

YEDITEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

**LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES OF IRANIAN EFL
LEARNERS IN TURKEY**

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Istanbul - 2024



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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
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LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS
IN TURKEY

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by
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

LANGUAGE SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES OF IRANIAN EFL LEARNERS IN TURKEY

The aim of this qualitative multiple case study is to explore how Iranian learners socialize in an EFL context and how these experiences influence their second language (L2) identity construction. I investigated the interactions and socialization processes within multilingual English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, where English serves as both the target language and the medium of communication. The current study informed by language socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Duff, 2007) framework and the poststructuralist view of identity (Norton, 2000) focuses on the experiences of six EFL students in a preparatory school at a private university in Turkey. I employed background questionnaires, group interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, class observations and reflective journals as data collection instruments. The analysis of the findings revealed that the participants managed to socialize with their classmates in and outside of the classroom to varying degrees. They also reported significant challenges that impeded their socialization. Furthermore, only a few participants were observed to experience transformations in their identities. Implications of the study can provide important insights about the multilingual and multicultural environments of EFL contexts.

Keywords: Language socialization, Learner identity, English as a foreign language (EFL)

ÖZET

Bu nitel çoklu vaka çalışmasının amacı, İranlı öğrencilerin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak (EFL) öğrenme bağlamında nasıl sosyalleştiklerini ve bu deneyimlerin ikinci dil (L2) kimlik inşalarını nasıl etkilediğini araştırmaktır. Çalışmada, hem hedef dil hem de iletişim aracı olarak İngilizcenin kullanıldığı çok dilli EFL sınıflarındaki etkileşimler ve sosyalleşme süreçleri incelenmiştir. Dil sosyalleşmesi (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Duff, 2007) çerçevesi ve kimliğe post-yapısalcı yaklaşım (Norton, 2000) ile şekillenen bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki bir özel üniversitenin hazırlık okulunda eğitim gören 6 EFL öğrencisinin deneyimlerine odaklanmaktadır. Veri toplama araçları olarak arka plan anketleri, grup mülakatları, yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel mülakatlar, ders gözlemleri ve yansıtıcı günlükler kullanılmıştır. Bulguların analizi, katılımcıların sınıf içinde ve sınıf dışında sınıf arkadaşlarıyla sosyalleşmeyi çeşitli derecelerde başardıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, sosyalleşmelerini engelleyen önemli zorluklar bildirmişlerdir. Bununla birlikte, yalnızca birkaç katılımcının kimliklerinde dönüşüm yaşadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, EFL bağlamlarının çok dilli ve çok kültürlü ortamlarına dair önemli çıkarımlar sunabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dil Sosyalleşmesi, Öğrenen Kimliği, Yabancı dil olarak İngilizce (EFL)

DEDICATION

To my dear grandfather who always believed in me and encouraged me to pursue my education.

Though he passed away before seeing me graduate, his support has stayed with me through every step.

This thesis is for him.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Modern English language classrooms are often and increasingly characterized by multicultural and multilingual environments, reflecting the global nature of today's world. Especially in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds come together and create a rich and dynamic learning context. This diversity affects how students interact, learn, and develop their language skills. Understanding these interactions helps us see how students negotiate their identities and learn in such environments.

English has established itself as a global lingua franca, meaning it is a “contact language” used by individuals who do not share a common native language or national culture, with English serving as their selected foreign language for communication (Firth, 1996, p. 240). In multilingual EFL classrooms, English serves not only as the language being learned but also functions as the medium for student interaction and engagement with course content. English acts as a common ground that enables learners from various backgrounds to work together, share ideas, and form connections.

The ability to communicate with their peers is important for learners for socialization purposes as well as learning opportunities. In other words, learning is not limited to classrooms and does not occur merely as a result of instructions and guidance of a teacher; learners can acquire and exchange new perspectives, opinions, or knowledge through formal or informal, in-class or outside-of-class, online or face to face, one to one or group and even direct or indirect connections with their peers as well. Language socialization (LS) theory (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Norton, 2000) plays a critical role in understanding how social interactions among learners contribute to their language development progress along with their cultural knowledge. LS research is largely based on study abroad or homestay experiences of international students in a host country where the target language is predominantly spoken (eg., Ou & Gu, 2021; Anderson, 2020; Sung, 2019; Takei & Burdelski, 2018; Kim, 2018; Kinginger & Wu, 2018;

Surtees, 2018; Diao, 2016; Kobayashi, 2016; Du, 2015; Kim & Duff, 2012; Zappa-Hollman, 2007). In these studies, researchers focus on how language socialization takes place between native and non-native speakers of English, and sojourners are generally viewed as novice learners while their native partners become experts in their interactions. Nevertheless, McGregor (2016, p. 178) states that “We still know very little about the ways in which sojourners co-construct and negotiate talk with local peers in conversation.”. This highlights the need for more research investigating the role of peer interactions in socialization and the identity construction process.

Furthermore, in language socialization (LS) research, there appears to be a notable relationship between Western and Far Eastern contexts. Many studies have focused on participants such as Japanese, Chinese, or Hong Kongese learners of English temporarily residing in Canada and the USA, or American students studying in China or Japan. Another common feature of these investigations is the involvement of a native English speaker. While Seidlhofer (2005) asserts that the majority of English as a lingua franca (ELF) exchanges occur between non-native speakers of English, there has been insufficient attention paid to EFL contexts where neither the sojourners' nor the host community's native language is English.

Based on the statistics of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK, 2024), 56.996 new international students registered for an undergraduate program in higher education institutions across Turkey in the 2023-2024 academic year. Furthermore, a great portion of those students come from either the Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen or other Asian countries like Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Therefore, English is likely to bridge a gap between Turkish and international students with lack of Turkish proficiency in language classrooms. Therefore, English language classrooms in Turkey serve as an information-rich research site for exploring social dynamics, peer relationships, intercultural communication, identity construction, power dynamics, and many other significant components of language learning.

1.2 Background to the Study

I have been working as an English teacher in the same institution since the English preparatory school was established six years ago. Meanwhile, I have had a chance to meet hundreds of students including both Turkish and foreign students from various countries. Two years ago, I taught a reading and writing course in a pre-intermediate level class including around 35 students alongside five internationals and four of them were Iranians. I remember I was amazed by how fast the international students socialized together with their Turkish classmates because I usually had to support students from different backgrounds to communicate with each other through interactive tasks. However, in this classroom, students accomplished forming connections even without my encouragement. I also realized that Iranian students were relatively more extroverted and talkative, and they tended to take a leader role in group work activities. Additionally, they were forming close connections with other Iranians even including teachers across the school. Briefly, one of the reasons why I wanted to work with Iranian students was my past experiences. I wondered whether the Iranian students' socialization success was unique to those particular students in my class. The other reason was that Iranians were one of the largest international student groups, outnumbering those from other nationalities. Therefore, accessing them would not be a challenging issue for me as a researcher. Lastly and more importantly, any qualitative investigations particularly focusing on Iranian EFL learners' language socialization experiences have not been done in the Turkish context yet. In this sense, I believe my research will provide significant insights to the field.

1.3 Aims of the Study

My research aims to explore the language socialization experiences of Iranian EFL learners in Turkey and how these experiences impact their L2 identity construction. By focusing on the interplay between language socialization and identity formation, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how Iranian learners foster their linguistic and cultural knowledge through social interactions in a foreign context. This research will offer insights into

the specific challenges and opportunities faced by these learners, highlighting how their social interactions influence their language development and identity. Additionally,

given that far too little attention has been paid to language socialization among non-native speakers of English, my study will contribute to a broader understanding of language socialization processes in EFL settings by exploring the dynamics of multilingual classrooms and the role of English as a lingua franca. The current study investigates the following research questions:

RQ 1: How do Iranian EFL learners experience language socialization in and outside of the classroom environment?

RQ 2: How do Iranian EFL learners position themselves as a learner in their interactions with their classmates?

RQ 3: Do socialization patterns interact with learners' L2 identity construction?

1.3 Organization of the Study

This study consists of six main chapters. The following chapter, Chapter 2 presents the literature review, establishing the theoretical framework for the study and discussing relevant literature. In Chapter 3, I address the methodological aspects of the research, providing a comprehensive overview of the theoretical basis for the research design and detailing the primary data collection methods and analysis techniques employed. Chapter 4 is devoted to presenting the results derived from the collected data, based on the participants' accounts. In Chapter 5, I discuss these findings in relation to the existing literature and relevant studies. The final chapter, Chapter 6, concludes the study by outlining the implications, limitations, and recommendations for future research in the field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language Socialization

There has been an increasing interest in language socialization (LS) in the field of applied linguistics since the beginning of the 1980s. With Ochs and Schieffelin's pioneering, LS research initially started with investigations regarding how children develop their first language, social and cultural knowledge through interactions. However, the recent research predominantly focuses on the development of a sense of self and language learning and use (Duff & Talmy, 2011).

