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Identity and Attitude: Eternal Conflict or Harmonious Coexistence

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Abstract: Identity and attitude are traditionally viewed as belonging to two contradictory schools of thought where identity is viewed as a social construct while attitude is viewed as solely cognitive. Few researchers have tried to challenge this argument and these two notions are usually studied in isolation of one another. This article argues that these two concepts are not as contradictory to one another as generally thought and it is possible to create a connection between the two in a way that makes it possible to study both of them in relation, rather than isolation, to one another. To support its argument, this article reports on the findings of a research study that explores the relationship between identity and language attitudes among university students at the University of Aleppo in Syria and reveals that a relationship does exist between identity and attitude in the sense that participants performed their identities through their cultural attitudes and language choice.

Keywords: Identity, Attitude, Socio-Cognitive, Language Choice

Introduction

What is identity?

Identity is a complex concept to study and investigate. This is partly due to the richness of this concept as well as the different layers it includes. Identity can be viewed and defined as simple as "who you are" (Blommaert, 2005; Joseph, 2004). However, "who you are" can also be viewed and defined as the combination of many elements such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, background, context, affiliation, education, past experiences as well as future aspirations that shape any human being. Malouf (2000, p.4) argues that every human being is a mixture of different identities, affiliations and belongings – social, national and religious – which lead to the construction of identity. In the case of an Algerian in France, Malouf argues that:

> "French, European and other western influences mingle with Arab, Berber, Muslim and other sources, whether with regard to language, beliefs, family relationships or to tastes in cooking and the arts"

This shows identity as "who you are" – although seemingly simple – can be complex and interconnected. Everything we do (or do not do) tells something about us: the clothes we wear, the newspapers we read, the music we listen to, the film genres we like, even the colours we prefer and much more. In this regard, the proverb "a person is known by the company he keeps" also seems to reveal one side of identity: the people you befriend or hang out with tell many things about you. Lakoff (2006, p.143) argues that even the kinds of food we eat tell a lot about us:

> "what we can and cannot eat, what kinds of edibles carry prestige, how much we are expected to know about what we eat – all of these are aspects of individual and group identity"

Language is another strong marker of identity and history brings us many stories about how the way people talk tells a lot about their identities; the story of Shibboleth is just one historical example of many. Dialect, accent and language preference are all ways through which we identify ourselves. In the Arabic World for example, speaking in the standard variety of Arabic is one way of showing education and the intention to indicate that education because it is hard for uneducated people to speak in Standard Arabic. Similarly, using a specific form of salutation such as السلام عليكم Assalamo Alaikom (peace be upon you) is

one way to perform religious identity because this is the proper way to salute in Islam.

Two Different Views of Identity

Spivak (1993, p.179) argues that "making sense of ourselves is what produces identity". In other words, identity is how people identify themselves and communicate their feeling of self to their social world. Supporting this argument, Scollon and Scollon (2003, p.15) argue that:

> "whether or not the person consciously undertakes any particular action, the action will 'give off' … a personal identity and a position in the social world that is available to others to see and to respond to"

The above arguments reveal that identity can be studied in light of two approaches: one which focuses on the individual's feeling of sense and how they "give off" this feeling of sense to the surrounding world and another which focuses on how an individual is perceived, interpreted and "seen" by the surrounding social context.

In other words, making sense of ourselves is a result of a social process which enables humans to develop, transform and negotiate their feeling of self in accordance with life experiences they undergo in their social contexts (Baynham, 2006; De Fina *et al.*, 2006; Hall, 1996). Identity in this view is continuous, developing and changing as a result of life experiences. Identity in this perspective is different from one person to another and one context to another since every human has different and unique experiences. This view of identity understands it as endless, dynamic, socially-situated and continuous. Hall (1996, p.2) argues that identity formation is "a construction, a process never completed – always 'in process". Similarly, Simpson and Hepworth (2010, p.6) argue that "it is appropriate to view identity itself as flexible, fluid and non-permanent". Under this approach, identity is a result of a multi-layered process which humans develop during their life and every life experience adds one layer to the continuous and on-going process of identity construction. Similarly, identity in this approach is strongly related to other elements such as context, culture and social values (De Fina *et al.*, 2006) and the difference among these elements is what makes everyone of us different and unique. In other words, it can be argued that identity is a social process and it is performed through social practices. In the example from the Arab world mentioned above, people actually use Standard Arabic in order to identify themselves as educated and communicate this feeling of being educated to their social context to respond to. De Fina *et al.* (2006, p.2) argue that "both social and discourse practices frame and in many ways define, the way individuals and groups present themselves to others, negotiate roles and conceptualize themselves.

