Native-Culturism in University of Jordan Students' Cognitions about Literature

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Abstract: This study explores the extent to which Jordanian university English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' cognitions about literature are shaped by the concepts of 'linguistic imperialism', 'native-speakerism', and 'native-culturism'. A survey is carefully designed by the researchers and electronically distributed to 100 students enrolled in the English language programs at the University of Jordan. The survey includes both objective and subjective questions in order to more fully understand students' cognitions (i.e., knowledge, beliefs, and thoughts, following Borg's (2003) conceptualisation) for better reliability in establishing arguments and reaching conclusions. Analysis of objective data is quantitatively conducted and statistically presented using a program called Qualtrics, an online survey tool, and subjective data are qualitatively analysed and consequently categorized into themes for better interpretation. Results show that most students are cognizant of the concepts of 'linguistic and cultural imperialism' when it comes to their preferences towards literature but report some obstacles to being exposed to 'non-core', 'periphery' literary texts. Some of these obstacles are the limited access to Arabic literature and curricular constraints. The study primarily concludes that more awareness of cultural diversity on the part of students and teachers is needed to improve their practices in language pedagogy and literary studies.

Keywords: cognitions, linguistic imperialism, literary literacy, native-culturism, native-speakerism

1. Introduction

In many countries in the Arab World, English is taught as a foreign language to most learners, who start learning this language as early as five years old. The classroom materials to which they are exposed show – at times – examples from English literature and culture. When they are growing up, they may begin asking questions as to why they learn English, why they need to know about English and/or its 'Centre' culture, and why English is generally perceived as a 'better' or 'more prestigious' language. Most often, these questions remain unanswered, even after they graduate from their respective universities. In fact, they take English to be just a normal part of their lives, accepting and often celebrating not only the dominance of English and its 'native' speakers but also its attendant culture.

It was only recently that such perspectives came to the fore of debate and research, especially through the ground-breaking works of such scholars as

Tomlinson (1991), Phillipson (1992) and Holliday (2005). In that important body of work, the idea of the perfection of the native speaker is questioned: Phillipson (1992:185) calls the idealisation of native speakers "the native speaker fallacy." Building upon his critique, Holliday (2005) develops the concept of native-speakerism to investigate and counteract the underlying principles of pedagogical practices when it comes to teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) or EFL. That investigation is long overdue, Kabel (2009:13) argues, as "[a]pplied linguistics has mostly been disengaged from the ideological conditions of its possibility." One of the key conditions of its *raison d'etre* is colonialism, as Pennycook (1998) and Azim (1993) put it. Indeed, the study of the aspects of colonialism, such as native-speakerism and native-culturism, represents an engaged approach to ESL or EFL and facilitates the eradication of racist or colonial undertones and mutual understanding between different cultures.

Holliday (2017:1) defines native-speakerism as "an ideology that upholds the idea that so-called 'native speakers' are the best models and teachers of English because they represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of English and of the methodology for teaching it." Elsewhere, he warns that native-speakerism is "so deep … that people are standardly unaware of its presence and its *impact*" (Holliday 2005:10; italics added). In this vein, as portrayed most often in Western literature, 'Western culture' – or the Centre culture, as opposed to the Periphery culture (see Said, 1993 for an elaboration of the Centre vs. the Periphery) – represents a form of cultural imperialism. Kabel (2009:15-16) argues that the proliferation of the presence of cultural imperialism is engendered by "discursive practices" and that it "is not simply a *reflection* and *continuation* of colonial constructs and practices" but also "a *discursive dialectic*…that *produces* a current ELT [English language teaching] 'Other'" (italics in original). This shift toward what is called "critical theory" (Waters 2007:281) or "critical cosmopolitan approaches" (Holliday 2009:144) is not readily tolerated. In fact, there are many experts who challenged the existence of or the current approach to dealing with native-speakerism. For instance, Waters (2007:281) argues that the work of what he calls "critical theorists" is marred by two "generalisations": lack of "empirical evidence" and alleged misuse of "the concept of stereotyping." Kabel (2009) counters his claims by suggesting that Waters's critique is in and of itself an example of native-speakerism. Our research stems from Holliday's and Kabel's attempts to think more consciously about the pedagogic practices that are tinged with or replete with native-speakerism.