According to Schieffelin and Ochs (1986), LS starts with the first moment when human beings engage in social interactions in their lives. In their other work, they also note that language socialization is "a lifelong process" (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008). Individuals need to learn how to use verbal, non-verbal, or written language in more complicated manners as they participate in activities in educational institutions, professional settings, religious groups, or community centers (Duff, 2010). Drawing on Schieffelin and Ochs's (1986) LS theory that was devised to understand how children learn to speak and socialize through their mother language, Duff (2011, p.564) expands it into second language acquisition (SLA) and defines second language socialization (L2 socialization) as the process that non-native speakers or people who re-learn a new language that they used to know once go through in order to develop competence, gain membership, or practice social activities. To date, there is little agreement on what the word "second" in second language socialization means because multiple languages can be involved in the learning process and there is no clear-cut order in learning them. Therefore, the current study adopts the notion of using "second language socialization" as a generic term as suggested by Duff (2011).

Since LS is a relatively emerging theory and research interest, it has undergone the influence of many disciplines varying from anthropology to sociolinguistics. Like a great number of LS researchers, Duff (2007) also asserts that sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky (1978) has been the most influential one in the development of LS. Based on

Vygotsky's work (1978), sociocultural theory views learning as a social process through which learners develop their language knowledge through cultural tools and interactions. From this perspective, sociocultural theory and LS resembles each other by putting interactions at the heart of language development. Even in the early appearance of LS theory, Ochs (1986) overtly attracted attention to the interconnectedness between Vygotsky's theory and LS. She points out how children develop their social and cognitive skills with the help of the cooperative interactions between them and experts such as parents, caregivers or teachers. For this purpose, she benefits from Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal Development concept and Bruner's (1977) scaffolding theory. On the other hand, compared to sociocultural theory, less attention has been paid to mental representations, developments or reconstructions of language systems in both L1 and L2 socialization processes. In addition, more focus has been placed on the construction and performing of identities in diverse learning environments (Duff, 2007). Another concurrent or complementary subject matter in L2 socialization is the concept of community of practice developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). It enables LS scholars to have a better understanding of the communities and activities that learners are heavily socialized into. Through the concept of community of practice, researchers analyze the processes that can support or hinder learners' growing identities, involvement in legitimacy in new learning environments.

As in L1 socialization (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), one of the fundamental aspects of L2 socialization is that there are two distinct roles that learners bear in their socialization process "through language" or "to use language": novices and experts (Duff, 2011). Experts who can be also defined as more experienced learners or old-timers are crucial in assisting newcomers to get along with others and informing them about the beliefs, customs, and values of the group - either directly or indirectly. However, this does not mean that novices play a passive role in interactions with their experienced partners. In the LS framework, learning and engagement has a co-constructive and collaborative nature (Duff & Talmy, 2011). As a result, expert and novice roles are flexible and co-constructed rather than being fixed and learning is bidirectional, which means that even experts are likely to acquire knowledge, belief, opinions, norms or behaviors with the help of their less competent or experienced counterparts.

While L1 and L2 socialization shares many commonalities, there are also significant differences between them. According to Duff (2007, p. 310), the main discrepancy between them can be that L2 socialization participants “may not experience the same degree of access, acceptance, or accommodation within the new discourse communities as their L1 counterparts do”. In other words, socialization is viewed by L1 researchers as “a powerful process” through which children or less experienced parties learn, transform or sometimes resist linguistic and cultural norms that they have been subjected to. On the other hand, L2 learners might have relatively limited access and receive less assistance or acceptance within their socialization contexts (Duff & Talmy, 2011), and this situation may stem from various reasons. For instance, in spite of how willing L2 socialization participants can be to take part in the practices and customs of the target community, they might encounter opposition and resistance from other parties. Or, they can be warmly welcomed and embraced by the L2 community, but they might not be reluctant to invest themselves in socialization and learning. The reason can be that they may hesitate to fully integrate themselves into the L2-mediated social settings, or they might be afraid of having conflicts with their existing identity if they become a member of L2 community (Duff, 2007).

A number of researchers reported that LS might happen in diverse settings ranging from isolated environments where learners have very limited opportunities to socialize through the target language like foreign language classes to online platforms that allow non-native speakers and the native ones to connect and interact with each other. To illustrate, Takei and Burdelski (2018) analyzed how a Japanese immigrant family living in Australia socialized each other into Japanese and English during dinnertime conversations while Diao (2016) examined the peer socialization process through routine conversations between American college students and their Chinese roommates in a dorm in China. Furthermore, Kobayashi et al. (2017) suggests that post-secondary institutions that offer English-medium education have become information rich context for language socialization research because of the increasing number of international and immigrant students who have been learning English as an additional language. These students do not just need to build up their English knowledge related to their major within an academic environment, but they can also develop social relationships with new people and learn about cultural aspects of the host community where they live in through English.

The scope of LS research has recently extended to academic discourse socialization. The aim of such studies is usually to investigate learners' written and oral language learning progress and how they socialize into academic communities. Researchers usually focus on particular learning activities or events such as academic writing, class presentations, or group work activities (e.g., Anderson, 2020; Kim, 2018; Kobayashi, 2016; Sung, 2023; Zappa-Hollman 2007; Zappa-Hollman & Duff 2015). To illustrate, Zappa-Hollman (2007) studied how six non-native graduate students socialized into academic discourses through academic oral presentations at a Canadian university. Participants reported that they had faced various challenges while both preparing and delivering their presentations. Those challenges were mainly related to sociocultural differences, language constraints and psychological obstacles. Although peer support and scaffolding generally function as a significant facilitator in participants' learning in LS research, Zappa-Hollman (2007) states that such collaborations and guidance did not occur in the participants' experiences in her research. Another study that focused on participants' socialization process through academic oral presentations is Kobayashi's (2016) research including only one undergraduate student who came to Canada with an academic exchange program. The analysis of the collected data demonstrated that the participant, namely Otome, changed her understanding of the given tasks and adapted her strategies accordingly as she kept repeatedly engaging in the activities and presentations, collaborating with other students when necessary, observing others' presentations and reflecting on both her own and others' performances.

Exploring how learners socialize into academic communities by developing their written academic language skills has also become a popular trend in academic discourse socialization research. To exemplify, Kim (2018) worked with four doctoral students in the United States to clarify the socialization process and explore the nature of graduate feedback with an emphasis on oral and written feedback including the interactions out of the class. The findings suggested that the repeated and multiple sources of feedback enhanced the participants' writing skills and facilitated their socialization into academic communities. Furthermore, it is interesting that the participants in this study rarely conceptualized themselves as "an L2 writer". Similarly, a recent study by Anderson (2020) supported the notion that feedback can function as "an interactive tool" that helps learners socialize. Besides, he revealed that the received feedback can shape

learners' academic identity construction. However, the findings also suggested that some learners may show some resistance while receiving and accepting the given feedback.

According to Kulick and Schieffelin (2004), any research on socialization that does not include evidence of language's function in the process of acquiring cultural behaviors is simply lacking in depth. In line with this notion, Ou and Gu's study (2021) also pointed to the co-occurrence of language and culture in socialization in their research through the analysis of interactions between Chinese students and their international peers. Another recent investigation by Kinginger and Wu (2018) provided similar findings, as well. While an American student in the study was practicing Mandarin Chinese through daily conversations with her roommate, the roommate had opportunities to learn about American culture and improve her English as well.

Nevertheless, what we know about language socialization through peer interaction is largely based on study abroad studies that focus on international students' temporarily living in a host country where the target language is dominantly spoken (e.g., Sung, 2019; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Surtees, 2018; Diao, 2016; Du, 2015). For example, Diao (2016) attempted to figure out how three American study abroad students socialized into gendered Mandarin Chinese with the help of their Chinese roommates by analyzing their daily conversations in a dorm in China. To accomplish this goal, she analyzed multiple data collection resources including the participants' audio-recorded interactions with their roommates. The findings indicated that gender was frequently indexed in the interactions of two participants with their roommates, and they became more aware of how to use affective sentence-final particles while practicing Mandarin. However, the other participant, Mac, could not have many opportunities to practice Mandarin with his roommate owing to his roommate's lack of availability. Similar to Diao' (2016) study, Kinginger and Wu (2018) and also Du (2015) investigated American sojourners' social networking and language socialization experiences in China.

Among the previous studies, only a few have dealt with the role of peer interactions in language socialization. One of those recent studies was carried out by Surtees (2018) with three Japanese students attending a study-abroad program in Canada to examine how aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation and language learning were addressed in peer interactions, as well as the norms for handling such topics in causal discussions. For this

purpose, Surtees asked the three focal participants to find English-speaking partners to regularly practice English and to talk about their progress. She also included those partners' perceptions about their contribution to the participants' progress in her study. Findings indicated that native partners were sometimes reluctant to assist the focal partners in language use and learning and did not help them unless they sought help. Besides, the participants reported that the peers who had more experience with international students were a more supportive conversation partner compared to the less experienced ones. Briefly, the analysis of interview data and recorded conversations addressed that demonstrating "language expertise" should be viewed as a learned behavior rather than a natural property of native speakers (Surtees, 2018).