On the other hand, making sense of ourselves is a more stable and less dynamic or changing process. It is acquired at a certain stage of our life and it always defines who we are. In light of this view, identity is more settled and less flexible. In other words, different events or experiences make us who we are and we carry this stable sense of identity and draw on it throughout our lives. Cerulo (1997, p.385) argues that this view of identity focuses mainly on "the formation of "me", exploring the ways in which interpersonal interactions mould an individual's sense of self". In this approach to understanding identity, participants in any discourse draw upon and bring in to the interaction aspects of their identities which have already been constructed and which they draw upon in order to make sense of themselves. This concept is commonly referred to as "habitus" which was introduced by Bourdieu (1991). In Bourdieu's terms, the habitus is:

> a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously coordinated or governed by any 'rule' (Bourdieu, 1991, p.12).

Drawing on Bourdieu's definition above, Scollon and Scollon (2003: 211) view habitus as "the accumulated experience and knowledge both conscious and unconscious of a social actor which is theorized as the primary source of human action". Pahl (2008, p.77) argues that we draw on habitus "to develop ways of being and doing". In light of these definitions, this stable view of identity focuses on the process of identity formation rather than on the factors that form identity and explains how individuals draw upon this feeling to make sense of themselves and communicate their feeling of self.

Both approaches to understand identity above show that a relationship exists between identity, whether dynamic or stable and attitude; individuals develop attitude based on their feeling of identity and this attitude changes and develops with the developing process of identity. Similarly, attitude is influenced by habitus. Bourdieu argues that habitus "generates practices, perceptions and attitudes". This shows a relationship does exist between attitude and identity as further argued in the following sections.

Attitude is a Cognitive Construct

One interesting remark that can be drawn when researching attitude from early studies on this concept is that it has been conceptualised and approached as a cognitive psychology construct and this approach has rarely been questioned or challenged. One early definition of attitude that has been later adopted by many

was developed by Thurstone (1931, p.261) as an "affect for or against a psychological object". Another definition of attitude was introduced by Edwards (1957, p.2) who defined attitude as "the degree of positive or negative affect associated with some psychological object". A third definition which was introduced a quarter of a century later by Oppenheim (1982, p.39) echoed the previous views and perceived attitude as a mental or psychological characteristic where he defined it as a "an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life". Although attitude has mainly been perceived as purely cognitive or having two components: Affect and cognition, one view incorporates a social dimension in the study of attitudes and connects it with social psychology in the sense that the affect or mental state (cognition) for or against something happens in a social context and it influences behaviour which differs from one social context to another. This view of attitude as a mental response towards social constructs is referred to as the three-component model of attitude (Hogg and Vaughan, 2011) which involves conation or the mental decision to perform an action in response to affect or cognition towards something or somebody. Nevertheless, this view still stresses the cognitive nature of attitude and it focuses more on the mental decision to behave rather than on how this mental decision influences behaviour. In addition, Hogg and Vaughan (2011, p.150) argue that this view of attitude comes with some limitations in the sense that it views attitudes as permanent and stable rather than dynamic and flexible and it is also limited to specific social experiences. This brief presentation of attitude shows clearly that attitude has always occupied a central position in cognitive psychology and it is very challenging to establish a link between it and a concept that has mainly been perceived as socially-situated and dynamic like identity.

The Relationship Between Identity and Attitude

The argument that a relationship exists between identity and attitude may not be digested easily (or may never be) by many researchers. This actually relates to the view every researcher takes on these two notions and the school of thought they affiliate with. Attitude is mainly viewed as a purely psychological phenomenon and it has been defined by different researchers as a hidden personality trait which cannot be observed or described, but can only be inferred because it resides in and emerges from the human brain (Ajzen, 1988; Baker, 1992; Dornyei, 2003; Hill, 1981; Zimbardo *et al*., 1977). Contrary to this, identity is a sociological phenomenon which can be observed by observing practices and behaviour. As a result, it does not seem easy to relate or combine these two contradictory paradigms in one study. Nevertheless, this article attempts to challenge this view and argue that there is a link that connects both of them

and therefore studying every concept in relation to the other does not violate any research laws. Rather, it actually provides a notable contribution to already existing knowledge by bridging the gap between these two notions and proving they can be combined in one study.

This claim is based on taking a socio-cognitive approach towards studying and understanding attitude as well as highlighting its relationship to identity instead of the predominantly cognitive view of attitude which draws a red line between it and identity. From this socio-cognitive point of view, a relationship does exist between attitude and identity and studying them together will offer a great contribution to understanding both. This article argues that understanding attitude is in fact one of the doors to understanding identity. It will even go further and argue that attitude can be seen as one aspect of identity and identity can actually be performed through developing and expressing attitude.