Responding to Holliday's warnings, noted above, many researchers studied the presence of native-speakerism in different contexts. Wu and Ke (2009) focus on native-speakerism among Taiwanese undergraduates, whereas Hall (2012:107) dwells upon ways of "deconstruct[ing] the maze of native speakerism" through teacher training. Tweedie's (2013) study revolves around the use of Singlish (i.e., a variety of English in Singapore) and the implications of its detachment from a native-speakerist paradigm. Nonetheless, very little research addresses native-speakerism as reflected in literature syllabi in ESL and EFL contexts. In fact, what is written does not reflect on the implications of reading literature (particularly

fiction and poetry) in general or the effects of reading English literature, in particular, on their languages and cultures. Stressing "the relevance of literary works for the study of language and culture" (Kachru and Smith 2008:174), most articles and/or books focus on the effect of reading literature on improving the learner's reading abilities and vocabulary learning (see Karakaya and Kahraman 2013). Ghiabi's (2014:55) study of Iranian students' perceptions of reading novels found that that extended reading activity positively influenced "students' attitudes [towards], confidence [in], [and] interest [in]" learning English. It also helped them improve "their novel-reading ability." Most other studies (e.g., Carroli 2002; Tevdovska 2016) looked at practitioners' attitudes towards literature and its incorporation in ELT curricula. More pertinently, Ruiz-Cecilia (2012) discusses the impact of teaching literature that is written by 'Others' – i.e., non-Anglo writers of literature – on learners of English by means of exposing them to fairy tales. He concludes that such a multicultural approach helps students get rid of any tendency for stereotyping. He also points out the significance of cultural awareness in teaching languages. It is then fitting to suggest that within most of the existing ELT literature, there is a tacit acceptance of 'English' literature and almost no treatment of other literatures.

That acceptance of English literature has been questioned or thought about in many theoretical iterations by critics in the field of postcolonial studies. Some believe that it is inevitable to employ English, given the context of imperialism and the possibility of reaching out to large audiences (particularly because of the publishing industry). Chinua Achebe and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, for instance, argue that using English is (a) necessary (evil). Achebe (2013:24-25) writes:

> While African languages and writing should be developed, nurtured, and preserved, how else, I would wonder later, would I have been able to communicate with so many boys from different parts of the country and ethnic groups, speaking different languages, had we not been taught one language?

For Achebe, English is a language of communication and unification (see also Achebe 1965). He uses English in his fiction to reach wider audiences, adding local linguistic features to his novels.

Other writers think of Achebe's views as a symptom of subscribing to the "metaphysical empire" of English (Thiong'o 2013:x). Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986), Tayeb Salih (2001), and Wole Soyinka (1994) are a few of those writers. In his book, *Decolonizing the mind: The politics of language in African literature*, Thiong'o (1986) suggests that using English negates one's own tradition and contributes to English culture. He adds that language is not merely a means of communication but is a significant component of one's identity. Thiong'o (1986:11) writes:

> Language was not a mere string of words. It had a suggestive power well beyond the immediate and lexical meaning…In Kenya, English became more than a language: it became the language, and all the others had to bow before it in deference.

At Kenyan schools, for instance, students were not allowed to speak Gikuyu, one of the Kenyan languages. Thiong'o (1986:12) adds, "Thus language and literature were taking us further and further from ourselves to other selves, from our world to other worlds." As a result, one felt alienated from one's own culture (see also Thiong'o 1986:17-18). In order to counteract that alienation, Thiong'o stopped writing in English and chose to write in Gikuyu first. He then translated his books into English, sometimes with the help of others.

Employing a multidisciplinary approach, this research paper combines current theories of native-speakerism in the field of Applied Linguistics with cultural critiques deployed by postcolonial writers. More specifically, it aims to locate students' cognitions about English literature and culture within such a background of different critical voices and to raise awareness of the different dimensions of such a debate. It also aims to bring into prominence cultural concepts to an otherwise perceived neutral linguistic discussion and to highlight the impact of their identification with the English language on their cognitions. The researchers argue that these multiple perspectives enable teachers and critics to come to terms with the conditions of possibility that underpin the dominance of the field of teaching English and native-speakerist-informed attitudes and assumptions, a topic that has not been openly and widely discussed. More particularly, the researchers make use of Holliday's (2009:150) concept of "culturism," which he defines as a "form of Othering on the basis of cultural description" and which the researchers call here *native-culturism*. In addition, this paper critically engages and contributes to the promotion of Holliday's useful formulation of "cultural belief" – "a belief in the cultural contribution of all teachers regardless of their background" – in the face of "cultural disbelief" (Holliday 2015:11). This "cultural belief" would empower teachers and in turn enable them to help their students make more critical and conscious use of English, a language which they are learning and may later teach. Such consciousness would result in more nuanced and critical decisions and more interest in different aspects of the language.

2. Methodology
2.1 Research questions
The study seeks to answer the following two research questions:
1. To what extent do Jordanian university EFL students internalize linguistic and cultural imperialism when studying literature?
2. How conscious are they of that internalisation?

2.2 Procedures
The researchers elicited the participation of a group of EFL students (N=100) studying Applied English, English Language and Literature, and other foreign languages at the University of Jordan during the first semester of the academic year 2016/2017. Students, registered in three different subjects, were asked for their consent to participate in this research study. The researchers explained to the students that their participation would not by any means influence the evaluation

of their performance, and students were assured that their answers would be confidential and would only be used for the purposes of research.

