Follow up questions were asked during the interviews, such as what kinds of emojis a participant uses when answering yes to question 39. The questions themselves were not very long, and overall the researcher’s speaking time was lower than the participants’. One participant opted out of a recorded interview, and instead wrote his answers down. No other data gathering methods were used in this research study. Please see Appendix A to view the interview and demographics questions.

2.7 Data Analysis

Once the interviews were concluded they were transcribed, save for one because the student declined a taped interview for an unexplained reason (the researcher did not press the interviewee on the matter). Then the interviews were coded by categorization of information within the student interviews according to the research questions. Sub groups were also created based on interview questions, unexpected information, and examples of similar information. Information from the participants was labeled P# or Participant

(assigned number). So all information from Participant 1's transcript would be under P1. There were three main categories used: identities at UT, Identity Negotiation, and Experience of Deficit Identity. A few of the sub categories were "View of 'home,'" "Behavior around Different Groups," and "Views of English." For a complete list of sub categories please see Appendix B.

Data was categorized based on whether or not what the student said fit the sub-category. For example, for the sub-category "View of 'home'" P1 said that they viewed home as where the heart is and "where one feels comfortable and accepted" so I wrote that down in that sub-section. This is also an example of a sub section that was formed based off an interview question. Another example would be when P7 stated how she behaved differently around different groups and is much friendlier with locals, so I coded that under the "Behavior around Different Groups" sub section. Participants will be named in the next chapter.

There was some difficulty with the coding of this information. Several times I noticed myself coding similar data in different sub-categories. To cope with that error I made more specific sub categories to better differentiate between the data. Overall the coding scheme worked out well because I was able to place everything in an appropriate category that allowed for easy access during analyzation. Only the researcher was involved in coding the data. Some of the repetitive data was hard to code, such as when P2 noted how different she acted with her family. I had to put that under the Family coding because it displayed a separate identity with her family, and also the "Behavior around Different Groups" coding because it was her describing how she behaved differently in different groups.

I created the sub categories “Views of English” and “Views of Native Language” out of necessity due to several answers to some of my research questions. I did notice that there was sometimes a lack of data to code, because participants had not thought of the questions before and did not know or feel comfortable answering them. Furthermore, I noticed that some sub sections have more data than others, and some participants provided more information on certain questions than others.

2.8 Conclusion

This study is primarily a qualitative research study which seeks to answer the three research questions which focused on how students negotiate their identities in the context of UT, what kinds of identities they have, and if they deal with deficit identity. Data gathered through interviews was coded through categorization, and the participants came from a variety of different backgrounds. Chapter Three will report the results of this research study, and will report them in a discussion in relation to the literature and interview questions. Excerpts from the interviews will be used when needed to illustrate student answers.

Chapter 3

Findings and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

Overall, the purpose of this study was to broaden the scope of research as to how ESL students view themselves in relation to aspects of their life, and the world, in relation to English. This study sought to achieve this by answering three research questions. Those being: What kind of identities are prevalent at UT? What are some way students negotiate their identities in the context of UT? Is deficit identity something that UT ESL students' experience. Overall, this chapter will examine the results, implications, and limitations of the study as well as make suggestions for future research. The organization of the findings section will be based on the order of the research questions, and the discussion of implications will look at how this study will impact teaching based on the data gathered by the interview questions. Finally, the limitations and suggestions sections will look at the flaws of the study, and provide some ideas for future researchers.

3.2 Participants

Eight participants were interviewed for this research project, and multiple different ethnic backgrounds are represented in this study. Lucas comes from Brazil, and was a 20 year first year biology student at UT at the time of the interview. His native language is Portuguese. Tanvi comes from India, and was an 18 year old first year biology student at UT at the time of the interview. Her native language is Hindi. Another participant from India was Aarav, who was 22 year old second year computer science and engineering student at the time of the interview. His native language is Marathi. From Bahrain comes Inaya, who was an 18 year old first year old Public Health major at the time of the interview. Her native language is Arabic.