Ou and Gu (2021) recently highlighted the bi-directional aspect of language socialization in their study that they carried out in an international school in China to find out how Chinese students experience language socialization and reconstruct their identities as they interact with their English-speaking peers. Data collected from multiple sources revealed that international students helped Chinese students improve their English knowledge as experts while novice Chinese students enabled the international ones to learn about Chinese culture. Likewise, Takei and Burdelski (2018) analyzed a Japanese family and their young adult daughter's conversations. Both studies supported the idea of bidirectional socialization with their findings showing that children and their parents socialized with each other in terms of linguistic and social norms.

On the other hand, Kim and Duff (2012) revealed that peer interactions may not always have a positive impact on learners' socialization and even the language learning process. They focused on two Generation 1.5 Korean-Canadian female students' experiences in high school and university in their longitudinal case study. Korean peers facilitated the participants to socialize with the local Korean-Canadian network, and to gain membership and status. However, they concluded that this experience impeded the participants' English learning progress because speaking English was viewed as a disloyal behavior to their Korean identity in their community. Another example for less successful socialization can be Hasegawa and Shima's (2020) study exploring the social networking and language socialization processes of a group of students living in a residential hall of an international university in Japan. At the beginning of the study, researchers matched international and Japanese students with each other

and made them roommates based on the results of a questionnaire including questions related to participants' personality and lifestyles. The results demonstrated that not all participants developed a good rapport with their pairs. As a result, the ones having poor relationships with their roommates failed to expand their social circle and provide supporting evidence for language socialization. About this issue, Wang (2020) points out that L2 socialization might not successfully occur in all cases although this is not very common in L1 socialization. For many reasons such as resistance to socialize, isolation from the community, or the community's excluding attitudes towards them, learners may fail to form social relationships that help them improve their language use, exchange opinions, beliefs and ideologies and learn about culture.

In light of the studies presented above, it can be understood that research on L2 socialization has been mostly restricted to limited comparisons of sojourners' socialization experiences based on homestay interactions that occurred in a country where the target language is dominantly used. Moreover, such interactions in the previous studies took place between students who were learning the target language additionally and native speakers. Until recently, far too little attention has been paid to how L2 socialization occurs in English as a lingua franca (ELF) context where English functions as a bridge language between non-native speakers of English. Therefore, this thesis seeks to fill the gap in the literature by exploring how Iranian learners socialize *to use the target language* or *through the target language* in an ELF setting.

2.2 Learner Identity

Investigating the connection between language and identity is a continuing concern within the field of language learning. Scholars have devised a number of theories and approaches to explore the nature of identity. Among them, the current study is informed by the poststructuralist approach.

Norton (1997) defines identity as “how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future”. In poststructuralism, an individual is seen as “diverse, contradictory, dynamic, multiple, and decentered” (Norton Pierce, 1995). In addition, according to Weedon

(1997), social relationships play a critical role in understanding the ways people “are constructed and construct themselves”. For this purpose, individuals need to “negotiate” their identities. Ting-Toomey (1999, as cited in Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001) conceptualizes negotiation as “a transactional interaction process, in which individuals attempt to evoke, assert, define, modify, challenge and/or support their own and others’ desired self-images” (p. 244). In line with this notion, identity can be considered as reflective self-images that individuals develop, experience and transmit within a culture or a setting of a specific relationship (Ting-Toomey, 1999). To have a better understanding of how identities are negotiated and constructed in social interactions, “positioning theory”, developed by Davies and Harré (1990), needs to be adopted. They define position as “the central organizing concept for analyzing how it is that people do being a person”. This concept does not only focus on how individuals locate themselves in social interactions, but also others. There are two types: interactive positioning, where one individual positions another, and reflective positioning, where individuals position themselves. Davis and Harré (1990) further note that individuals who assume a particular subject position interpret the world from the perspective afforded by that position. These subject positions can extend beyond categories such as gender and ethnicity to encompass a range of elements, including specific images, ideas, backgrounds, and narratives. Moreover, consistent with poststructuralist perspectives that view identity construction as a dynamic and evolving process, subject positions are also inherently fluid. Individuals continuously create and redefine their identities (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). The fact that people can position both themselves and others in social contexts does not necessarily mean that their identities and attempts for positioning would not be challenged by the others. As a result, they might frequently experience a mismatch between how they construct themselves and how others try to position them (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001). Besides, it cannot be often possible to resist such positionings because they might have been imposed in highly powerful ways. The extent which people can show resistance may vary according to the specific context and power dynamics between individuals or groups.

Groups of learners can be also considered small communities. They come together in classrooms, learn together and also negotiate their identities through interactions with their peers. Therefore, the concept of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998) is deeply connected to identity research as well as to language socialization (LS) research. It refers to

groups of people who share a mutual area of interest and develop skills in that area through frequent interactions. Wenger (2011) emphasizes that not every group of people can be considered a community of practice. Three essential elements must be present: domain, community, and practice. Firstly, members must share a common interest and demonstrate commitment to that domain. Secondly, members should assist one another, share information, and engage in group activities and conversations, fostering connections that enable mutual knowledge benefits. Lastly, regular meetings and collective practice are necessary to maintain and develop the community's practices. By participating in a community, newcomers develop awareness and engage with both explicit tools and implicit conventions of that community. They observe, imitate, and then adapt practices to fit both community norms and their personal sense of self. Through such participation, individuals develop, adapt, and potentially reconstruct their identities and practices (Handley et al., 2006).

The ability to negotiate or claim one's identity is often influenced by the power dynamics among people. The relationship between language and power did not only attract poststructuralists' attention. Bourdieu (1977), a French sociologist, also showed an interest in how power shapes discourse. He argued that the value attached to an individual or a group of people determines the value of an expression to a degree. Besides, he acknowledges that the ascribed value to a person or a community can change across circumstances and settings and additionally points out the relationship between dominant use of language and "dominant class". In accordance with this idea, Heller (2008) makes an explicit connection between language and other resources in a sense of access. To clarify, opportunities for language use and learning can be shaped by the values attributed to individuals or groups. Competing over access to the target language or resources often results in an unequal distribution of power. As a result, one of the parties establishes predominance over others.

The concept of investment plays a critical role in understanding how learners perceive their relationship with their existing identities and future identities. Investment was offered by Norton (2000) as an alternative to the psychological construct motivation that was considered as a fixed feature of learners in the past studies. It enables researchers to understand the relationship between individuals' willingness and commitment to learn the target language. Furthermore, learners' investment can change across time and place. Learners can be motivated

enough to improve their language knowledge and skills, but they might not sufficiently invest themselves to take action for many reasons such as racist or sexist learning environments or the mismatch between the learners' perception of good teaching practices and the real one in class (Norton & Toohey, 2001). Among many, one of the reasons why learners invest themselves to learn a language is their desire to access to symbolic or material resources which probably assist them to gain membership or achieve their future goals. Drawing on that, Norton (2000) argues that investment in the target language means also investment in someone's own social identity.

There might be numerous factors affecting the degree of investment in language learning. One of the most significant components is the concept of "imagined self and communities". Norton (2001) transferred the term "imagined communities", originally developed by Anderson (1991), to the field of SLA. This concept places an emphasis on the future, and it suggests that learners imagine who they will become and what community they desire to be part of in the future (Norton & Toohey, 2001). Furthermore, such imagined communities can become highly influential and stimulate learners to invest themselves even more in language learning.

In the 1970s and 1980s, language learning research often treated learners' identities (such as their characteristics, learning styles, and motivations) as fixed traits. However, more recent studies that take a poststructuralist approach, view language learner identities as fluid, context-dependent, and shaped by specific historical and cultural circumstances. As an example, Barkhuizen (2017) analyzed short stories told by a Hong Kongese student, Max, who completed his BA degree in New Zealand. To obtain a comprehensive picture of Max' identity transformation over the extended period of time, Barkhuizen (2017) conducted interviews before and after his first year in New Zealand. In addition, they met almost 5 years later again and had their follow-up interview. This study provides significant insights about the changing and dynamic nature of identity construction across contexts and time. In the post-sojourn interview, Max explicitly acknowledges that the person who he is now is not merely different from the one who used to be before going to New Zealand, but also the one who he used to be even during his sojourn there.

Coexisting of multiple identities has been a major area of interest in identity research as well. To illustrate, Gu (2011) demonstrated that multilingual environments can lead language users to employ a range of languages and dialects to present different identities and practice symbolic power. In the study centering upon Hong Kongese and mainland Chinese students' narratives, she reported that Chinese students performed three identities depending on the person they were interacting with: a Chinese identity, a Hong Kongese identity and a global identity. However, Hong Kongese students positioned themselves superior to the mainland Chinese students and adopted only a local Hong Kongese identity.

Chen (2010) did not merely support the multiplicity of learning identities but also underscored the community of practice as an effective analytical tool for revealing the complexities of relationships and settings. In her study, she analyzed how Evan, who was a 9-year-old elementary school student and moved from China to the USA, negotiated, constructed and reshaped his identities in three different school communities. These communities were the mainstream classroom, advanced Math group and English language learner (ELL) group that Evan was required to attend by the institution because of his poor English proficiency. Chen (2010) observed Evan in his natural learning settings every week and recorded these sessions to analyze his language use and interactions with his peers and teachers afterward. In addition, she conducted formal and informal interviews with the focal participant (Evan), his mother, teachers and peers several times throughout the study. The data analysis revealed that Evan presented different identities in those communities and experienced identity conflicts. While attending ELL program was pointing to his language needs and poor proficiency, being a "desirable" and "smart" student in the mainstream and advanced math communities encouraged him to actively participate in curricular activities and instructions. Therefore, he was struggling to embrace all his identities and position himself as a student in this institution.

