

THE STRUGGLE IN NEGOTIATING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN LEILA SLIMANI'S *THE COUNTRY OF OTHERS*

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Abstract

Identity is strongly related to one's culture. When a person is in an estranged culture, he/she may find it difficult to adapt. This research aims to explain the main character Mathilde's struggle with cultural differences in Morocco and how she negotiates with cultural identity. The research is a literary criticism since the object of the research is a novel entitled *The Country of Others* written by a Moroccan novelist, Leila Sliman. This research views the literary text using the perspective of cultural identity theory by Stuart Hall. The findings show that there were cultural differences, norms, and stereotypes between Mathilde and Moroccan people, making her shocked by this situation. This causes rejection or denial and confusion of her cultural identity. The situation made her perceive herself as 'other' due to the difficulties she faced in accepting the new culture. Even though she initially had difficulties adapting to the new environment, in the end, Mathilde negotiated differences in cultural identity by harmonizing her new and old cultures in her new life in Morocco. It is hoped that in the future, this research can become a reference for research which uses other literary theories or studies on the same novel from different perspectives.

Keywords: cultural identity, negotiation, denial, others

INTRODUCTION

Identity is a production process that continues to occur over time, including culture and other personal things. Culture itself is related to habits, perceptions, and meaning. So, identity is always related to culture (Grimson, 2010). Cultural identity is a sense of community, and all its members have consciousness in mind. In this way, people imagine and build communities, building a sense of belonging and security within their community by analyzing shared historical experiences. Groups living in the same area create an identity different from others through imagination; therefore, strengthening their self-awareness. Hall believes that the construction of an imaginary identity is determined by a particular cultural story (Yang et al., 2021).

Hall (1990) states that rather than thinking of identity as an achieved fact, which new cultural practices then represent, it is better to think of identity as a 'production': never complete, always in process, and always taking shape. Culture as production means that it is something that will continue to be processed over time with all the newness that exists which is influenced by the environment. Cultural identity can be seen from two points of view, namely 'being' and 'becoming' (Hall, 1990). Identity as 'being' is a person's identity that a brand has had from the start. It is not influenced by other things, so people maintain their identity wherever they are. In identity as 'becoming', a person's identity will continue to change according to where they are due to environmental or external influences.

Wherever individuals are, they have their own identity which can be different from the people around them. A person must indirectly adapt to cultural identity differences to be accepted in a group or community. The term identity in Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) refers to an individual's multifaceted identity in the form of culture, ethnicity, religion, social class, gender, sexual orientation, professional, family/relational roles, and personal image based on self-reflection (Ting-Toomey, 2015). In this case, individuals face differences in cultural identity when in different environments or countries. They may even have feelings of alienation, such as what may happen to immigrants who settle in a foreign country. Wati et al., (2015) found that immigrants who moved from their original land to a new land felt disappointment upon their first arrival. The new land was not as good as their expectations due to their shortcomings in knowledge, such as language and culture. Social barriers and boundaries created by discrimination and fear of difference create an unequal present and future for people in society.

Race, nationality, gender, region, ethnicity, religion, and others; are variables that influence the perspective of viewing people as 'others' (Abdul Magied, 2022). Such cultural negotiations can be found in real life and also in literary works, such as in a novel by Leila Slimani entitled *The Country of Others* (2021). It tells the story of a French woman, Mathilde, who immigrated to Morocco because she married a former French soldier, Amine, who came from Morocco. Mathilde hoped for a better life there but in reality, it was the opposite. The differences in cultural identity that must be faced made her become 'other'. She experienced a feeling of rejection in several events that occurred to her, making it difficult for her to adapt to the country of Morocco whose culture is different from her original French culture. Since this difficulty complicated conflicts in her relationship with her husband, Mathilde needed a way to negotiate her cultural identity with the culture of Morocco.

The Country of Others was first published in 2020 and only a few researches have been conducted on this novel. However, several previous studies have similar discussions on negotiating cultural identities by using different novels as their research objects. Hidayati et al. (2023) who studied Chinese culture found that the Chinese kinship system is strongly influenced by old traditions and values. They also found that the ethnic Chinese will maintain their culture wherever they are located. Neisya et al. (2022) analyzed a character named Kwei-lan whose cultural identity is Chinese. She experienced ambivalence when

she tried to change herself and her way of life in American culture. She felt trapped in the middle between the past and the present, between the Eastern culture and the Western culture. In the end, she lived with two identities and tried to survive in America.