Vihan is another participant that came to the USA from India, and he was a 20 year old second year computer science engineering student at the time of the research study. His native language is Hindi. Mehret was a 19 year old first year biology major from Ethiopia at the time of her interview. Her native language is Amharic. Haziq was a 21 year old third year International Business major from Malaysia at the time of his interview. His native language was Malay. Finally, there is Liu Yang who was a 22 year old first year psychology major from China, and his native language is Chinese. For a quick reference, please see Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Participant Names and Demographics

Name	Sex	Age	Major	Year	Native Language	Native Country
Lucas	Male	20	Biology	Freshman	Portuguese	Brazil
Tanvi	Female	18	Biology	Freshman	Hindi	India
Aarav	Male	22	Comp Sci	Sophomore	Marathi	India
Inaya	Female	18	Public Health	Freshman	Arabic	Bahrain
Vihan	Male	20	Comp Sci	Sophomore	Hindi	India
Mehret	Female	19	Biology	Freshman	Amharic	Ethiopia
Haziq	Male	21	International Business	Junior	Malay	Malaysia
Liu Yang	Male	22	Psychology	Freshman	Mandarin Chinese	China

3.3 Findings

3.3.1 Identities at UT

There were several identities that were present among the participants. These identities included home, international, family, and several different community oriented identities that varied from participant to participant. Before getting into the results, however, there will be a quick refresher on the definitions of each major identity that was coded during this research.

Home identity is one's identity in regards to their home country, and was found to be very important amongst the participants. One example of displaying one's home identity would be displaying pride in ones country during a major sporting event, or using one's native language. However, we shouldn't equate home identity with native language, because countries like India have incredible linguistic diversity. This will even be demonstrated later in the results when we look our participants from India and the

languages they know. The international identity can be defined as a person living, working, and/or studying abroad in a foreign country. This identity is usually paired with a strong desire for cultural exchange. This can be represented in various forms such as an international student identity, which was displayed multiple times during the interviews. Another identity coded was a family identity, and this is one's identity in relation to their family, and has close ties with the Primary Discourse that Gee talks about. Finally, there were several other identities, community oriented and self-described, that were coded that will be looked at individually. Please see Tables 1.2 – 1.5 at the end of this section for chart demonstrating the coded identities for the participants.

First, we will start with the home identity. Tanvi, from India, stated that one's native language is everything, and that one uses their native language when they cannot express themselves any other way. Additionally, most of the participants expressed a desire to return to their native country once their education in America is completed. Lucas, Inaya, Mehret, and Liu Yang expressed stronger home identities by stating that they would like to return home after their studies have concluded. Out of all the participants, Mehret probably expressed the strongest home identity.

Furthermore, being an international student was very important to the participants. For Lucas from Brazil this identity meant that he could "offer them [people not from his home country] something from my country, from my culture." For Aarav this means that he is a diverse person who learns from other cultures and gets global exposure. Several of the participants expressed desire to work in America, with Tanvi and Aarav expressing desires to work and live in another country after graduation. Inaya strongly identified as an

international student, and even stated that she prefers to be around other people who identify as internationals.

When it came to the participants' opinions of the international student community there was some variation. Tanvi, Inaya, Vihan, Mehret, and Haziq expressed that the international student community was strong. A strong community means a very involving and fun community that offers a social place of belonging at the university. However, it's important to note that Tanvi's opinion was formed despite not being very active in the international student community. Another important factor is that Tanvi, Inaya, and Mehret were first year students at the time of the interview, so their exposure to the UT international student community was shorter than Vihan, second year, and Haziq, third year. It was shocking for me to find out that a majority of the participants viewed the international student community as strong, and that they identified with it despite varying degrees of activity within the student community. Furthermore, the variation of involvement could be as little as no activity in the community, to frequent activity in the international student community at UT. As an outlier, Liu Yang stated that he does not get actively involved in the international student community discourse, so they did not really comment on their perceived strength of the community. Therefore, international students at UT are more likely to strongly identify with the international student community, and state that they believe the community to be strong despite varied degrees of participation.