Based on the general definition of identity as how we perceive ourselves or how we make sense of ourselves, it can be argued that attitude, whether purely cognitive or socio-cognitive, does tell a lot about the people who develop and express it. In other words, attitude is one of the ways through which we make sense of ourselves and communicate our sense of self to the world. In many life experiences, we perform our identities through the attitudes we express and develop. To elaborate this argument, let us take some examples on topics that have divided public opinion such as immigration, war on terror or same-sex marriage. When somebody says that immigration should be limited, or the West should fight terrorism, or same-sex marriage should be allowed, these statements can be seen as social, political, economic or religious points of view and beliefs. Nevertheless, these views and beliefs are actually attitudes which these people develop and express towards these issues. More importantly, people express these attitudes to tell about themselves and also to communicate their feeling of self to their surrounding social contexts. Hence, they are parts or aspects of their identities. In addition, declaring these attitudes towards any of the topics above (or any other topic or person) is not only an aspect of identity, but also an act of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006) through which people say something about who they are. Moreover, these attitudes reflect the identities of the people who express them. In other words, identity and attitude are coherent and harmonious; it is unusual for an anti-immigration individual to join a pro-immigration rally as much as it is unusual for a policeman to express supportive views of terrorism. These examples show the view of attitude as purely cognitive is not completely accurate. This is because attitudes are related to the socio-cultural, political and religious contexts they are developed in. Besides, they are related to the identities of the people who develop and express them. Therefore, attitude and identity are

sometimes intertwined and they are better studied in connection to one another, not in isolation from one another. In other words, we need attitude to explain and understand identity and we need identity to understand why attitudes are developed and expressed.

This argument echoes some other researchers' arguments (Atkinson, 2010; Billig, 1991; Clark and Chalmers, 1998; Lawson and Sachdev, 2004; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). Clark and Chalmers (1998) argue that attitudes are not cognitive responses that originate only in the human brain, but they are largely influenced by context. Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004, p.1) argue that "in multilingual settings, language choice and attitudes are inseparable from political arrangements, relations of power, language ideologies and interlocutors' views of their own and others' identities". Similarly, Lawson and Sachdev (2004, p.56) argue that "group identity influences patterns of language attitudes and usage". Hence, attitudes should actually be viewed as one part of identity. In relation to language attitude, Barton (2007, p.35) argues that attitude towards a given language plays an important role in the choice, use and acquisition of that language: "we have awareness, attitudes and values with respect to literacy and these attitudes and values guide our actions". This shows attitude towards a given language is related to the identities of the people who use that language. It also shows that understanding attitude towards language helps to understand the identities of the people who speak, learn or use that language.

Research Method

The argument of this article is based on a research study that was conducted at the University of Aleppo in Syria. This study investigates language use in Syrian university students' electronic literacy practices and how they perform their identities through their use of language online. In its theoretical framework, the study argues that attitude exerts some influence on identity in the sense that humans behave towards something or somebody according to what they feel about it or what they think of it and also in light of how they position themselves against it. Following this argument, the study argues that participants' attitude towards language, whether Arabic or English and their actual choice of language online are related to many factors among which is their feeling of identity. To put this argument to test, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach and employed surveys, semi-structured focus groups and case studies to explore the research phenomenon.

Rationale for Selecting Survey

The use of questionnaire is an ideal choice in this study because of access to a large number of participants and questionnaires are highly effective in collecting responses from large numbers of participants (Bryman, 2008; Cohen *et al*., 2007; Dornyei, 2003; Gillham, 2000). Besides, questionnaires have other advantages such as easiness of distribution and administration, saving researcher time, anonymity and confidentiality of participants and flexibility (Brown, 2001; Dornyei, 2003; Gillham, 2000; Oppenheim, 1992).

Interviewing is employed to support the questionnaire work by collecting more in-depth data on participants' language attitude and use. In addition, it is used to verify and enhance the accuracy and the reliability of data gathered by questionnaires and to get a clearer idea of the main themes of analysis that need to be examined. Robson (2002, pp. 272-273) argues that "interviews offer the possibility of modifying one's line of enquiry, following up interesting responses and investigating underlying motives". In addition, the flexibility of interviewing and the communication channels it creates between interviewers and interviewees make it a convenient and popular research method (Brown, 2001; Cohen *et al*., 2007).

Site Selection and Identifying Participants

Marshall and Rossman (2014, p.69) argue that the best place to do research is a site where:

> "access is possible; there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions and structures of interest are present, the researcher is likely to build trusting relations with the participants in the study"

Following this argument, this research was conducted in the Institute of Languages at Aleppo University in Syria because this site meets all the requirements mentioned above. First, access can easily be secured in this site because I have already worked there and I have good relationship with staff and administration. Second, the institute is concerned with teaching English to students from all university departments who come from different parts of Syria. Third, it is much easier to build rapport and good relations with participants in a familiar context compared to an unfamiliar one and having worked there before helped well to do so.