Fitria et al. (2023) investigated a short story with identity negotiation as one of its themes. The story is about a conflict between Claire (the second generation of a multiracial American family), who discovered that she had an Asian identity, and her father, who wanted her to maintain an American identity. Hidayat et al. (2022) examined a film entitled *Green Book* where the main character, Don Shirley, finally succeeded in negotiating his identity by accepting himself as an African-American despite the existing cultural differences. The study confirmed the idea that through a relational process of identity negotiation, culturally available identity categories and positions can be changed into individual actions and self-understanding (Vignoles, 2018). Hamza (2023) conducted a study on Slimani's *The Country of Others* which focused on the Moroccan native struggle for independence and the existence of colonial discourse which is implied by the characterization of the European characters and Moroccan native characters.

Based on the previous research above, this current research provides a novel perspective on Hall's cultural identity negotiation process in Slimani's novel, *The Country of Others*. This research aims to explain Mathilde's struggle in adapting to Morocco's cultural identity which is different from France's cultural identity. It also explains Mathilde's way of finally being able to negotiate her current identity in Morocco despite all the differences she faces without giving up her original French identity.

METHOD

According to Bressler (2011), this type of research was categorized as literary criticism as it was a disciplined activity that attempted to describe, study, analyze, justify, interpret, and evaluate a work of art. The works of art that became the primary source of analysis of literary criticism were, according to Klarer (2004), texts from all genres, such as fiction and poetry. The object of this research was a novel entitled *The Country of Others*, written by Leila Slimani, which was first published in 2020 in Moroccan. Then, the novel was translated into English by Sam Taylor and was published by Faber & Faber in 2021. Thus, the primary source of this research was one which was published in 2021. This research used Stuart Hall's cultural identity theory as a perspective to analyze and interpret the novel. The theory emphasizes that identity is continuously created within the framework of history and time. Therefore, identity can be influenced by social issues such as those in the selected literary text. This research perceived that the environmental and social influences that occur in the novel can influence the main character's identity so that her identity continues to change into being, becoming, or negotiating.

There were four steps in conducting this literary criticism. First, the researchers collected data from the primary and secondary sources. As previously mentioned, the primary source of the data was a novel entitled *The Country of Others*, written by Leila Slimani, translated by Sam Taylor, and published by Faber & Faber in 2021. The collected

data were in the form of words, phrases, or sentences that reflected Mathilde's struggles in negotiating her cultural identity which were affected by different environmental and social influences. The secondary sources of the research were articles, journals, books, and credible sources related to the topics of cultural identity and identity negotiation, especially Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity negotiation. The collected data were in the form of sentences that provided differences between Moroccan culture and French culture and, most importantly, Hall's theory of cultural identity negotiation. However, these data were not presented as data in this research. However, they were synthesized within the discussion of the data from the primary source. Secondly, after the data were collected, the data were reduced and classified based on the topics above to provide the findings of the research. Thirdly, the selected data were analyzed and discussed using Stuart Hall's theory of cultural identity negotiation to provide the discussion of the research. Finally, the researchers provided conclusions of the findings and the discussion by focusing on how Mathilde negotiated her cultural identity that was affected by the cultural differences that occur in the novel and how she dealt with the existing differences in cultural identity.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Country of Others by Leila Slimani tells a story of two different cultural identities; French and Moroccan. In terms of values, norms, and habits, these two countries are different from each other. In the novel, the researchers found conflicting differences in the French and Moroccan cultural identities. Cultural differences led the main character, Mathilde, to experience difficulties, as she experienced feelings of alienation, denial of her situation, and confusion. It led her to become the 'other' in the country that initially became her new hope. However, she tried to adapt and adjust herself to the new environment by negotiating her cultural identity. This section consists of differences in cultural identity, what impacts these differences have on Mathilde, and how she can adapt or negotiate with different cultures.

Cultural Identity Differences

The novel tells a story of Mathilde who went to Morocco following her husband who was originally from that country as a mixed couple. Mixed couples in Morocco are mostly composed of a Moroccan man and a foreign woman. In the 1940s for France, Morocco turned into the "American dream" (Breunig, 2019). Many French people migrated to Morocco either because they followed their Moroccan husbands or because of the hopes of finding a new, better life there where it's also the case with the "American dream". After moving to Morocco, Mathilde had to face differences in cultural identity and lifestyle in her new environment. Right after she arrived in Meknes, her husband's hometown in Morocco, Mathilde first sensed her difficulties in adapting to Moroccan culture, as reflected in the following quotation:

"So, what will we do?"