An identity related to family also turned out to be very prominent among the participants. This family identity was noted because several participants stated that they act differently around their family, thus how they view themselves in relation to the world changes when they are with their family. Tanvi described being "totally different" around

her family, noting that there are certain restrictions that come with the identity. Unfortunately, the participant didn't go into detail what those restrictions are, and while she didn't get into a lot of specifics with her answer, she simply noted that you can't act as crazy with your family as you can with friends. Based on this it's the opinion of the researcher that Tanvi acts more reserved around her family. Aarav stated that he act very "natural" around their family, while Vihan interestingly noted that he carries the identity of "the good guy around the house" when at home. Vihan made this comparison to a "crazy guy" identity that he has when outside of the home environment. Inaya was the only participant that stated that she didn't act differently around her family compared to her friends.

Finally, a variety of identities amongst friends and other communities were noted to the UT participants depending on the various discourses they participated in. For example, it was noted that Lucas identified strongly with the music community, and Tanvi had an identity as an athlete and a dancer. Tanvi, Aarav, Inaya, and Vihan also made the observation that their behavior among varying groups was different. This will be examined more in the next sub-section. Vihan expressed the most diverse amount of identities, being a gamer, sports fan, and programmer. Haziq and Liu Yang noted that they like to be around other international students, and Aarav self-identified as a "ladies' man." About half the participants openly expressed their identification with sports.

As observed, there are multiple different types of identities present among the international students at UT. The most prevalent among all of the participants were the national identity, and international student identity. Each participant also had their own unique identity in their family structure. Furthermore, each participant had their own

identities involving sports, music, games, and social life that varied from participant to participant. While not surprising that each participant had their own unique identities, it is surprising that many students expressed awareness of their different behavior around different groups, which is something that will be examined later in the next section.

Table 1.2: Home Identities

Name	Home Identity
Lucas	Stronger home identity, intends to return to native country
Tanvi	Stronger home identity, believes native language use is everything
Aarav	Weaker home identity, might move to America if there is work.
Inaya	Stronger home identity. Wants to go back to her home country
Vihan	Weaker home identity, mostly wants to visit home country
Mehret	Stronger home identity, wants to return home
Haziq	Around the middle, would stay in America and also return home
Liu Yang	Stronger home identity, intends to return to China

Table 1.3: International Identities

Name	International Identity
Lucas	Strong international identity, desires international cultural exchange
Tanvi	Strong international identity, wants to work in another country for the people
Aarav	Strong international identity, likes global exposure and wants to work overseas
Inaya	Strong international identity, feels she identifies strongly with other internationals
Vihan	Strong international identity, wants to stay and work in America
Mehret	Around the middle, is a proud international student, but wants to return home
Haziq	Around the middle, would work overseas and also return home
Liu Yang	Weak international identity, plans on returning home.

Table 1.4 Family Identity

Name	Family Identity
Lucas	Strong family identity, very open.
Tanvi	Uses a separate identity in front of family
Aarav	Acts very "natural" with family
Inaya	Has a strong family identity
Vihan	Self-identified "good guy around the house"
Mehret	Strong family identity
Haziq	Strong family identity
Liu Yang	Strong family identity

Table 1.5: Other Expressed Identities

Name	Other
Lucas	Musician
Tanvi	Athlete, dancer, writer
Aarav	Athlete, clubber, "ladies man"
Inaya	Athlete, art
Vihan	Likes to be the "crazy guy", gamer, athlete, programmer
Mehret	Didn't describe interests
Haziq	Didn't describe interests
Liu Yang	Team player, international student

3.3.2 Identity Negotiation

One way that participants negotiated their identities was through multiple language use. For example, Lucas would use a mixture of both his native language of Portuguese

and English in his daily life. This was a trait common amongst the participants, and it makes sense that, as international students, they would negotiate through their daily discourses with multiple different languages. As one changes discourse, i.e. from talking to American friends about music to talking to family back at home in Lucas's case, it is necessary to negotiate through the different identities and environments by using a different language in order to best fit in with the discourse.

Most interesting to note is how the participants negotiated cross-cultural differences. Tanvi noted the large cultural difference between America and her home country India, mainly that of more independence. Furthermore, two participants noted that people in America seem friendlier than their home countries. Unfortunately, outside of the participants stating that they got used to the differences in culture, there was very little specifics as to how they got used to the cultural differences. Despite real specifics from the interviews, many of the participants stated that they came to like the freedom and independence of lifestyle in American culture.