2.3 Participants and sampling

Of the 100 students who were first approached, 80 students voluntarily agreed to take part in the study. Most of them (70%) are Applied English students, some (26.25%) are studying in the English Language and Literature Department, and the rest (3.75%) are enrolled in other departments (it may be noted that Applied English students study at least three literature courses as part of their study plan). Their ages range from 18 to 29, with the majority (82.5%) between 21 and 23, indicating that the majority are students in their last year of study. The reason why the researchers focus on this age group is because students – after studying most courses in their programs – are expected to be more aware of popular concepts in ELT as part of the department's curricula and may be more cognitively developed to present conscious answers than those who are newly enrolled. All but two (97.5%) are females (Table 1 below presents the demographic information of participants). It may be noted that the overall number of students who were enrolled in the two BA programs of English offered at the University of Jordan at the time of data collection was 1087 students. Of these, only 64 are males and 1023 are females. This may justify the gender imbalance among participants in this study. The first language of the vast majority of participants (97.5%) is Arabic, and 2.5% are Jordanians but speak English as their first language.

Table 1. Demographic information about participants

Gender (No.) & %		Age (No.) & %		Year of study (No.) &%		Specialisation (No.) &%	
Male	(2) 2.5%	18-20	(7) .75%	2nd	(2) 2.5%	Linguistics	(56) 70%
Female	(78) 7.5%	21-23	(66) 82.5%	3rd	(8) 10%	Literature	(21)6.25%
		24-26	(4) 5%	4th +	(70) 87.5%	Other	(3) 3.75%
		27-29	(3) 3.75%				

2.4 Data collection

A specifically-designed electronic survey is used as the main method of data collection (see Appendix). The survey consists of two main sections: The first collects demographic information about participants including the age, specialisation, year of study, first language and gender of each one of them; and the second elicits participants' degree of awareness and internalisation of the concepts of linguistic and cultural imperialism by asking them questions about the type of literature they often read and its cultural associations. In order to fully understand their entrenched cognitions about the concepts, a few subjective (open-ended) questions are included to allow students to express their views in regard to the issues raised in the survey more freely. The inclusion of subjective questions enabled the researchers to make more confident conclusions about students' adherences and cognitions. As Holliday (2009:147) points out,

"[d]ecentered research methodologies need to allow critical spaces in which the unexpected can emerge, and the narratives of subjects can take on a life of their own."

2.5 Data analysis

As noted above, the survey includes both objective and subjective questions. This necessitated the use of a mixed-approach in the analysis of data. The data obtained from the objective questions are analysed quantitatively using Qualtrics, an online survey tool, and the data obtained from subjective questions are qualitatively analysed and consequently categorised into themes to allow for better interpretation and presentation.

3. Findings

In the survey, there were 10 questions about students' perceptions of their 'own' native literature in juxtaposition with English literature (or, as in very few cases, their perceptions of their 'own' literature; that is, English, in comparison to Arabic literature). It is worth mentioning that by literature the researchers mean English fiction, poetry, drama, and essays. The questions, one through five, in the second section of the survey were of two types: objective (close-ended) and subjective (open-ended), as noted earlier. Students had to pick and choose one option. After they made their choices, they had to justify them in response to a question that follows each one of the objective questions: *Use this space to explain your answer to ….* This section presents findings obtained from these questions. Tables 2 and 3 below show students' responses to the survey questions.

Table 2. Students' responses to survey questions

Questions	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1. I know more English-speaking writers than Arabic-speaking ones.	26.25%	43.75%	30%
2. I enjoy reading literature written in English more than that written in Arabic.	17.5%	53.75%	28.75%
3. Shakespeare is the best writer in the world.	13.75%	33.75%	52.5%
4. Arab writers should only write in Arabic.	13.75%	68.75%	17.5%

The first question asked students whether *they knew more native English-speaking writers than Arabic-speaking ones*; students were given three options (Agree, Disagree, Not sure) to express their views. Table 2 above illustrates their answers. The responses to this question were variegated and rich. Most students (43.75%) stated that they know fewer English-speaking writers than Arabic-speaking ones. Students who agreed with the statement constituted 26.25%, and there were 30% who were unsure. As for the justifications that they provided, those who agreed with the statement gave a number of reasons in their answers to the second subjective question which followed. Most of them said that the main reason was that they were students of English – in the Departments of Linguistics

and English Language and Literature – and explained that knowing more native English-speaking writers helped them improve their command of the language. They also cited the influence of their professors and friends, suggesting that that influence constituted a form of 'pressure' on them. Others wrote that they had been learning English for a long period of time, and that duration made them turn their attention away from Arabic.