As a result of careful management and administration of the questionnaire and group interviews, 432 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 14 groups of participants with a response and return rate of 100% because I stayed in class with every group of participants to address any questions they have and also to collect back all copies. Similarly, I managed to recruit 90 participants from the same target group for my interviews and these participants were divided into 9 focus groups. In addition, some participants were recruited to collect some further case study data on

participants' actual use of language in order to get closer understanding of how they perform their identities through their language attitude and use.

Findings

The questionnaire data was analysed using SPSS software and the interview data was analysed using NVivo software.

Participants' Attitude towards English

The first part of the questionnaire surveyed participants' attitude towards English using a 5-point Likert scale. The findings of this part are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

As Table 1 shows, participants seem very happy with the fact that they are learning English with almost everybody (427 participants = 98.9%) agreeing with the statement "I am happy I am learning English" and only 5 participants (1.1%) having a neutral view. To support this finding and ensure the accuracy of questionnaire responses, participants disagree strongly with the third statement "I wish English was not taught at all in Syria" where 410 participants (96%) disagree with this statement, while only one participant (0.2%) agrees with it and 16 participants (3.7%) have a neutral view.

Data in the table above shows that participants are developing a highly positive attitude towards English in terms of how they feel towards learning it. This finding echoes many similar ones in other studies conducted about the topic of attitude towards English in different contexts around the world (Al Abed and Smadi, 1996; De Kadt, 1993; Mitsikopoulou, 2007). However, the second statement "English is my favorite subject" seems to raise some question marks. Responses to this statement show that 23 participants (5.3%) disagree with this statement and 41 participants (9.5%) have a neutral view. Although this is still a small percentage, it seems interesting when compared to the 98.9% positive response to the first statement. In other words, the majority of participants feel happy that they are learning English although it is not the favourite subject for around 15% of them. This seems an interesting finding and there must be an explanation for this difference in responses. The answer to this question emerges in Table 2.

A quick look at Table 2 seems to explain the difference in responses mentioned in the previous paragraph. Data in Table 2 shows that participants view English as a source of success in their life. Looking at responses to the first three statements in the table above shows that English is viewed as a means to an end, not an end by itself and the end in this case is achieving success in life. This instrumental view of English is a common feature in many studies in ESL and EFL contexts (Al Abed and Smadi, 1996; De Kadt, 1993; Fonzari, 1999; Friedrich, 2000; Mitsikopoulou, 2007;

Schaub, 2000). Fonzari (1999, p.44) found that participants in her study were motivated to learn English because they viewed it "as a means to achieve a good job, personal improvement and economic success". Similarly, Schaub (2000) found that English was viewed with special importance by many people going into the job market especially those working in the tourist industry, engineering, business and medicine.

To get a deeper and more accurate understanding of participants' responses, this topic was discussed in the group interviews and some examples of participants' responses are presented below.

(In all extracts, "s" means student and the number after it indicates the order when every student joined the conversation)

Extract 1: (Group Interview 1)

s3: to help me in my study
s4: because the english become of the language of world and and language of العلـــم (knowledge)
int: any other reason that you are studying english
s5: it is important to speak with tourists if I go to another country i found people who do not know my language and know english so it difficult without english

Extract 2: (Group Interview 2)

s4: for me i need it for my job
s5: ... now i am learning english because i want it and i need it in the future
s1: it is necessity
int: yes please
s2: i learn english just to find a good job after i graduate

Extract 3: (Group Interview 3)

s2: because we need it and
s1: for future work
s2: and it is very important for anything in the life and any job and any
int: aha so because it is important in your life
s2: yes
int: what do you mean by important here i mean in what sense is it important in your life
s3: everything
s2: different reasons
s1: it is part of our study because i am study economic and i need english for to learn about the many things in my field i need to know how european and american people use the banking and everything

Table 1: Participants' feelings towards English

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
I am happy I am learning	0	0	5	114	313	432
English	0%	0%	1.1%	26.5%	72.4%	100%
English is my favorite	3	20	41	187	180	431
subject	0.7%	4.6%	9.5%	43.4%	41.8%	100%
I wish English was not	322	88	16	0	1	427
taught at all in Syria	75.4%	20.6%	3.7%	0%	0.2%	100%