"We'll live with my mother until it's ready." Mathilde leaped to her feet and burst out laughing.

"You're not serious?" She seemed to find the situation ridiculous, hilarious.

"That's how things are here." (Slimani, 2020:15)

The quotation above explains at the beginning how Mathilde and her husband, Amine, had to live in Meknes where living with Amine's parents was something Mathilde had never imagined. The experience that occurs during a mixed culture relationship is a feeling of culture shock because there are two cultures within the partnership which can cause heartbreak for everyone and can culminate in insanity (Therrien & Phipps, 2023). At the beginning of the marriage, Amine had promised Mathilde to live in their own house. Mathilde had high hopes and expectations about life with her husband. The sentence *"That's how things are here."* shows that certain things or habits of the people there were normal and Mathilde somehow had to struggle in accepting them because she was an immigrant and she felt that she could not just change things that came from her new country.

She threw herself into his arms and tried to explain her fears, her homesickness, the terrible dread that had overcome her... He slowly stroked her back and said: "Don't act like a little girl. You're my wife now. Your life is here." (Slimani, 2020:18-19)

The quotation above shows how Mathilde, who had just moved to a new country, was seemingly forced to follow the norms or rules that exist there. The sentences *"You're my wife now. Your life is here."* show that Mathilde's life was in Meknes, Morocco and was the wife of Amine, a Moroccan man. Everything must be different in every way and Amine emphasized that Mathilde must adapt as a wife to a new life where she must obey her husband and the new culture. Mathilde was not allowed to explicitly show her discomfort with the environment according to the demands of her husband. Another of Amine's demands was provided by the previous quotation (Slimani, 2020:15), where they had to live with Amine's parents first. Conflict especially escalates after they live with Amine's mother, Mouilala. The differences in Mathilde's and Mouilala's views on things are completely oppositional, as can be seen in the following quotation.

She would scold Mouilala, who didn't care about her daughter's education, shrugging at bad reports, never encouraging her to work hard... Mathilde would try to convince Mouilala that education could provide her daughter with the means to gain her independence, her freedom... "Why do you let her miss school? You're endangering her future." ... What future was this Frenchwoman talking about? (Slimani, 2020:25)

The quotation above describes how Mathilde told Amine's mother to care more about the education of her daughter, Selma. This is in accordance with Phipps (2022) that states that in the Moroccan stereotypes, European women can generally be divided into two categories: (1) those who were relatively emancipated young women earning a salary or (2) wives of men responsible for maintaining the imperial presence in Morocco. The question "What future was this Frenchwoman talking about?" shows that Mouilala, as a mother who adhered to the norms that existed in Morocco, did not believe in the future that Mathilde spoke about, which was a future in the form of freedom of women to receive education and be equal to men. So, Mouilala did not agree with the advice given by Mathilde. There was a visible difference in views regarding women's education, where Mathilde cares about education, especially for women, because she received a fairly good education while in France. Meanwhile, in Meknes, Mouilala has no concern for that as they expect women to do housework well rather than just writing ink on paper like Mathilde often does.

The situation in the novel is supported by Therrien and Phipps (2023) that found it a tradition of Moroccan families and a method of maintaining their stability to limit the education of Moroccan girls. The stereotypes of Moroccan women at that time were that it was better for them to be good at doing all the housework and obey their husbands. The stereotypes of Moroccan society in general highlight how men view women. For example, men show positive attitudes towards "good" mothers and wives, but negative attitudes towards "female leaders". The negative stereotypes of the Moroccan women are caused by negative representations created by the culture in the family in general and perpetuated in powerful institutions in the public realm (Sadiqi, 2011). The existing stereotypes are very contradictory to the perspective of Mathilde, a French woman who considered herself educated and independent.

Then, when they heard the call to prayer, the women set the table with a carafe of milk, hard-boiled eggs, the bowl of steaming soup, the dates that they would open with their fingernails. Mouilala paid attention to everyone; ... "It's slavery!" she said. "She spends all day cooking and then she has to wait until you've eaten! I can't believe it." (Slimani, 2020:26-27)

The quotation above shows a situation when Mathilde did not believe that in Morocco, a woman or wife must take care of all the housework and must stay in the kitchen. It is like women must serve men in every matter and were lack the freedom to do things that they like. Mathilde was very disturbed by this, considering this treatment between women and men to be unfair. This was the opposite of what Mathilde knew throughout her life in France. She was shocked to know that Moroccan women must put men first in all things and this was different from Mathilde's belief which considers women equal to men. While at Mouilala's house, Mathilde must face the big differences

between her cultural identity and the culture of this country. Mathilde tried to teach her culture or habits to the people around her. She hoped that what she taught could help people around her, but it was not as easy as she thought.