That duration for a few students was a crucial factor in their formative years, as they associated reading in general with English in particular. One student, for example, claimed that "I have never had a reading habit before I entered my major, and in order to improve my language" (S65). She illustrated that statement by saying that she was introduced to reading within an environment that cherished English. Two students (S21 & S48) suggested that their lack of knowledge of Arabic writers is caused by the possibility that they were not asked, probably by parents and/or school teachers, to read in Arabic or that they were not told about Arabic-speaking writers in their childhoods. Some curricular and time-related constraints were reported by students as justifications for knowing more native English-speaking writers and fewer native Arabic-speaking ones. S19 made the following remark: "the reason for knowing English literature is that my major required me to know writers and stay abreast with them so I don't have enough time for the Arabic writers."

A third group of students thought that English as a language naturally facilitates knowledge of more writers. They thought of English as a "more intriguing and relatable" language (S66). S12 thought that Arabic novels were "difficult." In fact, another student made a link between English and "progress" (S45), an answer that we noticed in other students' responses to other questions (English primarily being understood to be an epitome of modernity and enlightenment).

At the other end of the spectrum, there were a few students who said that they knew more Arabic-speaking writers, and the reasons that they provided were equally intriguing. Most intimated that knowing more Arabic-speaking writers is a manifestation of their identity: S79 explained that Mahmoud Darweesh – as an example – is a great Arab writer who should be read. In other words, they felt that it is more 'natural' to know more Arabic-speaking writers. S56 stressed the fact that Arabic is her "mother language." Other students thought that they knew more Arabic-speaking writers because Arabic is inherently easier. Interestingly enough, unlike the student who linked English with progress, there was a student (S44) who claimed that she read more by Arabic-speaking writers because she followed them on social media. She wrote:

> No, actually, I know Arabic writers on social media rather than English-speaking writers. Perhaps, because I am living in an Arab country, and I don't have enough communication with foreigners. I even know many YOUNG Arab writers. (emphasis in original)

S28 said that English books are not "beautiful," but maybe she misunderstood the question confusing literature with other books.

A number of students were understandably unsure about the question. Some of them, as our discussion of Question Two shows below, do not like to read. S30 and S12 wrote that they are not interested in reading. S31 said that she does not "know standard Arabic" and was as a result unfamiliar with Arabic literature. This last statement entails that she has a specific definition of 'standardness', a concept about which the researchers are concerned in this paper. It also implies that Arab writers write in the standard variety only, but that statement is not accurate and clearly shows a lack of awareness among some students as to what constitutes literature.

The second question asked students whether *they enjoyed reading literature written in English more than that written in Arabic*. As in the previous question, students were given three options (Agree, Disagree, Not sure) to express their views. Table 2 above shows their answers. Analysis of students' answers shows that a number of students, 20% – to be precise – of the total number of participants, do not like reading in general or reading literature in particular. They did not elaborate on the reason why they did not like reading (literature). Incidentally, this attitude suggests the absence of what the researcher might call 'literary literacy', a term that is developed below.

Apart from students who did not show any interest in literature, students who were unsure gave two general explanations as to why they were uncertain. First, as one suggested, they found it difficult to compare and contrast two completely different linguistic and cultural systems. Others suggested that it depends on aesthetics (formal features and 'beauty' of texts) and thematics (various topics covered in texts), as illustrated in their comments below. The students who thought that reading works written in English is more enjoyable provided different reasons. S33 stated that English was her mother tongue, hence her 'natural' familiarity with the language. Familiarity for others was brought about by the fact that they are students of English; that is, they had studied it for a while, and they wanted to improve their knowledge of it. The other students similarly reflected three main reactions to English literature that were formed as a result of their assumptions concerning English: the language is easy/ier, (more) enlightening and liberating, and more interesting. As for ease, S48 put it very clearly: English is "easier, more understandable and is more precise and meaningful." S42 explained that the ease of English was caused by her familiarity with it: "easier, and I am used to it."

Some others thought that English literary texts allow more freedom in terms of the topics discussed. They also thought that English texts were conducive to more awareness. On the other hand, some preferred English writers because of a genre that they liked; a student gave the example of the short story. Others thought that English texts are "more exciting" (S15). One student revealed, "the topic of English literature is attractive me more than Arabic. I feel it close to my thinking and how I see the things. From childhood, I am interested in their plays, stories, and films" (S19).

Students who disagreed with the statement gave justifications that also derives from their attitudes towards Arabic as opposed to English. They mainly

focused on the idea that Arabic is easier, better-suited for literary contexts, and more expressive. Students said that Arabic is "clearer" and "more interesting." A student stated that she did not need a dictionary while reading Arabic. Others suggested that Arabic is "more aesthetic and ambiguous…expands the horizon," as S63 wrote. Some students used the following phrases to express a similar value judgment: "more romantic," (S58) "more than amazing," (S56) "the most eloquent," (S54) and "a wonderful and mesmerizing way" (S24). Some others found that Arabic-speaking writers "play with words" (S27). Another subgroup attributed their knowing more Arabic-speaking writers to their lack of linguistic abilities in English. Some explained that it is much more difficult. One student said that she does not "like reading in English" (S25). Some students said that they find more "comfort" (S38) in Arabic than in English. The last opinion had to do with the question of identity. As S67 puts it, "i like my language and I respect it and it inspires me."