Table 2: Participants' perception of English

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
English is necessary for university students	0	0	3	112	313	428
	0%	0%	0.7%	26.2%	73.1%	100%
English is necessary for development in Syria	0	3	46	138	240	427
	0%	0.7%	10.8%	32.3%	56.2%	100%
English is a source of success in life	3	8	66	192	162	431
	0.7%	1.9%	15.3%	44.5%	37.6%	100%
Learning English is a waste of time	312	111	0	2	5	430
	72.6%	25.8%	0%	0.5%	1.2%	100%

Table 3: Participants' change of attitude towards English

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Learning English weakens Arab identity	128	134	93	67	7	429
	29.80%	31.2%	21.7%	15.6%	1.6%	100%

Data in these extracts seem to emphasise participants' responses to the questionnaire; the main reason for learning English seems related to the need for English in participants' life or future in terms of finding a better job or getting a better chance and also the global status of English as a world language.

Participants' Change of Attitude with the Shift of Identity Position

Based on participants' responses in both the questionnaire and the group interviews, it can be argued that participants in general develop highly positive attitude towards English and this is reflected in the high desire to learn this language. Nevertheless, one part of this study that points out that attitude is influenced by the identities of the people who develop that attitude and that it changes with the shift of identity is presented in Table 3 below which investigates the relationship between learning English and participants' identity:

So far, participants, who are native speakers of Arabic, develop a highly positive attitude towards English as a language of knowledge, technology, etc. However, participants' responses to the statement in Table 3 above show that their feeling of identity exerts some influence on their attitude towards English or their desire to learn English. In Tables 1 and 2, participants seem to develop highly positive attitude towards English. However, this high attitude seems to decrease or change in Table 3 where participants' feeling of identity is involved; 74 participants (17.2%) agree that learning English weakens their feeling of Arab identity. Although

262 participants (61%) still think that no contradiction exists between learning English and preserving the feeling of Arab identity, 74 participants (17.2%) seem to agree that learning English negatively influences their feeling of identity. Keeping in mind that 93 participants (21.1%) have a neutral view, data in Table 3 points out a relationship between participants' feeling of identity and their attitude towards English.

To explore this argument further, this issue was raised during the interviews and some participants' responses clearly reflect the responses to the questionnaire as presented in the following extracts:

Extract 4: (Group Interview 2)

s6: … … if you know the language of anyone if you know his language you can know you can understand his feelings you can understand his thoughts because american is now is our enemy you have to know how it is how he is thinking how they are thinking

int: their way of thinking so that you understand them

s6: yes

Extract 5: (Group Interview 3)

s1: i hate american

int: you hate american

s1: yes

int: so why are you studying their language then

s2: because he hate america he study their language

من تعلـــم لغـة قـوم أمن مكرهم حـديث

(he who learns a grouop's language keeps safe from their evil this is hadeeth)

int: what do you mean

s2: لحـــتى تهـزم عدوك لازم تعـــرفو

(you must know your enemy in order to beat them)

Extract 6: (Group Interview 7)

S9: yes arabic is our language and we should use it more and protect her from english or anything i love english and want to learn english but i do not want to use english instead of arabic and if i have to choose between english and arabic i will choose arabic of course

Extract 7: (Group Interview 2)

s2:

بالنسبة للسلام لازم يكون دائما بالعربي

(greeting must always be in Arabic)

int: ليـــش

(why)

s2: لأنـــو هيك تحيـــة الاســـلام

(because this is the greeting of Islam)

The extracts above show a completely different attitude from the one that has been so far expressed by the majority of participants. Interestingly, the participants in the extracts above still want to learn English. However, their desire to learn English is not influenced by their desire to find a job or improving their future chances, or anything related to the instrumentality of English. Rather, it is influenced by these participants' political, national, ethnic or religious identities.

In extracts 4 and 5, participants' attitude towards English is influenced by their political identities. Participants s6, s1 and s2 view the United States of America as an enemy and they want to learn English, the language of their enemy, in order to understand this enemy and also to defeat it. It is very interesting to see how these participants identify themselves against English as an international language of communication, knowledge and technology and English as the language of their enemy, the United States of America. It is more interesting to see how participants develop contradictory attitude towards English based on each one of these positions. In other words, participants' positive attitude towards English when they identify themselves as language learners shifts to negative when they identify themselves based on their political views and position against the United States as a political power and its policies in the Middle East.

Similarly, data in extract 6 point out a clear connection between ethno-linguistic identity and language attitude. Although participant s9 says that she loves English and wants to learn it, she makes it clear that she is more connected with Arabic because it is her language. This participant brings another example of how attitude changes when people perform different identity positions. In light of her identity as a student, participant s9 loves English and wants to learn it. When she speaks from her ethno-linguistic identity, she will choose Arabic, if she has to make a choice between Arabic and English. This is reminiscent of similar findings of other studies; many participants in Marriott's (1998) study insisted on using their mother language in their online communication although they spoke and wrote perfect English because of "the reality that your mother tongue is your mother tongue" (Marriott, 1998).