Another study that addresses the complexity of multiple identity construction was conducted by Vasilopoulos (2015). In his study, he worked with 10 adult Korean bilinguals who had lived or studied abroad more than 4 years before. The findings in this study demonstrated that the participants had to make "strategic switches" between their L1 and L2 identities to conform to the local communities' norms. They were able to embrace their L2 identity solely under limited circumstances such as while contacting people with similar

experiences, high level of English proficiency, or from other countries. According to the participants, speaking English to local people could make them label as “elitist” or can be seen even as a betrayal of their Korean cultural identity. This study does not only offer important insights into the context-dependent nature of identity construction and negotiation, yet also points out the struggles that speakers can face to express their multiple identities.

Similar to identities, recent evidence suggests that investment in language learning changes over time and is heavily influenced by the surrounding context. These changes significantly impact learners' engagement and identity. For instance, Sung (2019) provided supporting evidence for changing nature of investments with a longitudinal single-case study with a Hong Kongese undergraduate student who studied abroad within the time period allocated for the study. Since he had opportunities to collect data about the participant's identity construction experiences in three main contexts namely university, workplace and study abroad, he found out that his participant's level of investments varied across different contexts. The participant was actively communicating with foreign customers at work in Hong Kong and the host family who he stayed with during his sojourn although it was observed that he did not show enough willingness to actively participate and look for opportunities to practice L2 speaking neither in nor out of the class at university.

The concept of imagined communities and its connection with investment has become one of the major areas of interest within the identity construction research (e.g., Chang, 2011; Dagenais, 2003; Kinginger, 2004; Teng, 2019; Trentman, 2013; Yim, 2016). One significant early work in the field is Kinginger's (2004) study that focused on the experiences of a young American woman, Alice, who went to France to learn French. However, what Alice had imagined about the city life and her expectations as a learner before going to Paris did not match with what she experienced there much. She used to imagine herself as a good language speaker or even someone who would teach French in the future, but this mismatch led her to lose her motivation to learn French and accomplish her future goals. Nevertheless, after a while, she decided not to give up and motivated herself to stick to her goals. In fact, she reconstructed her identity to reach imagined identity. Similar to Kinginger's (2004) work, a recent multiple case study was conducted by Teng (2019) with three Chinese EFL students. He tried to explore the way the participants, June, Mary and Rick, constructed their identity and they invested

themselves in language learning. The results did not solely show that a mismatch between learners' existing identity and imagined one can hinder learners' language learning, but, on the other hand, an alignment may encourage them to make more investment and take control of their learning. The fact that June and Rick conceptualized themselves as "a poor language learner" led to a decrease in their involvement in language learning. Although both understood that it would be difficult to reach their imagined identities, Rick was the only one who reconstructed his imagined identity as a businessperson. On the other hand, Mary viewed herself as "an advanced English speaker" and as a result, she demonstrated even more effort and engagement in her English language development.

In addition to imagined communities, several attempts have been made to how actual communities that learners participate in can be influential in their identity construction. One recent example of these investigations can be Janice McGregor's (2012) doctoral dissertation. She examined the identity constructions of six American undergraduate students during their study abroad in Germany and the communities that they participated in for one year. The participants participated in various communities ranging from a group of German women to a Muay Thai boxing community. On the other hand, one participant did not actively attend any communities throughout the study although he made a few close friends. In addition, the data analysis demonstrated that the level of engagement to communities was different among the participants. McGregor (2012) suggests that the discrepancy may stem from individuals' personal beliefs, perspectives, future goals, desires, lifestyles, and experiences within those communities. She also observed that participants who were actively involved in their communities often reconsidered and reshaped their beliefs and perspectives. According to the findings, these participants were the ones who experienced significant changes in their identity trajectories and more likely to adopt new roles as they experienced different languages and cultures.

Studies on language use and identity construction among non-native English speakers abroad revealed the dynamic and multifaceted nature of their identities, as well as the varying degrees of comfort and confidence experienced in different linguistic contexts. Virkkula and Nikula (2010) focused on identity construction and language use of seven Finnish engineering students who went to Germany for an internship and experienced transitions from a Finnish

context in which English was mainly accessible within educational settings to a new setting in which English functioned as a lingua franca in daily interactions. They conducted interviews before and after their participants' study abroad and attempted to explore the changes in their identities. The results provided evidence regarding the multifaceted and dynamic nature of identity. The participants presented multiple identities varying from a language learner to a language user of English as a lingua franca. Furthermore, the study also suggested that lingua franca contexts might allow non-native learners to develop the sense of better proficiency and confidence by using English with other non-native speakers rather than native speakers or in educational settings. In a more recent study, Sung (2020) analyzed the identity constructions of 18 Chinese undergraduate students at an international university in China and provided similar evidence. The participants had opportunities to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English on campus. They reported feeling more comfortable when speaking with non-native students, whereas they experienced negative emotions, such as anxiety and pressure, and felt insecure about their English proficiency during conversations with native speakers. Sung (2020) claims that it resulted from the fact that the participants placed native speakers in a more powerful position but themselves in lower position. On the other hand, they might have developed a sense of equality between themselves and the others in terms of non-nativeness.

In this chapter, I presented the theoretical frameworks that the study is based on and the review of the relevant studies concerning language socialization and identity construction. The following chapter will focus on the methodological aspects of this study.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide methodological details of the research such as the research design and context, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

3.2 Research Design

The current study employs a qualitative multiple-case study design to provide an in-depth understanding of Iranian EFL learners' language socialization experiences and L2 identity construction in an English preparatory program at a private university in Turkey. The study focused on six participants' experiences both in and outside of a classroom environment during one academic semester. Therefore, this study was designed to be a case study because case studies equip researchers with detailed investigations on a small-scale sample. Similarly, Merriam (1998) defines a qualitative case study as "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit". According to Punch (2005), a single person, a group of people, an entity or a nation can be a case. However, Yin (2019) advocates that it might be difficult to set a boundary between a case and its context. Therefore, Bhattacharya (2017) suggests that researchers need to determine the boundary of a case by providing evidence from the literature and theoretical frameworks. Drawing on the aforementioned perspectives, I selected the social interactions of Iranian students with their classmates as my unit of analysis.

3.3 Research Context

The following sections present further details regarding the focal university where the present study was carried out, the English preparatory program and the individual participants.

3.3.1 University

The private university where this study was conducted was established on the European side of Istanbul in 2015 and it hosts nine faculties, one institute, and two vocational schools and offers 59 undergraduate, 45 graduate, 18 PhD, and 36 associate programs. It offers both Turkish-medium and English-medium education. Within eight years, the university has managed to increase its popularity and recognition, especially among Middle Eastern countries, and has broken its own record by recruiting around 2.000 international students in 2023. As a school policy and also an amenity offered by the Turkish Council of Higher Education, the institution maintains accepting newcomers by the middle of the semester. Iranian students were the largest group among the international students at this private university according to the statistics provided by the student affairs at the institution.

3.3.2 Preparatory Program

At the beginning of every academic year, all international students who registered in an English-medium undergraduate or graduate program at this private university are required to take the Cambridge English Placement Test. This test aims to test learners' vocabulary and grammar knowledge and reading and listening skills, and it is used to determine the English proficiency level of students. Those whose level was detected as the pre-intermediate (B1) level or above are invited to the proficiency exam that tests learners' three main academic skills: listening, reading, and writing. If students get 60 points or above in this exam, they become exempt from the English preparatory education and directly start studying their major. Depending on their results in the placement exam, students who could not pass the proficiency exam or were not eligible to take the exam are placed in different levels in line with

the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages standards (CEFR). The English Preparatory program offers English language education at four different levels: (1) beginner and elementary (integrated), (2) pre-intermediate, (3) intermediate and lastly (4) advanced level. The program takes three semesters: fall, spring, and summer. However, it is only compulsory for beginner and elementary students to complete all three semesters. Others can join the summer school on a voluntary basis.

3.3.2.1 Curriculum

All students are offered General English and Academic English courses four days a week. On Fridays, pre-intermediate and upper-level students come together with their peers with the same major in a classroom and learn Content-Based English. However, beginner and elementary students continue learning General and Academic English. Depending on the level, class hours can differ as well. For example, beginner, elementary and pre-intermediate students receive 25 hours of English weekly while the upper levels take only 20 hours. If students miss more than 25% of their lessons, they fail from the absenteeism and need to repeat that level in the following semester. In addition, they must meet the evaluation criteria of their level because only the students who take an average of 70 from the formative and alternative assessments can take the level achievement exam. If they score over 70 in the fall term, they become eligible to take the proficiency exam held in January. When they get 60 points or above, they are considered to have successfully completed their English preparatory education. In case they score below 60, they continue their preparatory education from the intermediate (B2) level in the spring semester.