The third question was a little confusing for – or even irrelevant to – some students, as it was a little more specific than the previous ones. It asked students whether *Shakespeare is the best writer in the world*, and students again were given three alternatives (Agree, Disagree, Not sure) to express their views. Table 2 above shows that 13.75% agreed with the statement viewing Shakespeare as the best writer in the world, 33.75% disagreed with it, and the majority (52.5%) were not sure. What is remarkable about this finding is that all of them were familiar with Shakespeare, but a number of them had not read anything by him. Two of them went so far as to say that they do not read (S34 said that she is "not into literature"), an answer that more students provided in response to other questions. Most students were unsure about the statement. Thirteen respondents justified their lack of certainty by rightly recognising that the statement is an overgeneralisation, as there are many good writers in English and other cultures. Some students were not sure, but they wrote that Shakespeare might be considered as a great writer because he was a versatile writer or that they heard from others that he is a good writer. Some claimed that it was the difficulty of Shakespeare that made people think of him as a good writer.

Students who agreed with the statement did not find it an overgeneralisation. They thought that Shakespeare's fame and the fact that many people think of him as great justifies the statement. Some students claimed that he is a "clever" (S20 and S38) writer. A few students suggested that his style is unique: A student pointed out that Shakespeare has a "very strong structure" (S32), whereas another claimed that other writers from all over the world emulate and adapt his themes and style, especially – as one student put it – because he wrote in many genres. According to one of the respondents, it was his "timeless" (S45) and cross-generational literature that made the statement true. The most relevant observation to the purposes of this article is that most students agreed with that statement, as Shakespeare, according to a student's claim, was taught by many professors as being a perfect writer.

On the other hand, those who disagreed with the superiority of Shakespeare cited logical, linguistic, and cultural reasons. For instance, some students

questioned the idea that Shakespeare is the 'best' writer, as there are many other writers from the Arab world who are great ones. They suggested that he is like other writers, recognizing that 'best' is a relative quality (with one student noting that one's favourite writer is a matter of personal preference), and it depends on the context and content. S69 even suggested other names like Edgar Allan Poe. Others claimed that the 'difficulty' of Shakespeare contradicts that statement, with one student suggesting that that difficulty is a question of the past and explaining that the advent of technology allowed more access to literary works from all over the globe; that is, modern writers are greater. More importantly, they identified other Arab writers whom they appreciate. Some just said that they "hate" Shakespeare without providing any reasons, while one student's reason was that Shakespeare was a racist by virtue of his negative representations of Arabs and Africans (S54).

As for the fourth question which asked respondents whether they believe that *Arab writers should only write in Arabic,* they were given the three options of (Agree, Disagree, and Not sure) to express their beliefs as shown in Table 2 above. Analysis of the data of this question (13.75% agreed with the statement, 68.75% disagreed with it, and 17.5% did not show certainty) shows that this last question brought to the fore the issue of identity with fewer students being unsure about the statement. Those who were unsure suggested that it depends on their linguistic ability in English. But they also claimed that using another language could "expand their knowledge" (S68) and help them communicate with others.

Students who disagreed with the statement that Arab writers should only write in Arabic had stronger views. They mostly focused on the question of personal choice, ownership, and communication. Many suggested that as long as Arab writers have the ability to write in English, they can do so. Others intimated that the statement expresses a narrow-minded attitude. S39 wrote: English should not be "limited to the English speakers" Such statements are in line with literature on the ownership of English: "English as a field of knowledge now belongs to those who know it and use it" (Kachru and Smith 2008:180). Other students felt that Arabs writing in English use English in order to convey their traditions to others, as "English is universal" (S28). That is, English is considered by them as a lingua franca. It is, as one respondent put it, a vehicle for intercultural communication. Interestingly enough, one student remarked that professors who teach them English write in English, and that gives sanction to the use of English by Arab speakers.

Students who agreed with the idea that Arab writers should only write in Arabic stressed the connection between identity and one's culture and language. They suggested that it is 'natural' for one to use one's own language for self-expression. They explained that Arab writers are expected to be "experts" (S43) on their own language, and that makes them "more professional" (S16) and "do a better job" (S3). They added that Arabic is inherently more expressive. Some, who obviously were familiar with the topic (particularly the views of Thiong'o outlined in the introduction to this article), suggested that one should write in one's own language and then translate into English.

The last question asked students to evaluate literary works written in English as compared to those written in Arabic. It asked them to fill in the blank space with an appropriate adverb from the list provided in the statement: *Novels that are written in English are.......better than those that are written in Arabic*. The options given were (Always, Often, Sometimes, Never, Not necessarily). Table 3 below shows their responses.