Finally, participant s2 in extract 7 above presents further emphasis of the relationship between religious identity and language attitude. Speaking from a religious identity position as a Muslim, this participant argues that Arabic is more preferred for certain linguistic functions such as greetings because this is how religion, Islam in this case, dictates. As participant s1 in the same extract says, some university students in Syria use English terms such as hello or hi for greeting and these people do not seem to adopt a religious point of view on the issue, while those who do, like participant s2, use only Arabic for greeting. This shows clearly that language attitude is influenced by the identities of the people who speak or learn the language. It also shows that choosing Arabic or English for certain functions is an act of semiosis which is also an act of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 2006) which indexes speakers' identities.

Participants' use of Language, Attitude and Identity Online

The survey also explored participants' choice of language online and tried to investigate any relationship between their choice of language online and their identities. Participants were asked to indicate the reason for using both English and Arabic in their online literacy practices by responding to a number of statements which represent possible reasons of using both languages online. Participants' responses are shown in Tables 4 and 5.

As Table 4 shows, different factors influence participants' use of English online. In accordance with what participants said about their attitude towards English in section 4.4, the majority of participants say that their use of English online is due to the instrumentality of English as well as the global status of English.

Table 4: Participants' reasons for using English online

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
English websites improve one's English	0	4	40	215	134	4.37
	0%	0.9%	9.3%	49.9%	31.1%	
English websites provide better information for study	4	20	114	156	99	4.02
	0.9%	4.6%	26.5%	36.2%	23.0%	
I am interested in Anglo-American culture	58	128	125	54	27	2.94
	13.5%	29.8%	29.1%	12.6%	6.3%	
I want to know more about the West	17	107	120	107	42	3.38
	3.9%	24.8%	27.8	24.8	9.7%	

Table 5: Participants' reasons for choosing Arabic for their online practices

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
Not able to understand the content	33	90	119	148	26	3.21
	7.6%	20.8%	27.5%	34.3%	6.0%	
Arabic websites provide information in Arabic	24	68	118	161	45	3.42
	5.6%	15.7%	27.3%	37.3%	10.4%	
English websites contain unfair representation of Arabs or Syria	28	84	180	91	25	3.11
	6.6%	19.8%	42.5%	21.5%	5.9%	
English websites are not appropriate to Arabic culture and values	37	62	130	156	26	3.28
	8.7%	14.5%	30.4%	36.5%	6.1%	

However, the use of English online seems also ideological and identity-related. This is clear in the participants' responses to the last two statements in Table 4. Participants seem to disagree more than agree with the argument that they use English online because of their interest in Anglo-American cultures or their desire to know more about the West; 81 participants (18.9%) agree (and strongly agree) that interest in Anglo-American culture is the reason for using English online while 186 participants (43.3%) disagree with it and 125 participants (29.1%) have a neutral view. Similarly, 149 participants (34.5%) agree that reason for using English online is the desire to know more about the West while 124 participants (28.7%) disagree with this assumption and 120 participants (27.8%) have a neutral view of it.

Similarly, data in Table 5 shows that participants' use of Arabic online is also related to their identity. Responses to the first two statements shows highlights the progress of Arabic as a language of the internet which is playing a considerable role in the choice of this language as a medium of internet use or online communication. However, the more interesting finding in Table 5 is related to the connection between participants' feeling of identity and their choice of Arabic online. Responses to the last two statements in Table 5 indicate that 182 participants (42.6%) agree with the statement that they access the internet in Arabic more than in English because English websites are not appropriate to Arabic culture and values. Although responses to the last statement were close, 116 participants (27.4%) still agree that data in Table 4 and 5 indicates that the issue of language use online is complex and influenced by different factors. One factor that seems to shift language attitude and use is participants' feeling of identity. Participants develop a highly positive

attitude towards English in light of their identities as young students who are looking to build their future and this positive attitude is accompanied with choice of English online. However, this attitude seems to shift to negative or at least neutral when they view themselves as Arab, Syrian or speakers of Arabic and this shift of attitude is accompanied by one in language shift online from English to Arabic.