3.4 Participants

To investigate the research topic, I employed purposive sampling. While selecting my participants, I analyzed the distribution of Iranian students at the preparatory school, and I found out that the majority were the pre-intermediate students. Therefore, I narrowed down the scope of the study to the pre-intermediate students. I invited four of them to a piloting session, and I met the rest in person and asked them if they wanted to participate in my research after briefly

informing them about my research. Finally, I recruited eight participants at the beginning of the semester, but two of the participants dropped out of the study. One of them failed due to absenteeism and stopped attending classes and the other decided to move back to Iran. Therefore, I continued my study with six participants. I will refer to these participants by the pseudonyms I assigned to them. Two of them are female, and four of them are male. All participants were native speakers of Persian. Their age varied from 18 to 42 because half of the participants aimed to study in an English-medium undergraduate program while the other half enrolled in an English-medium graduate program at this private university in Turkey. Since they could not pass the proficiency exam, they had to attend the English preparatory school. Depending on the results of the Cambridge English Placement Test that they all took at the beginning of the academic year, their level was detected as pre-intermediate. There were 12 classes offering English preparatory education for the same level, but these six participants were placed in three of them. As a result, Hazin, Nader, and Yasmin were sharing the same class (Class A) whereas Karim and Roya were in another class (Class B). Lastly, Omid was in a different class (Class C). Although Iranians were the largest international group in the preparatory school, still their number was not quite high. Therefore, almost all the participants knew each other and spent time together during the break times or after the class. In addition, none of them had ever been abroad until they moved to Turkey. Hence, they had never needed to speak English as frequently as they did in Turkey. The following sections provide more details about each participant.

3.4.1 Hazin

Hazin was the eldest male participant in my research. He was 30 years old and was born in Kermanshah, Iran. He had a chance to live in Tehran which is the biggest city in Iran, but he had never been to other countries before except for Turkey. His father was retired, and his mother was an architect. He had a sibling who worked in finance. Like his mother, he also had a bachelor's degree in architecture. He completed his primary, high school, and university education in Iran. He had moved to Turkey to pursue his master's degree eight months before the school started. He lived in a dormitory on the European side of Istanbul. He had three

roommates, and they were from Iran, Morocco and Turkey. So, English was the only language that all could speak.

Hazin mentioned that he did not remember exactly but he thought he started learning English when he was nine or ten years old. Six years ago, he wanted to learn English again but this time it would be more “serious” according to what he mentioned in the first interview. However, in the middle of the B2 level, he decided to quit and start learning French. So, he also knew French, but his knowledge was very limited. Because he had a roommate from Morocco, he had a chance to practice French as well.

3.4.2 Karim

Karim was a single man at the age of 28. He was born in Iran. His father was retired, and his mother was a housewife. He had traveled to Turkey a few times before and stayed here for four or five months. His last visit was one month before the beginning of the semester and since then he had been living with his sister on the European side of Istanbul. He lived close to the university compared to the others, but it might take a long time to come to school because of the transportation. He went to primary school, high school, and university in Iran. He had a bachelor’s degree in business management. He registered in a graduate program in the same field at this private university. He was in the same class with Roya and also another Iranian student, Bahar. Bahar used to be one of the participants at the beginning of the semester, but she decided to move back to Iran for personal reasons in the middle of the semester. Until then, she was one of both Karim and Roya’s close friends.

Karim reported that he was suffering from ADHD, and it was difficult for him to stay focused during lessons. As a result, he preferred to sit in the front row to be able to concentrate better in the classroom. Furthermore, he described himself as an introverted learner during our first individual interview. Karim reported that he started learning English in middle school when he was 14 or 15 years old. In addition, he took private courses to improve his English skills four years ago. On the other hand, his Turkish knowledge was very limited.

3.4.3 Nader

Nader was an 18-year-old young man. He was born in Tehran, Iran, and had never been to another country or city until he emigrated to Istanbul, Turkey with his family in July 2022. He had a chance to visit a different city in Turkey too, which was Ankara although it was a short trip. He lived with his parents on the European side of Istanbul but in a distant place that usually took at least three hours to get to school. Sometimes he studied English on his way to school. He was the youngest child and had two more siblings. One of them was a fashion designer, the other was a physical education teacher.

One of Nader's unique features was that he was the only participant who could speak Turkish fluently. It was probably because he completed the last year of his high school education in İstanbul, Turkey. Even though he did not receive any formal education to learn Turkish, he viewed himself as an advanced speaker of Turkish. Whenever I needed to talk to him unofficially, he always insisted that I communicate with him in Turkish. When he was five years old, his parents started teaching him English. Apart from the formal education, he mentioned that he attempted to improve his English by himself through watching YouTube videos during the pandemic.

3.4.4 Omid

Omid was the youngest participant in my research. He was 18 years old. He was born in Iran and had never been abroad. His father was a driver, and his mother was a housewife. He had two siblings, and he lived with his sister and brother-in-law in İstanbul. He reported that he had visited his sister in İstanbul a few times before, but they were all short-term visits. This was the first time that he lived in a different country. He stated that he migrated to Turkey for freedom and job opportunities a month before the school started. He lived with his sister and brother-in-law on the European side of İstanbul. As Omid stated, they were both fluent in English, but they usually spoke Persian at home. The only time that they spoke English at home was when he asked them how to pronounce a word, which happened occasionally. Omid used to share the same class with another Iranian student, Behrooz.

Omid completed his primary and high school education in Iran. He was a native speaker of Persian; he started learning English when he was 8 years old. He just received formal education to learn English. Besides, he tried to learn colloquial Turkish with the help of his friends, but he mostly used Persian and English in his daily life. During the interviews, he mainly used Persian but sometimes switched to English.

3.4.5 Roya

Roya was a middle-aged Iranian woman. She was 42 years old, and she was born in Iran. She was married and had two children. She had lived in two different cities in Iran, but she had never been abroad before. Her family and she moved to Turkey for her children's education one and a half years ago. She lived with her husband and two children on the Anatolian side of İstanbul. Her father was not alive, but her mother was a retired nurse. She was the youngest child and had one sister and two brothers. All were well-educated. Her eldest brother was an architecture professor at a university, the other was a civil engineer and lastly, her sister was a computer engineer. Roya completed her primary, high school, and university education in Iran. She had a bachelor's degree in telecommunication engineering. She would pursue her master's degree in data science at this private university after completing her English preparatory education. Because she was ill, she could not attend any classes for a week in the first month of school.

Roya reported that she started learning English at the age of nine. In addition to the formal education, she also took some language courses. Even though it was a long time, she could not improve her English very well because there were some time gaps in which she could not practice enough. She also stated that her family and she migrated to Turkey for her children's education and her English learning. The year that they moved to Turkey, she attended a Turkish course for two semesters, and she completed the A2+ level. Nevertheless, she could not speak Turkish fluently, and her vocabulary knowledge was very limited. Roya thought that her children could speak Turkish much better than her. In addition, in her opinion, her daughter was also good at speaking English although the whole family dominantly spoke Persian at home.

3.4.6 Yasmin

Yasmin was the youngest female participant in my research. She was 20 years old. She was born in Isfahan, Iran. She had never been abroad before. In the first individual interview, she stated that she moved to Turkey for education and freedom 6 months before school started. She stated that her parents did not want their daughter to live alone in a different country, but his father had to stay in Iran due to professional issues. Therefore, she lived with her mother on the Anatolian side of İstanbul which was very far away from the university. She reported that it took almost 2 hours to get to school. She came from a well-educated family. Her father was an engineer while her mother was a psychologist, and she continued her PhD education in a Turkish-medium program in İstanbul. According to what Yasmin mentioned in the interviews, her mother tried to speak to her in Turkish sometimes and she was very good at it.

Yasmin was a native speaker of Persian. Since the fifth grade, she had been learning English. Apart from the formal education, she attended a few English courses too. She completed her primary and high school education in Iran. She immigrated to Turkey to continue her higher education and improve her English. She enrolled to the molecular biology and genetics department at the focal university as an undergraduate student. During the interviews, she mostly spoke Persian. She rarely switched to English. She knew only a few basic sentences in Turkish such as “*Nasılsın?* (How are you?), and *İyiyim, teşekkürler.* (I’m fine, thank you.)”.

The following table provides a summary of the participants’ demographic information:

Table 1*Demographic information of the participants*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Languages	English learning age	Major	Classroom	Residence in Istanbul	Duration of residence
Hazin	Male	30	Persian, English, French	9-10	Master of Business Administration (MA)	A	European Side	10+ months
Karim	Male	28	Persian, English	14-15	Master of Business Administration (MA)	B	European Side	6+ months
Nader	Male	18	Persian, English, Turkish	5	Computer Engineering (BA)	A	European Side	2+ years
Omid	Male	18	Persian, English	8	Software Engineering (BA)	C	European Side	1+ month(s)
Roya	Female	42	Persian, English, Turkish (limited)	9	Data Science (MA)	B	Anatolian Side	1+ year(s)
Yasmin	Female	20	Persian, English	11-12	Molecular Biology and Genetics (BA)	A	Anatolian Side	6+ months

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

In the current study, I used four separate data collection instruments to perform method triangulation. These are group interviews, semi-structured individual interviews, class observations, and reflective journals. Triangulation in research requires employing several methods or data sources to obtain an extensive understanding about the investigated subject (Carter et al., 2014) and there are different types of triangulation suggested by Patton (1999). In addition, I collected data from six participants at different periods of time. The following sections provide necessary information about these data collection tools.