Table 3. Students' evaluation of novels written in English and Arabic

Novels that are written in English are.......better than those that are written in Arabic				
Always	Often	Sometimes	Never	Not Necessarily
2.5%	3.75%	18.75%	6.25%	68.75%

As shown in the table above, most students were not certain about the statement included in Question Five: Always, 2.5%; Never, 6.25%; Not necessarily, 68.75%; Often, 3.75%; and Sometimes, 18.75%. Of the overall number of participants, more than 20% thought that such a statement depends on several factors like themes, writers, and the identity of those writers. One student suggested that it "depends on the writer's native language" (S74). Those who answered by using the words 'Sometimes',' 'Often', or 'Always' generally had a better image of novels written in English. Some thought that the novel is an inherently Western genre, and English novels are accordingly better written. They also suggested that the variety of topics covered as well as the level of freedom in those novels is one factor that led them to that conclusion. Some students went back to the idea of familiarity because of their majors. Others thought that Arabic literature is "boring," whereas English novels are "more exciting" (S75) and "full of emotion" (S64). One student thought that she is drawn to English novels because some of them are made into movies, which makes the understanding process much easier. Arabic novels – for others – were "closer to the heart," (S69) as they provided "incredible expressions" (S65) and were "more creative" (S43). Some cited the difficulty of English novels. Others thought that Arabic is inherently a more expressive language. They also suggested that their love for the language makes them love Arabic more, associating their disagreement with the statement with an expression of cultural freedom and autonomy.

4. Discussion

The main aim of this study is to explore the extent to which cognitions and 'identities' of EFL students at the University of Jordan are influenced or shaped by concepts of linguistic and cultural imperialism and native-speakerism. To achieve this, students were asked questions that were intended to elicit their views of the cultural connotations reflected in the literature produced in the languages that they speak. The questions covered the impact of their identification with a language, namely English on their perceptions of the culture with which they identify: its producers, works, artefacts, standards, and norms. The objective

behind conducting this study is to highlight that impact, if any, and discuss its relevance to pedagogical, and more ambitiously consciousness-related, practices.

While preparing for the study, we thought that most students buy into native-culturism. But the results showed a different picture, and – in keeping with Holliday's methodological recommendations on which we touched in the methodology section – we adjusted our analysis to students' answers, not the other way around. By and large, there is a strong relationship between students' views of their own language and English on the one hand, and its attendant and their 'own' cultures on the other. It was difficult, however, to see which attitude stems from the other. Nevertheless, some insightful themes were inferred from a careful analysis of the findings, and we discuss them more deeply in this section.

Many students demonstrated complex and nuanced attitudes to language, complexity, overgeneralisations, and culture (see Thiong'o 1986, on the connection between language and culture). In fact, those students expressed deep understanding of the concept of language that does not entail the instrumentalisation of any language (see Holliday 2009). Still, there were less nuanced positions. As the findings showed above, some students hinted at the relevance of language and identity, seeing language as an inseparable part of their identities and accepting such notions as canonical works (Shakespeare) and standardness. This is consistent with scholarly arguments such as that put forward by Joseph (2004:3), who proposes that the way we perceive and feel the "'deep' identity" of others depends more on our *social* rather than *linguistic* encounters with them. In contrast, others provided sentimental, instrumental approaches to languages and lack of awareness of cultural contexts. This rather superficial view of language may be interpreted in light of students' limited access – as will be discussed below – to contemporary discussions of language, culture, and identity (see Riley 2007). Several students, for instance, referred to English as a lingua franca, taking that reference for granted. They also thought that one of the "positive" attributes of English is that it is enabling of intercultural communication without any critical qualification. In response to the question about novelists, students' choices of writers show that students do believe in the 'universality' of English culture and the English language. The fact that they know more about the English language and culture than about Arabic attests to that acceptance.

This rather passive acceptance of the 'universality' of English and its attendant culture, we argue, is a symptom or effect of native-speakerism or the term that we develop in this paper *a la* Holliday (2017), native-culturism. This acceptance suggests that more students internalize the idea that their language and culture are inferior to a more dominant language, exemplifying Frantz Fanon's conception of the inferiority complex (see Fanon trans. 2008). Indeed, the way students feel about the culture derived from a certain language deeply reflects some views circulated by the dominant culture. Some students confused literary decisions with ideological ones (for instance, freedom), using overgeneralisations. More concretely, some students used capitalistic terminology to express their thoughts about culture, and that use suggests that they accept the

discourse of neoliberalism that assumes that the free movement of goods, the English language and its related cultural products, is by far the most important in today's so-called "world order." That neoliberal view ignores the material conditions that pave the way for that free movement.