Many of the participants noted that they act differently around various social groups. Only Tanvi stated that she does not act differently around different groups, and that she does not care what kind of groups of people she is with. However, it's interesting to note that Tanvi contradicted herself during the interview by stating that she does act differently around different social groups. Vihan noted that he will talk about specific topics with certain groups, showing that he will switch between identities depending on the discourse they are in. Mehret noted that she acts similarly around different discourses, which demonstrates the closeness that she feels with these discourses.

Furthermore, the questions regarding what “home” is yielded varied responses. For example, Mehret viewed home as “my tiny village in Ethiopia” while Liu Yang defined America as home. This could be interpreted as Liu Yang viewing home as where he is currently living. Inaya said home is where family is, while Tanvi said home is surrounding yourself with friends and family and is when you don’t feel different from the community. Despite having different definitions of home, the one factor that each participant had in common with their concept was the feeling of being able to be oneself.

Similarly, some participants also negotiated what the concept of being ESL means to them. Lucas stated that ESL is nothing more than a label and didn’t say more than that, while Tanvi, Aarav, Haziq, and Liu Yang described that it’s just a way for them to learn more about English. However, Tanvi and Mehret were not sure of how to answer the question either because they had not thought about it, or because they were unsure of what being ESL meant to them. So while some participants took the label of ESL and negotiated its meaning to fit their interpretation of the label rather than the institutions interpretation of the label, it is fair to say that not much information was gathered in regards to this subject.

3.3.3 Views of English and English Speaking Culture

While the researcher went in expecting some negative connotations with English, he was surprised to find out there were no overly negative ideas attributed to English. This may be because the participants did not want to offend the interviewer, who is a native English speaker. But that will be discussed more in the limitations section. In one example, however, Aarav noted English as being a force for solidarity between cultures and that “there is another world to explore” because of English. Haziq and Liu Yang echoed this idea by stating that English is a global communication tool that one can use to learn about

a variety of cultures. However, Inaya noted that English carries no meaning to her. When asked about their views on their native languages, the participants overwhelmingly stated that native language is about where one comes from.

Furthermore, English speaking culture was found to have an overall positive meaning towards the interviewees. Many of the participants stated that English speaking culture means knowledge, learning, and freedom. Additionally, the participants noted that English, more specifically American pop-culture, is spreading very rapidly to their home countries. As Lucas noted “give or take two weeks it’s already in my home country [Brazil] and people are already all over it.” Aarav stated that there is a lot of westernization happening as a result of the spread of American pop-culture and that a big conflict of interest is growing between generations. About half of the participants stated that they followed American pop-culture.

3.3.4 Native and English Language Use

Given that the participants live in the US, many of them stated that they only use their native language when communicating to family and friends back in their native countries. However, a few of the participants deviated from this trend. Specifically, Tanvi uses her native language to write poems, and Liu Yang prefers writing in his native language, Mandarin Chinese, and has written some papers and worked on novels in Mandarin. Haziq only uses his native language, Malay, for official documents and stated that he mostly uses Chinese. Mehret noted that sometimes she couldn’t express herself in her native language as there are no expressions for how she feels, so in those instances she switches to English. Mehret frequently switches from one language to another based on how easily she can express herself with either her native language Amharic or English.

Aarav described his native language as the one that he swears in, and said that applies to everyone.

While the participants' use of their native language was mostly to communicate back home, it was found that they primarily used English and other forms of expression while in the US. The main focus of this study for these other forms of expressions were emoji's. One participant, Mehret, stated that she thinks she can express herself better with emoji's than with something like her native language or English. Lucas stated that he would like to use the language (English) for good, while Tanvi likes the challenge of using different words every day. Lucas never really clarified what was meant by "for good" and the researcher didn't ask a follow up on the issue. Almost all the participants use English daily for texting, and Haziq even uses English to talk to the UT instructors from China when they could easily communicate in Mandarin Chinese instead. Aarav even stated that they prefer to use English when writing as their native language, Marathi, takes a long time to write.