After trying to teach her the rudiments of Western cuisine, she was forced to accept that Tamo simply didn't care: she barely listened and when she was supposed to stir the crème pâtissière she just stood there with the spatula hanging limply from her hand. (Slimani, 2020:47)

The quotation above provides evidence of Mathilde was teaching Tamo, the young maid, to understand what French manners are but she lost her patience with Tamo's behaviour. Tamo thought Mathilde was a woman who was rude and liked to dominate, unlike Moroccan women in general. After being taught Western cooking by Mathilde, Tamo did not even care about what she was told, similar to what Amine did to Mathilde in the quotation below.

He didn't like the way she was raising the children, her indulgence toward their feelings... "That's no way to educate a man. You have to give him the resources he'll need to deal with the realities of life." (Slimani, 2020:48)

In this quotation, Mathilde taught how she raised her child with the kind of love that had been instilled in her for a long time. However, Amine considered that this method was not suitable to be taught to their children. He thought that something like that would only make their children spoiled, especially their sons. Amine perceived that boys should not need to be pampered because they might grow up to be people who easily complain. What Mathilde taught to her children and the people around her was not well received by the society as her teachings were deemed totally different and unacceptable. Mathilde's method of instilling education and her behaviour were very contradictory to those of the Meknes people, making these opposing views difficult to reconcile.

He wanted a wife like his mother, who would understand him instinctively, who shared the patience and abnegation of his people, who spoke less and worked more. (Slimani, 2020:92)

In the quotation above, Amine hoped that Mathilde could be like his mother, who could become an obedient wife and did housework well. However, Mathilde was a woman who believed her life goals and who refused to be controlled by men as the culture in Morocco. Amine disliked Mathilde's rebellious nature, who, unlike Mouilala, wholeheartedly lived life like a Moroccan woman in general. It was difficult for Mathilde to force her thoughts to be accepted in Morocco, considering that she was an immigrant who brought her own culture.

The Impacts of Differences in Cultural Identity

In this case, the existing differences in cultural identity had negative impacts on Mathilde. This can be seen throughout the novel where she had feelings of denial and confusion. She felt that she had become an 'other' in the new country she lived in because everything she had planned about her new life there was just an unreachable dream.

Rejection or Denial

Mathilde told her sister, Irene, all extraordinary things about how her current life was very good through letters. She stated that all her dreams and hopes came true in this new country. She made an image like she was living a perfect life as she wanted Irene to be jealous of her achievements. But it was all just an invention to make her look okay. In reality, she felt that everything was different, and she had negative feelings towards this change. Her first negative feeling is rejection as presented by the quotation below.

Nothing here was familiar: not the color of the trees or the sky, not even the taste that the wind left on her tongue and lips. Everything had changed.
(Slimani, 2020:22)

Nothing she expected matched reality. Her life in Alsace, France, was different from how it was in Morocco. Everything felt different and unfamiliar to her. This is in accordance with Wati, et al. (2015) that found how immigrants feel rejected by the new society which influences their self-esteem and leads them to alienation and confusion in terms of identity. That was the reason Mathilde always wrote good things to convince herself that she was fine in Meknes and very lucky to be with her husband. She wanted to convince her family that she was successful in another country. The sentence "*Nothing here was familiar.*" proves that nothing in Morocco was the same as the things in her home country. Hall (1996) states that the process of rejecting or denying identity is the way identity is constructed. In reality, she was in denial about the existing situation. All these differences she felt made her feel alone.

Confusion

Mathilde was confused by what she was experiencing. She felt that the gazes of people made her feel like a stranger. As for the same view towards foreigners who look different from the majority, foreigners not only live on the other side of a border; they have crossed the borders and are now found living in loneliness. They will be strangers when they are somewhere else (Grimson, 2010). Mathilde's physique was different from that of Moroccan women in general, enough to make her known as a foreign woman despite her ignorance of existing norms.