Such inclinations are probably misshaped in a way that contradicts common arguments among linguists and language teachers about the inextricable connection between language and culture, a site for thinking about the self and the 'Other'. As Shapiro (1989:28) asserts, "the Other is located most fundamentally in language, the medium for representing selves and others." In order to develop their knowledge of a language, learners accordingly need to acquire – or more technically, acculturate – its attendant culture (see, Brown 2007:193 for a discussion of "second culture acquisition"). That acculturation is often called the acquisition of "L2 sociocultural competence" (Hinkel 2014:395). On the surface, this may seem to suggest that one should learn about Western culture along with his/her learning of English; however, as Holliday (2017) argues, in order for language development to happen, authentic 'local', not necessarily 'Western' acculturation may be a more convincing method of adaptation.

But our analysis should not be taken to mean that the picture is bleak. In fact, some students made good use of the survey itself, as they started to reflect on issues that they took for granted such as beauty, difficulty, reading practices, truth, values, and so on. Such attempts reflect the critical abilities of some students and suggest that students can indeed be co-partners along with teachers in making decisions about their learning experiences. Other students already started doing that reflection by showing that their knowledge of another language, regardless of how dominant its culture is, does not hamper their engagement with their 'own' culture and language. On the contrary, their knowledge of other languages encourages their investment in their own culture. As S54 showed, her reading of Shakespeare did not make her forget her culture in the process, remarking that Shakespeare was a racist. We are not interested in the validity of the claim itself (as it is a hotly debated topic by Shakespearean scholars and as it could be the subject of a separate paper). What the researchers are more interested in is that the student did not experience negation of self in the process of knowing about 'Others'. This is an aspect of current approaches to language teaching that call for the involvement of students in decision-making (Nunan 2015) and the development of autonomy in language classes to which critical thinking and evaluation are key. As Little (1991:2) puts it, teachers aiming at autonomy should work on developing in students "a capacity for detachment, *critical reflection*, and independent action" (emphasis added). However, this idea of autonomy should not endorse an individualistic ethos (see Holliday 2009).

It goes without saying that we are not calling for such ideas as identity to be construed as a fixed notion. We find it counterproductive that students at times express such views as the idea that this language is the best or that language is the worst. On the other hand, it is disturbing that some students did not show any inclination for reading or knowing more about other cultures or even their own.

That lack of exposure to cultural texts and contexts leads to the dissemination of intolerant views that are as insidious as those perpetuated by native-culturism. Undoubtedly, such attitudes are the result of parochial thinking, an effect that is part of what we call *literary illiteracy*. More importantly, we found the lack of certainty in answering some questions very generative. While it is true that in some cases students lack the necessary knowledge (another example of literary illiteracy), we think that that lack of certainty at other times is indicative of open-mindedness, more consciousness, and an on-going thinking process. In other words, they dealt with cultural and linguistic issues without dogmatism or free-floating relativism.

In consequence, it is imperative that pedagogical choices and practices need to incorporate two main premises. First, students should be provided with ample opportunities to learn about the culture whose language they are studying. But this should not deter them from developing a cross-cultural understanding of norms and traditions of various communities, especially in the context of English as a lingua franca and in light of arguments for the multiplicity of Englishes. Hinkel (2014:395) argues, "At the present time, the ultimate goal of cultural and cross-cultural education is to enable learners to become successful in the *international* community … and cross-national boundaries" (italics added). This result goes well with Holliday's (2017:3) conclusions that language teachers should "undo[…] the preoccupation with so-called 'native-speaker' language culture" and "shift[…] the perception of what makes English authentic away from what amounts to a constructed 'American' or 'British' culture, and towards language that is meaningfully rooted in the lived experiences of students." While decentring themselves, as it were, students also need to be cautious about falling into the trap of neoliberalism, which reifies them and turns them into commodities. Second, they need to be reminded that that learning should not be negative, in the sense that it should not make them forget their cultural backgrounds. In other words, learning languages should not reflect the disparity that we see in the world. Rather, it should counterbalance and offset it. To use Holliday (2017), we should promote what he calls "cultural belief." Only then can we produce more consciousness that yields a more equitable world that is native-culturism free or almost free.

5. Limitations

While utilizing an electronic cross-sectional survey provided researchers with the opportunity to easily collect data about students' cognitions, the scope of participants was limited to 80 students, most of whom are female. Thus, the results of this study may only reflect a small and potentially imbalanced portion of Jordanian EFL students' cognitions about literature. It was also observed that a few students did not understand the questions, a fact which is evident from incomplete or irrelevant responses. Their lack of understanding may be due to different factors such as not paying close attention to the questions and lacking the English proficiency level needed to take the survey or knowledge about literature itself. Interpreting such incomplete responses may raise the potential of subjective analyses. Thus, incorporating an additional method of face-to-face

interviews may be an effective way to lessen potential subjectivity. In addition, it is crucial to give students the necessary space to express their views in their L1s to guarantee more depth that might otherwise be lost in their responses in English due to their proficiency level. Furthermore, the implementation of a single survey also limits researchers' extrapolation of how and/or when students' cognitions developed or changed. Conducting repeated cross-sectional surveys on the same population of participants across their time at university may yield results that could determine to what extent educational instruction influences students' cognitions in terms of native-speakerism and native-culturism.