3.3.5 Evidence of Deficit Identity

Only two of the eight participants expressed difficulty in communicating in English. For example, Tanvi stated that their English is "kind of fine" and didn't add more other than that it's difficult for her to articulate what she wants to say, and that others misinterpret what she's saying. Vihan also stated that he is not able to completely express himself in English and that it's very difficult for him to communicate with others daily. Both of their native languages are Hindi. However, the other 6 participants described, in various ways, how comfortable they are using English daily. Lucas, for example, said that he can express himself well with formal speech. Another example involves Aarav who found it easy to

convey his feelings in English, but does not like “going full brown on people” which he described as stumbling over words and people not understanding what he’s saying. Some of the participants noted challenges in English writing such as getting off topic on papers or as Tanvi noted, having difficulty in putting thoughts into precise sentences. While almost all participants expressed that they can communicate well enough with English, Vihan, Mehret, Haziq, and Liu Yang found the language gap to be difficult to handle.

Furthermore, none of the participants expressed a negative connotation with English, which is one of the traits of someone with an identity deficit whom is labeled ESL. Quite the contrary, most, if not all, of the participants stated positive or neutral connotations with the label ESL. As stated earlier, this might have been to not offend the researcher. Lucas did express that ESL is just a label, and that many UT ESL students could be taking normal mainstream comp 1 classes. Tanvi presented more of a confusing statement, saying that English is and is not her second language so the label ESL may not appropriately describe her. It’s possible that after further reflection she could feel that English is not her second language, and then the label ESL would not be appropriate for her. It’s possible that other students feel conflicted about whether or not English is their second language, especially our students coming from linguistically diverse countries. While this may not be the case with every student, it should be something to be mindful of when an instructor has a student that is ESL.

While Lucas and Tanvi expressed difficulties with the term ESL, the other participants had no problems with the label ESL. It’s also interesting to note that the participants that labeled themselves ESL had learned multiple languages, sometimes simultaneously so there is no way to accurately pinpoint what is their “second language.”

For example, several of the participants were from India where they learned Hindi, Mahrati, and Sanskrit along with English. Mehret learned Mandarin, Malay, and some Cantonese alongside English, so while the students may have been labeled ESL, English may not be their second language. However, it's important to distinguish that this does not mean that a student has deficit identity because English isn't officially their second language. Deficit identity is the inability of the student to negotiate a second institutionally prescribed identity, and none of the students really expressed a serious disconnect. While the institutionally prescribed ESL identity didn't cause any deficit identity, or noticeable negative effects on the participants' identity expression, this does not mean that there are no cases of deficit identity at UT because this study is not generalizable.

Finally, all of the participants have been learning English since around kindergarten age, and most of the participants have taken some writing classes to some degree. Lucas had taken 6 years of English writing classes, and he noted that he didn't think he would have to take more classes when he came to UT. For the most part, the participants were fine having to take more writing classes when they came to UT despite their extensive learning history. Mehret actually expected to have to take more classes, and Tanvi felt it was normal to have to take more classes when coming to UT. Therefore, given the information gathered it is safe to make the assumption that, at least amongst the participants, there is no deficit ESL identity.

3.4 Discussion and Implications

Throughout the interviews there were several instances where the interviewer was shocked or the participants contradicted themselves, and these moments, along with the implications of this study, will be examined in this section. First let's look at the moments

were I was surprised at the participants answers. The first moment we will look at is when a majority of the participants viewed the international student community as strong, and identified strongly with the community. I've never seen a survey of the international students' opinions of the community here at UT, so it was surprising and refreshing to see so many students viewing it as a strong, open, and genuinely seemed to make students happy. As Mehret put it "that was the first time I was happy in a school community." Another reason I found this shocking is that a lot of the participants were first year students, five in total, and so to think the community is strong after not a lot of exposure to it surprised me.

Secondly, I was surprised at the amount of awareness that students had about their behavior and how it changes from environment to environment or group to group. I had expected most of the participants to not have thought about that issue very much. I was even surprised at some of the details that the participants were able to give in this regard. While some only gave minor behavioral differences like language use, some noted more familiarity with different groups like family and friends, while others like Haziq noted that he's much more different around locals than he is among other internationals.