As mentioned before, some participants were recruited to get real-life data on participants' language attitude and choice online. These case-study participants were observed as they used the internet as they normally do and they were interviewed after the observation to understand what (and why) they did. Every case study presents an interesting manifestation of the relationship between the participant's identity, their language attitude and their use of language online. Two case study participants in specific presented completely contradictory views. During the interview stage, the first participant seemed very supportive of English and she said she uses it a lot while the second participant was very supportive of Arabic and she said she only uses it. During the observation, the first participant did almost everything online in English while the second participant did everything online in Arabic. The first participant, Roa (pseudonym), presented herself as an open-minded "citizen of the world" who has a globalized identity as follows (she spoke in English throughout the interview):

> i was raised in an open-minded family and i
> like to know other people and see their life
> style and how they think ... ...
> for example, i visited a pub when i went to the
> uk. i did not drink and of course i do not drink
> but i wanted to know how people there live

Roa's statement above reveals a lot about herself and her background. As mentioned before, Roa presented herself as a person who is interested in other cultures and who wants to explore and understand them. This other-friendly attitude seems to be shaped by her open-minded background and she seems aware of this when she says "I was raised in an open-minded family". Also, it seems to shape her view of herself i.e. her identity and how she communicates her sense of identity to the outside world such as to visit a pub while she was the UK. When asked about her attitude towards English, Roa said:

> i think English language is very important to be learned by everyone. Beside, you can be connected with all other foreign countries when you are able to speak English

This statement seems to clarify the picture Roa depict about herself. She is interested in exploring other cultures and connecting with them and she also develops a highly positive attitude towards English because she believes that English is the way to fulfil her interest in understanding other cultures.

Roa's open-mindedness and positive attitude towards English are clearly reflected in her use of language online; during the observation process, Roa did everything in English. This includes the websites she visited, the emails she received and the emails she sent. This shows that her identity as somebody who is interested in other cultures is reflected in her positive attitude towards English and both of her identity and positive attitude towards English are reflected in her use of English online.

Contrary to Roa, the second case study participant, Hala (Pseudonym) presented herself as a conservative person who follows religious teachings as follows (she spoke in Arabic throughout the interview):

> أنا إنسانة متدينة و بستخدم الدين ليرشدني بحياتي يعني لما بحكي مع حدا أو وين ما بروح بلجئ للدين ليساعدني
> (I am religious myself and I use religion to direct my life I mean when I talk or wherever I go I refer to religion for guidance)

The statement above shows Hala's conservative and religious identity and how she uses religion as a way of life. As she reveals elsewhere in the interview, she performs her religious identity physically by wearing a head cover and linguistically by using Arabic all the time. Although she is interested in learning English, she does not seem to express a positive attitude towards it. On the contrary, she performs her religious identity by developing a highly positive attitude to Arabic. Interestingly, she uses a verse from the Quran to do this:

> الله عز و جل قال بالقرآن " إنا أنزلناه قرآنا عربيا لعلكم تعقلون" أنا بحب العربي لأنها لغة القرآن

> (Allah Almighty said in the Quran "we have sent it down an Arabic Quran so you may understand" I love Arabic because it the language of the Quran)

In addition, Hala's religious identity and positive attitude towards Arabic are reflected in her use of language online. During the observation, Hala did everything online in Arabic. This included the websites she visited and the emails she received and sent. When asked about the reasons for the absence of English in her online activities, she said:

> نحنا لازم نتمسك بلغتنا لأنها بتمثل حضارتنا و وجودنا لغتنا هي لغة القرآن و الله باركها بالقرآن و أمرنا أنو نستعملها منشان هيك أنا دائما بستعملها و عن جد بستغرب كيف المسلمين بينجذبوا للانكليزي و بيتجاهلوا لغتن المباركة
> (We should appreciate our language because it is our culture it is our existence it is the language of the Quran it is blessed by the Quran and Allah in the Quran orders us to use it so I always try to use it and I really feel surprised how Muslims feel enchanted by English while they ignore their blessed language)

As her statement above shows, the reason for Hala's use of Arabic online is very connected to her feeling of religious identity i.e. her feeling of being a Muslim and her awareness of the strong relationship between Arabic and Islam. This again shows that Hala's identity as a religious person is performed through developing a highly positive attitude towards Arabic and also through using only Arabic in her online communication.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide different pieces of evidence that a relationship exists between identity and attitude. These finding provide reconciliation between already existing views about identity and attitude as being on two completely opposite sides because a theoretical disagreement exists between them and it is not possible to study each one of these concepts in relation to the other.

As mentioned before, this theoretical disagreement emerges from the traditional view attitude as a cognitive construct and many researchers followed and adopted this purely psychological view in their investigation of participants' responses. These studies also viewed attitude as hidden personality traits which cannot be studied or described. Rather, they can be measured. In other words, attitude according to the psychological view presented above is predominantly cognitive and it resides in the minds of participants in isolation of anything else. On the opposite side of this view, identity

is defined and understood by many scholars as a sociological phenomenon which influences (and is influenced by) individuals' behaviour and actions and which relates to their contexts and backgrounds. Besides, it can best be understood by investigating these behaviour and actions. Following this view, many identity-related studies view it as socially-situated and related to context and background.