6. Implications and future research

In terms of pedagogical practices, since some students expressed the idea that their knowledge of literature was predicated upon what their professors asked them to read, more cognizance on the part of teaching practitioners as well as curriculum designers is required when making decisions as to what texts students should read, especially when it comes to canonical texts (e.g., they can add texts that belong to "contact literatures" [Kachru and Smith 2008:166]). By asking reflective questions such as, "what does this (material, literary work, etc.) contribute to the discourse in my classroom?" or "how does this choice position my students' culture?", teachers may demonstrate the critical awareness needed to defy native-culturism and its potential effect on learners. Furthermore, in order to promote a positive learning environment where learners' cultural identity is supported rather than compromised, it is advisable to create a learning environment that enriches not only the academic proficiency of students, but also students' socio-emotional needs. Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests that a culturally relevant pedagogy is one that creates a classroom environment that allows learners to maintain their cultural integrity by supporting their intellectual, social, and emotional needs. While Ladson-Billings's framework could be a welcoming environment, her advice to teachers on embracing culture as "a vehicle for learning" (Ladson-Billings 1995:161) instrumentalises students' own culture, making it a means to an end. We suggest that students' own culture and the culture about which they are learning should be both ends and means. By facilitating conversations related to linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism, and native-culturism, teachers may support their students' identities as well as encourage the development of their critical thinking skills in terms of why they learn English, how they perceive English, and how their mother language is perceived.

As our study was primarily concerned with the cognitions of university students in their last year of study, it would be prudent to repeat such a study by tracking the cognitions of first-year university students over the duration of their university education so as to examine what events, pedagogical practices or outside influences shape students' cognitions towards the English language, their mother tongue, and their respective literatures. As some students shared beliefs that demonstrate a positive view of the English language and even superior view of English over their mother language, it is those perceptions that are critical to future research. Furthermore, some results of this study indicate a serious lack of

awareness of literature, both in English and Arabic, by fourth-year university students, a lack that creates a need for further investigation of the factors which contribute to literary illiteracy. Gender differences in relation to such ideological assumptions such as native-speakerism and native-culturism represent a significant area of investigation in future research.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, the researchers reflected on the level of students' consciousness in terms of linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism, and native-culturism. It was found that more students were aware of such concepts, but at least a few of them were not (a finding that is in line with the researchers' initial expectations). More importantly, it was also found that the more conscious they were, the more nuanced their attitudes to language and culture were. The opposite is true. Those who were literarily illiterate provided very little or biased input and less tolerant points of view. Upon reporting findings and extrapolating conclusions and implications, the paper argues that students then need to express their opinions based on careful thinking rather than sentimental attitudes. It also suggests that teachers and professors of literature written in English should engage students' views of the English language and its attendant culture and incorporate thinking about linguistic choices into their curricula and syllabi. Moreover, the researchers recommend that more training needs to be given to students, especially at this age (most of them are older than 20 years old), as some of them are going to become teachers. It is our hope that this paper contributes to writing back to linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism, and native-culturism, hence, a more profound understanding of the self and the Other.

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Appendix
Student Survey

Please tick [√] in the square next to the appropriate answer, or write in the space provided.

Section 1

1. Gender: [   ] Male   [   ] Female
2. Age: [   ] 18-20   [   ] 21-23   [   ] 24-26   [   ] 27-29
3. Year of Study: [   ] 1st year   [   ] 2nd year   [   ] 3rd year   [   ] 4th year +
4. What is your native language?
5. What language(s) do you speak at home?
6. What is your major?   [   ] Linguistics   [   ] Literature   [   ] Other

Section 2

Question 1   a: I know more English-speaking writers than Arabic-speaking ones.
                    [   ] Agree   [   ] Disagree   [   ] Not sure
                    b: Use the space below to explain your answer to (1a).
                    _____

Question 2   a: I enjoy reading literature written in English more than that written in
Arabic.
                    [   ] Agree   [   ] Disagree   [   ] Not sure
                    b: Use the space below to explain your answer to (2a).
                    _____

Question 3   a: Shakespeare is the best writer in the world.
                    [   ] Agree   [   ] Disagree   [   ] Not sure
                    b: Use the space below to explain your answer to (3a).
                    _____

Question 4   a: Arab writers should only write in Arabic.
                    [   ] Agree   [   ] Disagree   [   ] Not sure
                    b: Use the space below to explain your answer to (4a).
                    _____

Question 5   a: Novels that are written in English are…........better than those that are written
                    in Arabic.
                    [ ] Always   [ ] Often   [ ] Sometimes
                    [ ] Not necessarily [ ] Never
                    b: Use the space below to explain your answer to (5a).
                    _____