Furthermore, there were two noted occasions where Tanvi contradicted herself. The first occasion is when we were talking about what she would describe as her second language, when she said that English would not be her second language as she has been learning it since childhood, she also comes from India where there is incredible linguistic diversity so that could be playing a part in this. She later said "English would be my second language according to now" and I unfortunately did not ask her to clarify why she contradicted herself. The second time Tanvi contradicted herself is when we were talking

about acting differently among different groups. This time she said she did and didn't act differently, and no clarification was given on the matter. It's possible the participant hadn't thought too much on the matter, and this was the first time she had ever experienced being asked a question on this topic or thinking about it. This is one of the reasons why a writing prompt would be very beneficial to a study on identity, because it would be participants' time to think about their answers.

There are a few implications that this study has on future research on identity, and on how students negotiate their identities at UT. First, is that this study implies that students are generally aware of their behavior changing around different groups. These interviews have shown that a majority of participants are aware that their identities, or at least their behavior, changes when they are around different groups of people. However, these interviews also imply that the majority of the participants have not thought too much about how their behavior is different, but that might be because the right questions were not asked. Another implication of this study is that students at UT have not done a lot of exploration into the concept of ESL means to them. For the most part, students just view it as a label, or a way for them to get the English assistance they need. However, that's not to say that students, and some of the participants, don't take pride in being ESL. Overall, the feelings are a mixed bag among the participants. Therefore, the implications of this study is that the participants of my study are likely to think that the international community at UT is strong and that they are aware of their behavioral changes from environment to environment. Students typically negotiate their identities from different environments, though the trend amongst the participants is to prefer to be among other international students.

3.5 Limitations

While this study is important for its contribution to the overall research on ESL student identity, there were multiple limitations of this study. The first major limitation is that it is not generalizable to the general UT ESL student population. This is due to the fact that a random sampling of ESL students did not take place, and also because studies on ESL identity are typically not generalizable. Furthermore the study on UT ESL student identity was also limited in the sense that there was not enough time or resources available for a longitudinal case study like the ones used in the review of literature.

Some other limitations of the study include not using student writing samples, a limited participant pool (only ESL Composition 1 and native speaker Composition 2 students were recruited). Also there was very limited research previously done on identity in a university environment, giving this study little relatable context to draw from in the literature. Another limitation of the study was the inexperience of the researcher, which caused missed follow up questions at several different opportunities. Additionally the study was limited because the researcher could not communicate with the participants in their native languages to clear up any potential miscommunications or questions. As previously noted in the results, the interviewer is a native speaker of English, and so the participants may have given answers that would not offend the interviewer, or trying to give the interviewer the kind of answer they want.

Finally, there are also several limitations with the interview itself. The first major limitation of the interview is that there was only one main interview with limited follow questions to provide for further clarification. The interviews were also short and the questions could be answered in as little or as much detail as the participants wanted. Also the interviewer was inexperienced, which led to missed impromptu follow questions that

could have clarified or shed light on certain issues in the study. Therefore, while the interviews provided some interesting data they were limited because there were simply not enough data gathered from them in all.

3.6 Suggestions for Future Research

For future research on the topic of ESL student identities in a university setting there are several suggestions that can be made based on the limitations of this study and what was learned from the interviewees. First, a broader scope of participants should be chosen instead of just composition students, as there are definitely identities and negotiation strategies that were missed. While no cases of deficit identity were found, that does not mean that international students are incapable of having one. It was shown that there are a huge amount of backgrounds among the international student population at UT, and this study barely scratches the surface.

Second, student writings could be collected to better understand different negotiation strategies, and this could be done by offering a simple writing prompt that could be completed in 10-15 minutes before or after the interview. By looking at student writing you can help answer this study's research questions in the following ways. First, when asking a questions related to identity such as "Describe your hobbies and routines" you can get a description of the participants' environments, and also how they transition from environment to environment.

Also, more follow up questions need drafted in consideration of some of the answers that were discovered from the interviews. A few examples questions that should definitely be asked in a future study are: "What does a strong international student

community look like to you?” “Why would you prefer to work overseas?” “When was the first time you started to learn about writing?” “Have you ever thought about how you act amongst different groups?” and “Can you think of any examples when you acted differently among different groups?” Questions like these would allow for a more detailed report, and could fill in the gaps that were in this research.

There were multiple instances of overlap between students in terms of identities, but this can be attributed to the fact that the students interviewed were all international students. A future study should try and find students that are not international, if possible, to try and see what kind of identities they have, and how they negotiate them.