3.5.1 Group Interviews

Group interviews were conducted to cross-check the incidents mentioned by participants during the individual interviews in the current study. Arksey and Knight (1999) argue that having more than one interviewee allows researchers to obtain more reliable and comprehensive data, as it provides the opportunity to hear different versions of the same events and access additional details and explanations. Additionally, group interviews enable researchers to save time and effort by meeting with all participants simultaneously. This approach can also increase the variety of responses. In the present study, nearly all participants shared the same classroom environment with at least one other participant. Therefore, group interviews played a critical role in assessing the extent to which they experienced similar events and in determining the consistency and reliability of their answers. Furthermore, group discussions stimulated the emergence of related new topics and encouraged participants to elaborate on them.

3.5.2 Semi-structured Individual Interviews

I used consecutive semi-structured interviews to explore the steps and changes in the participants' language socialization experiences. One of the qualitative data collection instruments, semi-structured interviews were chosen for the current study because of their reciprocal and flexible nature. Qualitative interviewing can provide in-depth understanding of

the subject under investigation and assist researchers in exploring new perspectives in light of opinions, feelings and experiences shared by interviewees (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). In such interviews, “prompts and probes” prepared beforehand can be tailored, reordered and even sometimes abandoned according to the interaction between interviewers and interviewees (Cohen et al., 2018). Rubin and Rubin (2011) also suggested that repeated interviews make it possible for researchers to understand social processes and realize changes over time (2011). The interviews were conducted individually to ensure that the participants could share their opinions, experiences and feelings comfortably without hesitation.

3.5.3 Class Observations

Another data collection tool I used was class observations. Cohen et al. (2018) states that “first-hand and live” data can be collected from social circumstances that naturally arise through observation. In addition, it enables researchers to record verbal, non-verbal and physical activities (Clark et al., 2009). Therefore, I expected class observations to allow me to gather more authentic data about participants’ language socialization experiences in learning settings and see what I could find out beyond participants’ perceptions. Furthermore, class observations in the current study played a critical role in checking to what extent what participants reported in interviews overlapped how they were behaving in their classrooms and offered a “reality check” (Robson, 2002).

3.5.4 Reflective Journals

I employed a journal-type instrument that is one of the diary methods. As Bolger et al. (2003) suggest, the most important feature of diary methods is that they give researchers the opportunity to capture “life as it is lived”. Moreover, they also make it possible for researchers to access an insider’s perspective (Dörnyei, 2007). In this type, researchers provide participants with short prompts and requires participants to create their entries depending on the provided general questions or prompts. I asked participants to reflect on what they experienced in and out

of the class during their interactions with their peers and what they think about their English learning progress every week to compensate for the weeks that we could not meet.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure started in October 2023 and ended in January 2024. As a first step, I detected the classes including Iranian students, and I realized that their number was remarkably high at the pre-intermediate level. As a result, I decided to include them in my research and met them in person. I briefly informed them about my study and asked them to sign the consent form (see Appendix A) approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee at Yeditepe University (see Appendix B). In addition, I asked them to complete a background questionnaire (see Appendix C) that enabled me to gather demographic information and language background about the participants. Immediately after they shared their contact information with me, I created a WhatsApp group and usually planned our meetings together through this channel.

3.6.1 Group Interviews

After I created interview prompts based on the literature and the points I wanted to explore, I invited four students from different levels to an interview upon getting their written consent and piloted the interview questions. With their consent, I recorded the piloting session. Depending on the students' comments, I needed to simplify some of the prompts and add a few more (see Appendix D).

I had planned to have all the interviews in English, but the piloting enabled me to notice that the language barrier would not make it difficult for participants to express themselves considering their proficiency level. Hence, I requested one of my Iranian colleagues to attend both group and individual interviews and help me with the translation to avoid communication breakdowns or misconceptions between the researcher and participants. With his support, participants were able to switch back to their native language as they wished. I always reminded

them that they did not have to speak English, and they could answer my questions in Persian at the beginning of the interviews. Nevertheless, all the participants occasionally spoke English especially when they were generally giving simple and short answers. Even though all the other participants used mostly Persian during the interviews, Nader was the only one who insisted on answering our questions in English and he told us that he viewed these interviews as an opportunity to improve his English speaking skills. Since he also knew Turkish, he sometimes switched to Turkish or Persian when he could not find a word, or he realized that he could not express himself very well.

I conducted two group interviews. Both were face-to-face and held at the school. The first one happened at the beginning of the data collection process, and it was the first official interaction between me and my participants. Because the preparatory school building was very small, it was sometimes difficult to arrange an available room. Before the first group meeting, I asked the permission of the department's head and used her office to meet my participants for the first group interview. While planning the date, one of the participants informed me about her absence in advance, and the other two participants were late on the meeting day. Since the rest needed to attend their classes immediately after the meeting, we had to have the first group interview only with three participants, namely Hazin, Omid, and Yasmin. On the other hand, the second group interview was administered with the participation of Hazin, Karim, Nader, and Roya on the last day of the semester. During these interviews, I usually started asking questions and waited for the participants to share their opinions. In the first group interview, the participants were not quite willing to talk. I usually had to encourage them to take turns and contribute to our discussion one by one. It was probably because it had been only a few weeks since the school started, and the participants did not have enough opportunities to socialize with their Iranian peers in the school and to adapt to a new learning environment. Conversely, it became relatively difficult for me not to allow the participants to digress from the main subject in the second group interview and I even had to interrupt the discussion to pose a new question a few times since they were constantly either commenting on each other's responses or talking about their perspectives. The second group interview took almost 80 minutes while the former one lasted only 44 minutes including the time the participants introduced themselves (see Table 2).

3.6.2 Semi-structured Individual Interviews

Immediately after the first group interview, I invited the participants to individual semi-structured interviews. We usually had these interviews in the morning before the participants went to their classes. Depending on room availability, we had to meet in various locations such as the archive room, writing center room or the department head's office. Every participant attended three individual interviews, and the duration of these sessions ranged from 22 minutes to 53. Table 2 summarizes the number and duration of both individual and group interviews. I aimed to regularly meet them once a month. However, the time gap between the sessions showed variations because we had to reschedule some interviews depending on the availability of the participants.

Table 2

Total number and duration of interviews

Interviewee	Individual Interviews (#/mins)	Group Interviews (#/mins)
Hazin	3/78	2/121
Karim	3/100	1/77
Nader	3/107	1/77
Omid	3/87	1/44
Roya	3/69	1/77
Yasmin	3/115	1/44

After the piloting and the first group interview, I prepared similar prompts including mostly open-ended questions (see Appendix E). During these individual interviews, I usually started directing one of the prompts to the participants and expected them to share their opinions about their language learning process and language socialization experiences in and outside of

the classes, but I did not strictly follow them. Depending on the participants' responses and the flow of the conversation, I sometimes needed to pose follow-up questions to encourage them to provide more details or change the sequence of the questions. While conducting the interviews, I sometimes took notes about new issues that participants mentioned or points that I wanted to raise and check again in our following meeting. I always reviewed these notes and accordingly revised the interview prompts before the second and third cycle of meeting participants.

I employed the same techniques as I did in the group interviews. First, I asked the questions in English and then my Iranian colleague translated them into Persian when needed. All participants were informed that they could always switch to Persian as they wished, and they did not have to speak English during the interviews. Similar to the group interviews, all the participants used Persian in the majority of their responses. They occasionally used English while providing short and simple answers and Nader was the only one who additionally used Turkish. All the interviews were audio-recorded, stored on my laptop, and uploaded to Google Drive.

3.6.3 Class Observations and Field Notes

Class observations took place in three different classes and enabled me to see all my participants in a class environment. They lasted nine weeks and each session took 90 minutes. At the end of the data collection process, the observation data reached to 40.5 hours. I decided to attend the participants' listening and speaking courses because I expected to witness more peer interactions during these lessons. Since I only focused on the interactions between my participants and their classmates especially during pair work and group work activities, I did not prefer to record these sessions. I usually sat in the back rows of the classes, silently observed the interactions between the participants and their classmates and took field notes when necessary. Immediately after these sessions, I made a clean copy of my notes on a Word document while my memories were fresh. In this way, I was not only able to provide more details about the incidents but also generate "thick descriptions" (Geertz, 1973) about the participants' profile by including the information I obtained from background questionnaires. I

did not keep these documents only in chronological order but also classified them according to the classes I observed so that I could easily find relevant details when needed.