One day she was stupid enough to hand a coin to a little boy... "Buy yourself a ball," she told him, all puffed up with pride and joy. But the little boy shouted and children appeared suddenly from all the neighboring streets and swarmed around Mathilde like a cloud of insects. (Slimani, 2020:23-24)

The quotation shows what was considered good by Mathilde was not necessarily seen the same by the people of Meknes. Mathilde only intended to give money to a little boy, but then other children came around her which made her confused. "*But the little child shouted and children appeared...*" The children spoke Arabic and some spoke French but Mathilde didn't understand what they meant. She was confused about this situation. Moreover, people who passed her looked at her with mocking eyes. Such situation was emphasized by Hall and Held (Giroux, 1994:31) that describe the citizenship problems people experience due to the diversity of existing communities, complex interactions between identities, and differences in the way people participate in social life will make them confused about their existence.

Others

In this context, Hall (1990) states that people who dominate can make the minority become 'others' because of the emergence of cultural domination by those who have power/knowledge. It is proven that Mathilde even found it difficult to dominate Tamo, the young maid, even though Tamo was supposed to be dominated by her. Mathilde was considered minority and she became an 'other' in Moroccan culture, as provided by the quotation below.

She had gone from her father's house to her husband's house but she felt as if she had no more independence or authority than before. She could barely even exercise her domination over Tamo, the young maid... (Slimani, 2020:32-33)

Apart from having a different physical appearance compared to women in Morocco, her position there is also low as shown in the sentence above. The sentence "*She had no more independence or authority than before.*" shows that Mathilde felt like she was no one there. The views of the people around her made her feel like an outcast. As a French woman, whenever she was in Morocco, she was considered as a minority in Morocco. On this situation, Ewing (2004) states that minorities will indirectly follow the majority culture where they live. Minority individuals may use different strategies to negotiate a range of identities. For example, they may give up one or more identities and ideologically embrace another, or they may cross cultural boundaries that separate one identity from another. Such situation was also faced by Mathilde in the story, as provided by the quotation below.

Mathilde wanted to look dignified, but sometimes she would just turn around and start screaming that she had to get out of this place, that she'd made the worst mistake of her life, that she was a stranger here. (Slimani, 2020:58)

Mathilde regretted her decision to marry Amine and live in Morocco. All the hopes she carried toward Morocco were just dreams that she couldn't easily realize. Everything that happened there was contrary to her expectations. The clause *"that she was a stranger here."* shows that Mathilde felt alienated. She did not have the power and right to be herself because she was considered different. She became 'other' in someone else's country and tried hard to introduce her culture to the people around her. Her situation is related to Dervin's (2016) idea of the other (othering) that originates from the presence of different minority groups in society related to the concept of identity. Minority identity is usually the reason an individual becomes 'othered'.

The rejection that occurred to her made her feel tired. Even so, she did to try to understand how different cultural identities could work simultaneously in her new life. Differences in women's roles, education, ways of raising children, and norms were visible in this story. This situation made Mathilde a stranger and an outsider who suffered from different cultures. As a result, she felt lonely and experienced being 'othered' as the idea of 'others' arises because of the existence of other people in society or those outside society, where these people live side by side (AbdulMagied, 2022).

Mathilde's Negotiation in Cultural Identity

As the story unfolds, Mathilde's struggle to face her new life in Meknes was full of obstacles. However, in the story, it is depicted that she also tried to adapt and was finally able to negotiate with the existing circumstances. Because she found difficulties in introducing French culture into Moroccan life, Mathilde finally tried to adapt her life to the new culture but still did not lose her own culture. Ting-Toomey (2015) states that most individuals acquire their combined identity through a process of sociocultural conditioning, individual life experiences, as well as repeated experiences of intergroup and interpersonal interactions. This condition is found in Mathilde, where she continuously interacted with Moroccan cultural identities which could make her follow the new culture.

It was in the kitchen that Mathilde learned Arabic... First, she learned how to say tomato, oil, water, and bread. She learned hot, cold, the lexicon of spices, then words related to the climate: drought, rain, ice, hot wind, even sandstorm. (Slimani, 2020:25)

In the quotation above, Mathilde studied Arabic which was the majority language in Meknes. When she was first in that environment, Mathilde did not understand the language used by the children who seemed to be making fun of her because she was

different. The children dared to jeer her in her face as she didn't understand what the situation was really like at that time. She expected a gratitude from the child she had given the money, but she was ridiculed. Mathilde finally learned to speak Arabic with the help of her sister-in-law who also spoke French. The feeling of wanting to blend in with the people around her emerged, so she tried to learn the language since language was one of the differences that often occurs in a new environment. She did so with the hope that she would no longer be ridiculed for not understanding Arabic. Apart from language, Mathilde also tried out Moroccan Muslim culture, as shown in the quotation below.