Contrary to the two views above, this study is trying to argue for a mid-way position between the two views and claim that the two traditionally contradictory views could be reconciled in a way that identity and attitude could be studied together which actually improves the way we understand human actions and behaviour. So doing, this article tries to develop a different understanding of attitude and its relationship to identity. This understanding views attitude as more socio-cognitive than purely cognitive as many researchers did before. Understanding attitude as a cognitive response or a preference which is produced and processed inside the human brain apart from anything else is only partially true and it is narrow-angled because it misses a very important element in the development of attitudes i.e. the social context or the environment simply because the human mind does not operate in isolation of the body or its surroundings. Rather, the social context or the environment surrounding the human being has a strong influence on the decisions made by the human mind. According to the cognitive view of attitude, preference for (or against) something, the spread of English let us say, is a mental response made in the brain. An important question, which shows a main drawback of this view, is about how the human brain makes a judgement about the spread of English, if the human being does not experience any situations or experiences upon which an attitude can be developed and expressed! When someone says they love English or English is good for no reason, this does not make much sense. But when this attitude is justified such as I love English because English opens the door for getting a better job, this attitude is clearer and it makes more sense because it is connected to certain experiences the speaker has. One of the participants in the study said:

> i know my friends from Lebanon because he
> knews the language English and France
> language they chose him directly

This participant makes this cognitive judgment about English because of a certain experience in his social context, not because he loves English or he thinks English is good for no reason. If we change the context, the cognition might change. Therefore, this understanding of attitude takes the social context as equally important as the human mind. Similarly, the participants in this study who prefer to use Arabic more than English were all influenced by political, ethnic or religious backgrounds. Hence, their attitude towards English or Arabic is influenced by their society or social context and it is enough to argue that their attitude is a product of their brain only and it is not influenced by their social context.

Let us take another example, a general attitude of animosity against Muslims started to emerge in the West during the past decade. This attitude was fuelled to a very high extent by the 9/11 attacks which were carried out by 19 Muslims; an absolutely tiny fraction of the World's Muslim population of more than one billion. Islam for many people in the West means suicide bombers and terrorism. In other words, the whole concept of Islam, a deeply-rooted Abrahamic religion, is summarized by the actions of a group of lost souls called Al Qaeda whose actions are highly rejected by millions of Muslims all over the world. Developing attitude towards Muslims based on the cognitive approach to attitude will only produce misunderstanding, negativity and animosity. Contrary to this, developing attitude towards Muslims based on a socio-cognitive view, which takes life experiences, discussions, practices or appropriate knowledge of Islam would certainly change attitudes and reduce the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1998) our world is experiencing at the moment. In other words, the attitude towards Muslims on part of Westerners who live in the Middle East, which is more socio-cognitive, is more realistic than that of Westerners who know about Islam from news they see or read and their attitude is more cognitive. In a similar argument, Rogers (2003) argues that experiencing an innovation is an important part of making a response to adopt or reject it. Based on these arguments, it makes more sense to view attitude as more than making a mental judgment for or against something and including the social context, the past experiences as well as the present ones as important factors that help the human brain to develop attitude.

This view of attitude is reminiscent of that of some researchers (Atkinson, 2010; Billig, 1991; Clark and Chalmers, 1998; Harre and Gillett, 1994) who see it as social and related to the context rather than confined solely to the mind. Atkinson (2010) and Clark and Chalmers (1998) used the term "extended cognition" in their argument that cognition does not only take place inside the brain. Atkinson (2010, p. 599) argues that "extended cognition conceptualizes mind/brain as inextricably tied to the external environment". Similarly, Clark and Chalmers (1998) argue that the external environment plays an active role in the brain's cognitive tasks and that "once we recognize the crucial role of the environment in constraining the evolution and development of cognition, we see that extended cognition is a core cognitive process" (Clark and Chalmers, 1998, p. 12). Finally, adopting this socio-cognitive view of attitude makes it closer to identity which is also socially-situated

and influenced by the context or environment. So doing, attitude and identity seem to have something in common and, as the study claims, it becomes possible and justified to study both of them in relation to one another.

Summary

This article presents a different take on the relationship between identity and attitude. Contrary to traditional views which perceive attitude as a cognitive construct which cannot be studied in connection with identity which is a social construct, it presents a new argument which presents attitude as a socio-cognitive construct which bridge the gap between it and identity. It goes further to claim that attitude is one way through which identity is performed and it is therefore one marker of identity and studying everyone in connection to the other will actually enhance, not contradiction, our understanding of both.

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