3.6.4 Reflective Journals

Participants were also asked to write weekly entries to compensate for the weeks that we could not meet. They needed to reflect on their language learning progress and the interactions between them and their peers in these weekly tasks. Although they were allowed to create their entries in their language too, they always preferred to use English. I also provided them with prompts that would guide them and make them stick to the main topic while writing. I first shared these reflective journals with participants through Google Forms on Fridays and asked them to submit their entries by Monday evenings. However, the participation level in these weekly tasks was very low. Only a few participants submitted their reflective journals regularly although I shared the link to the new tasks on our WhatsApp group and reminded them about the deadlines every week. Therefore, I decided to give them printed copies and asked them to bring their written journals back to my office before the deadline (see Appendix F). Reflective journals took eight weeks in total. I wanted to skip the exam weeks so as not to cause the participants to feel overwhelmed because of an additional responsibility.

3.7 Data Analysis

I adopted a thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006) approach in the current study because I collected only qualitative data and I needed “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It was an iterative and ongoing process. I had three main data sources: group and individual semi-structured interviews, field notes based on class observations and reflective journals. Since the first audio-recorded interview, I had been listening to the tracks and getting familiar with the raw interview data. In addition, I often reviewed my field notes and the participants’ reflective journals to track my participants’ progresses. I noted down the

issues and comments that caught my attention in class observations, participants' weekly entries and semi-structured interviews. I benefited from these notes in determining the focal excerpts.

As soon as the data collection process ended, I began transcribing the interview recordings. For this purpose, I used Word to transcribe the individual and group interviews. I listened to the recordings several more times and reviewed the transcribed data. I highlighted sections that I thought might be related to my research questions and took notes next to them. Once the transcription was complete, I focused on these highlighted sections and my notes. First, I summarized the relevant excerpts using a “summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 3). After generating codes, I reread the transcribed data and looked for any connections and patterns between the codes. I paid particular attention to recurrent and salient issues and categorized these emerging codes under sub-themes. To validate these categories and support them with additional evidence, I also adopted cross-case analysis (Patton, 1990). I searched for similar codes and categories in different participants and data sources such as the reflective journals and field notes. After finalizing them, I grouped the categories based on the relevant literature and my research questions, ultimately generating the main themes. After formulating my codebook, I requested one of my colleagues to contribute my research as the second coder. Upon his feedback and contributions, I modified and finalized the codes and categories used in the current study.

3.8 Trustworthiness

To ensure the validity of my findings in this qualitative multiple-case study, I followed Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four main criteria of trustworthiness, which are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. I utilized various strategies to achieve these criteria. Four types of triangulation suggested by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999) were utilized in the current research. Firstly, I used method triangulation by collecting data through different sources such as group and individual interviews, reflective journals and class observations. Secondly, triangulation of sources was established through analyzing different sources of data such as interview data, field notes and the participants' reflective journals. I had a chance to cross-check information and validate my findings from different perspectives. Besides, I

interacted with the raw data at different times and often reviewed my interpretations. Thirdly, analyst triangulation was used to minimize researcher bias and ensure more reliable interpretations. I asked one of my colleagues to be my second coder in the data analysis process and to provide feedback to me. Finally, I interpreted the collected data based on two main theories: the language socialization theory and the poststructuralist theory of identity. In this way, I achieved theoretical triangulation. Furthermore, I also conducted prolonged engagement to enhance credibility. I did not only depend on the participants' narratives and journals, but I attended their academic listening and speaking lessons on a weekly basis as well. Thus, I had a chance to observe their socialization progress by tracking the in-class interactions with their classmates throughout one semester. To enhance the transferability of my study, I provided thick descriptions of the research context, design, procedures and my participants' background, classroom settings and socialization experiences.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided details about what methods I adopted to investigate EFL Iranian learners' socialization experiences and L2 identity construction. In this chapter, I will present my analysis of the qualitative data that I collected from individual and group interviews, class observations, and reflective journals. Before moving on the detailed analysis, I will provide short information about the individual participants for the contextualization of the findings.

4.2 Vignettes of the Participants

All the participants were students in an English preparatory program at a private university in Turkey. Four of them were male and two were female. They were all native speakers of Persian, with ages ranging from 18 to 42. This range reflects that half of them were undergraduate students while the other half were graduate students. None of them had been abroad before aside from Turkey. Since all the participants' programs offered English-medium education, they were required to take an English proficiency exam. However, none of them passed the exam, which is why they became preparatory students. Based on the results of the Cambridge English Placement Test taken at the beginning of the academic year, their English level was detected as pre-intermediate, and they were all placed in classrooms offering English courses at this level. The following sections provide short information about each participant's background and socialization process.

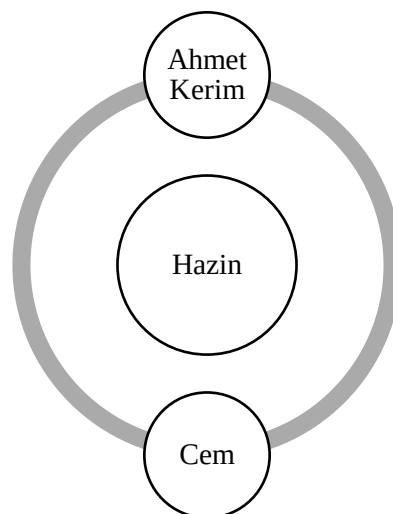
4.2.1 Hazin's Vignette

Hazin was 30 years old. He also knew a little French. After developing his English skills, he was planning to enhance his French knowledge. When the current study started, he had been

living in Turkey for around nine months. His Turkish language knowledge did not go beyond a few Turkish words. He was living in a dormitory which was not very close to the campus. He had one Iranian, one Moroccan and one Turkish roommate. So, English was the only language that everyone in the room could use. He completed his bachelor's degree in architecture in Iran and moved to Turkey to pursue his master's degree. He enrolled in a Master of Business Administration (MBA) program at the focal university and was placed in Classroom A with Nader and Yasmin. Apart from these three participants, the rest of the students in the class were Turkish. Despite the presence of other Iranian students, Hazin interacted more with Turkish students than with Nader and Yasmin. However, this does not mean he completely isolated himself from them. Based on my observations and his own accounts, his relationship with Ahmet Kerim and Cem was much closer than with Nader and Yasmin (see Figure 1). Additionally, he once attempted to socialize with a group of Turkish students outside of class. Beyond that, his interactions with other students were limited to the classroom environment. He appeared somewhat reluctant and indifferent about meeting or interacting with more students.

Figure 1

Hazin's social circle in classroom A

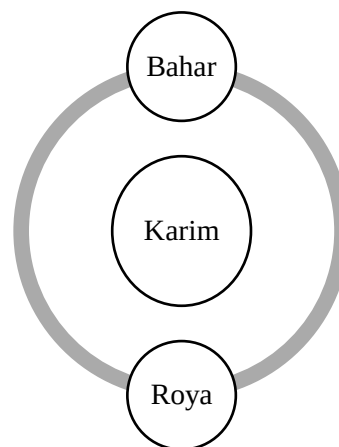


4.2.2 Karim's Vignette

Karim was 28 years old. English was the only language that he could speak additionally. Although he had travelled to Turkey several times before because his sister was living in Turkey, his Turkish proficiency was limited to only a few words like Hazin. He completed his previous education in Iran, so this was his first sojourn experience. Karim lived with his sister on the European side in Istanbul. He registered to the same master's program with Hazin. He was in Classroom B together with Roya and another Iranian student, Bahar. Unlike Hazin, Karim and Yasmin's classroom, there were also other international students from different countries such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia in this class. However, the only students whom Karim regularly communicated with were Roya and Bahar. Although he had short connections with other students, he did not develop any further relationships with them. In fact, he did not talk to them unless it was necessary. He did not attempt to have plans with any of his non-Iranian classmates outside of the class except for his encounter with a couple of his Turkish classmates in a bus station. During our interviews, he described himself as an introverted person. That might have been one of the reasons why he could not expand his social circle.