Finally, this research study focused on a lot of aspects of identity, such as multiple identity theory and negotiation. In order to better focus the study, I think it would be best if only one aspect of identity were focused on. For example, the interview questions could focus specifically on cultural aspects of identity, or about how students negotiate multiple identities in a new environment. It would be easier to analyze data and organize potential interviewee writings in a more focused research study. Additionally, it would also make it easier for the researcher to create follow up questions for interviews.

3.7 Conclusion

Identity negotiation at the University of Toledo was found to be a complex subject with lots of variation from participant to participant, and each participant had various identities that they negotiated with on a daily basis. From home identities, to being an international student, to negotiating with the label of ESL, the international ESL population at UT demonstrated through this study to be a diverse body of opinions and personal history

both educationally and linguistically. The data showed no evidence of deficit identity, and it also evidenced that participants negotiate with their multiple languages at least once a week. Several factors about UT ESL students must be taken into consideration as a result of this study, and repeat studies should dig more into the specifics of identity negotiation at UT.

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Appendix A

Interview and Demographics Questions

Age: _____ Sex: Male/Female Major: _____

What year are you currently in at the university?

First-Year Second Year Third Year Fourth Year Over Four Years Grad
Student

What is your native language? _____

What is your country of origin? _____

Please answer the following questions:

1. How long have you been living in America?
2. What was one of the hardest things you experienced when you came to America?
3. What do you like about living in America?

4. How do you feel about the international community in Toledo?
5. What does being an international student mean to you?
6. How long do you intend to stay in Toledo?
 - a. How about America?
7. What would you say is “home?”
8. Do you intend to go back to your native country?
9. If not, do you want to stay and work in America? Or another country?
10. How long have you been learning English?
11. How long have you been learning English in the US?

12. Would you say English is your second language?

13. What languages have you learned to speak and write before and/or after English?

14. What does being an English as a Second Language or “ESL” student mean to you?

15. How many English classes have you taken until now?

a. How did you feel having to take more English classes when coming to UT?

16. How many writing classes have you taken?

17. What is one of the hardest things to you about writing?

18. What is one of the easiest things to you about writing?

19. When you write a paper what is your normal process?

20. Do you enjoy doing any particular kind of writing?

21. How do you feel you are able to express yourself in English?

22. What has been one of your hardest challenges using English daily?

23. Is there something about English you enjoy using in your daily life?

24. What does using English mean to you?

25. What does using your native language mean to you?

26. Do you prefer writing in your native language or in English?

27. What kind of things do you write in your native language?

28. What kind of things do you write in English?

29. What groups of students do you prefer to be in class with?

30. What groups of people do you prefer to be out of class with?

31. Do you feel like you act differently when around these two groups?

32. What about with your family?

33. What kind of out of school interests do you have?

a. Do talk or write differently among groups with different interests?

34. What language do you primarily use when you communicate with these groups?

35. Have you participated in any online discussion boards before?

a. If yes, have you noticed any differences in the way you write on the discussion board compared to other forms of writing?

36. How often do you use English in out of school contexts?

37. Do you use instant messaging at all?

38. How would you describe the way you write in instant messages compared to other writing (journals, school, notes, etc.)?

39. Do you use any specific emoji or emojis more than others?

40. What does English speaking culture mean to you?

41. Do you follow American pop-culture at all?

42. How do you feel about American pop-culture in relation to the culture from your native country?

Appendix B

Categories and Sub Categories for Coded Data

1. Identities at UT
 - a. National Identity
 - b. International Identity
 - c. International Student
 - d. Family
 - e. Friends
2. Identity Negotiation
 - a. Negotiation Through Multiple Language Use
 - b. What English Culture Means to the Participant
 - c. How one Uses English
 - d. How one uses their native language
 - e. View of “Home”
 - f. What Does ESL Mean to the Participant
 - g. Behavior around Different groups
 - h. Cross cultural negotiation
 - i. Views of English
 - j. Views of Native Language
3. Experience of Deficit Identity
 - a. English Expression.
 - b. Negative connotation of English meaning
 - c. Communication difficulty
 - d. Length of English Learning
 - e. Mislabeling of ESL
 - f. Multiple Languages
 - g. Writing Experiences
 - h. Communication gap