For her first Ramadan, Mathilde decided to fast too, and her husband was grateful for this show of respect for their rites. Every evening she drank the harira, although she didn't like the taste... (Slimani, 2020:26)

Mathilde learned to fast, which is an obligation for every Muslim. When she tried to fast, she was shocked by the habits of the people there. This illustrates that Mathilde wanted to try out how to live the same life as her husband. She also showed respect for existing cultural differences. This was Mathilde's way of negotiating cultural identity even though, in the story, she experienced difficulties. Amine was also happy with Mathilde who was willing to respect and follow the customs of the people there. Mathilde learned to follow customs and appreciate differences. Even so, that didn't mean she lost her own culture in her new environment.

After all, it had been her idea to enroll Aïcha here, in this French-run school with its church tower and its prayers to a foreign god. (Slimani, 2020:53)

In the quotation above, Mathilde sent her daughter, Aïcha, to a French-run school, which was different from the teachings of Amine's Muslim family. She still sent Aïcha to school there with the approval of Amine, who initially did not accept this. This shows that Mathilde was negotiating with the situation, where she sent her children to a Christian school but still respects her husband's religion. She did not lose her culture entirely in Meknes. Mathilde also made a small Christmas celebration for her children because she wanted them to know that in her home country, where Christmas was very exciting and much awaited. Mathilde's goal in doing this was to introduce the culture that has existed since she was a child to her daughter. Mathilde's way of raising children remained as it was what she was taught at her place of origin since childhood.

Then Aïcha heard her mother reciting, in Arabic: "I swear that there is no god but God, and that Muhammad is His prophet."... "Mariam," she said finally, and the adoul appeared very satisfied with this choice. "Let it be so, Mariam. Welcome to the community of Islam. (Slimani, 2020:271)

Religion was one of the differences between Mathilde and Amine. In the quotation above, Mathilde chose to convert to Islam following her husband. She even changed her name to Mariam without thinking twice because of the many complicated thoughts within her. Mathilde's conversion in religion shows that she tried to adapt to the situation that existed at that time. Even so, she still let her child go to a French-run school where her daughter was aware of the difference. Aïcha finally tried to refrain from bringing up God's name when she was with her father because she knew her father was sensitive about that. When Mathilde had become a Muslim, she continued to teach her child according to the school's teachings.

She could have put into action all those pretty speeches she'd given about the emancipation of women and the right to choose love. Instead, she'd let the law of men rise up between them. (Slimani, 2020:272-273)

In the quotation above, Selma, Mathilde's sister-in-law, thought Mathilde had changed. Mathilde, who was originally a French liberated woman, turned into a woman who, like Moroccan women, obeyed men's laws. Mathilde slightly changed her views following the men's rules there, as she agreed to her husband's suggestion to impose Selma to marry a Moroccan man. It was unusual for Mathilde to agree to a forced marriage, but she did it because she was trying to negotiate with the culture around her. In this case, Mathilde did not change at all but rather she negotiated her identity. She thought about how to apply the patriarchy laws that existed in Morocco.

Mathilde's identity negotiation process is a process that often occurs through conflicting identities between parties who are considered superior and inferior, since identity itself is not how a person or group sees themselves but how others see them (Alivin, 2021). The identity negotiation that occurs within Mathilde was highly influenced by Amine's dominant culture (superior) and her culture (inferior). But in the end, Mathilde carried out a process of cultural identity negotiation by making decisions based on the local cultural situation. She finally could negotiate her identity by accepting the Moroccan culture while maintaining her French culture.

CONCLUSION

The previous section shows that differences in customs, norms, ways of thinking, and stereotypes are found in Mathilde's daily life in Morocco. In the story, Mathilde shows a feeling of rejection and confusion while in Morocco. Mathilde's different thoughts about life compared to Moroccans made her seen as 'other' by the people around her who consider her a strange woman. After trying to adapt and learning to understand the situation there, Mathilde, despite all the difficulties she experienced, finally succeeded in negotiating her culture and identity, where she harmonized her French culture with the Moroccan culture. She did not forget her French culture and kept both French culture and Moroccan culture side by side.

The research on cultural identity is essential to understand what cultural identity is, how different cultures exist in each group, and how these cultures can coexist. This research is recommended for those interested in discussing the differences and negotiations of cultural identity in literary works, such as the character Mathilde in *The Country of Others*. It is hoped that in the future, this research can become a reference for research which uses other literary theories or studies on the same novel from different perspectives.

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