Figure 2

Karim's social circle in classroom B

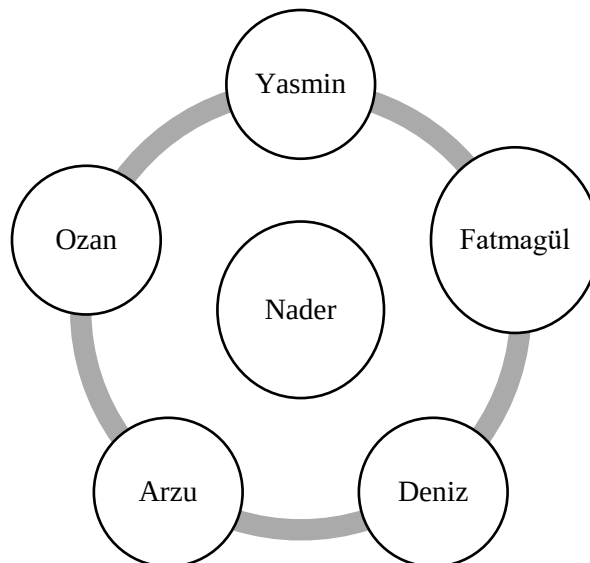


4.2.3 Nader's Vignette

Nader was 18 years old. He moved to Turkey with his family in 2022 and he also completed the senior year of his high school education in Turkey. Therefore, he was fluent in Turkish. He registered to a computer engineering undergraduate program at the focal university. Like Hazin, he was in Classroom A. My observation notes and his narratives showed that he was the most sociable participant in the study. It was probably because he could speak Turkish very fluently and he had been living in Turkey for two years. Therefore, he could easily talk to Turkish students and was more familiar with the social norms, daily life, customs, and beliefs of the Turkish community. Since the beginning of the semester, he was friend with Yasmin, and they usually sat together. As they kept having the same place, Nader developed close relationships with the Turkish students sitting close to Yasmin and him. These students were Arzu, Deniz, Fatmagül, and Ozan. In addition to this group of Turkish students, he formed connections with almost the entire class, but he did not identify them as his “close” friends. Figure 3 demonstrates Nader's social circle within the boundary of his classroom:

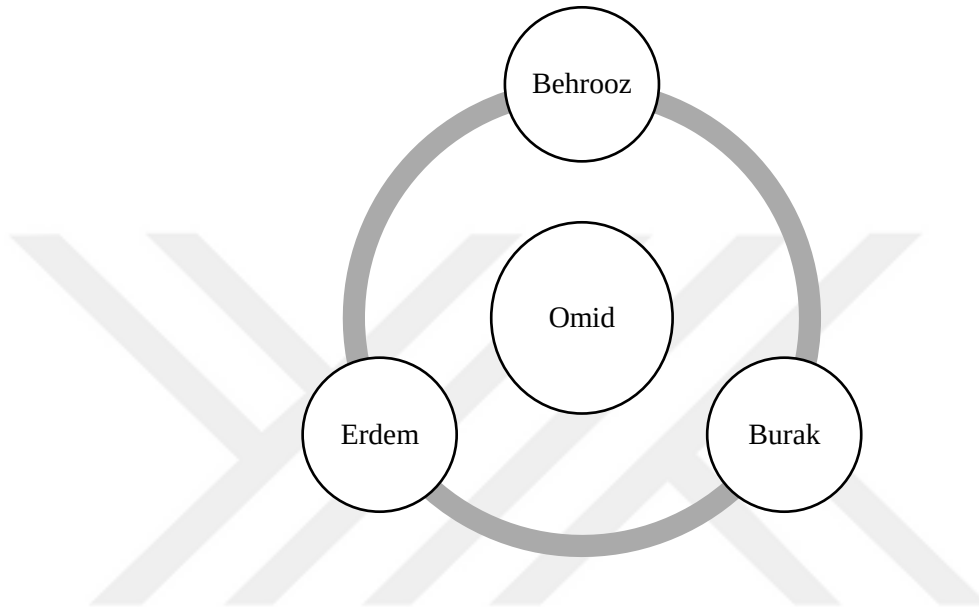
Figure 3

Nader's social circle in classroom A



4.2.4 Omid's Vignette

Omid was 18 years old. Similar to Karim, Omid had been to Turkey a couple of times before because his sister lived in Istanbul, but his visits lasted for only a few weeks. After migrating to Turkey for his higher education, he started living with his sister and brother-in-law. Omid enrolled to the software engineering department at the private university where the current study was conducted. He was placed in Classroom C together with another Iranian student, Behrooz. In the classroom, there were mostly Turkish students alongside a few more international students from diverse backgrounds. Omid was mostly interacting with Behrooz at the beginning of the semester although he already made a few Turkish friends. Behrooz and Omid were sitting close to each other and usually completing pair-work activities together unless their teacher paired them with other students. When he was supposed to work with others, I observed that he was actively talking to his partners and contributing to the assigned tasks. However, Behrooz failed owing to absenteeism in the middle of the semester. After that point, Omid began interacting more with Turkish students. He had two close Turkish classmates: Burak and Erdem. Although he was in touch with Burak and Erdem during lessons and break times, Omid did not spend any time together with them outside of the school. On the other hand, he once participated in Nader and Yasmin's social event with their own classmates at a shopping mall.

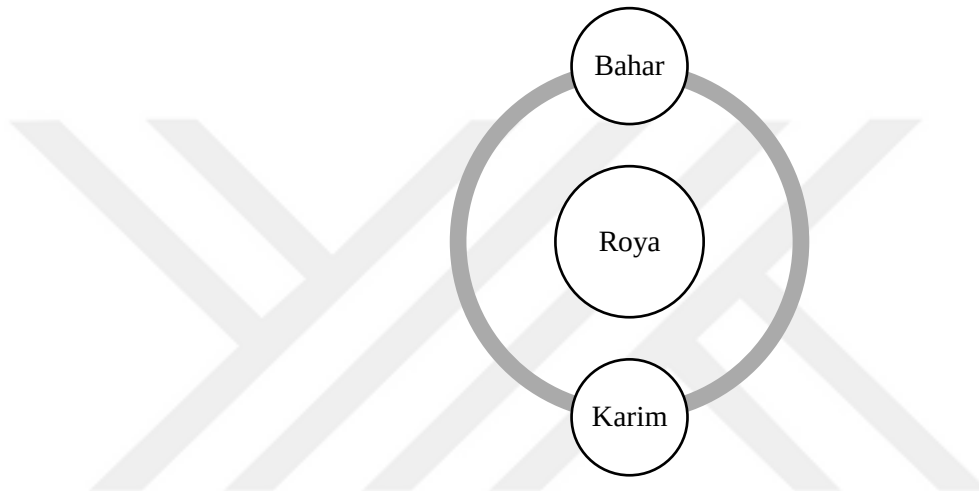
Figure 4*Omid's social circle in classroom C***4.2.5 Roya's Vignette**

Roya was the eldest participant at the age of 42. She was also married and had two children. She mentioned that they all moved to Turkey for her children's education one and half year ago. They were living together on the Anatolian side in Istanbul. Although she took Turkish courses for two semesters, she stated that she could understand but not speak Turkish fluently. Roya completed her bachelor's degree in the field of telecommunication engineering in Iran. Similar to Hazin and Karim, she wanted to pursue her master's degree at the same institution. Her master's program was data science. She was in Classroom B with Karim at the preparatory school. As mentioned in Karim's section, Roya had close relationships with Karim and Bahar. They used to go library together to study English before their classes. After Bahar moved back to Iran and dropped out of the school, I observed that she began engaging with her other classmates more, especially the Turkish ones even during break times. Nevertheless, Karim had been the only person who Roya interacted most by the end of the semester. What made Roya's

case different from Karim's was that she did not seem resistant or reluctant to form connections with other students in their classroom.

Figure 5

Roya's social circle in classroom B

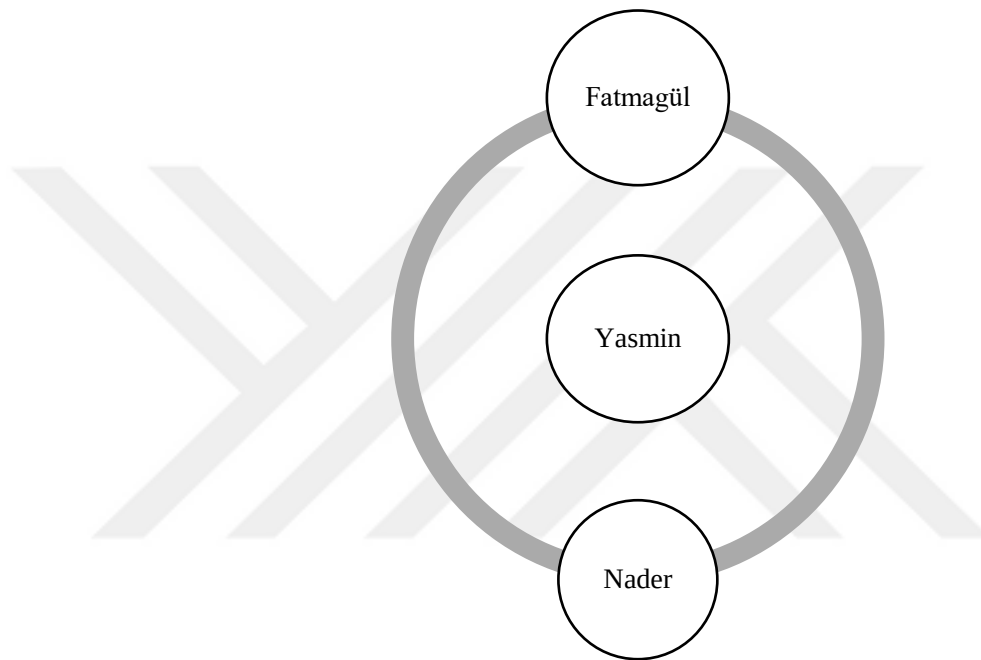


4.2.6 Yasmin's Vignette

Yasmin was 20 years old. She had migrated to Turkey with her mother around 7 months ago before I met her and her father had to stay in Iran because of his business. She was an undergraduate student, and her major was molecular engineering and genetics. Like Hazin and Nader, she was in Classroom A. Her strongest relationship was the one with Nader. Ever since the first week of classes, they stayed friends. Coming from a similar background and speaking the same native language might have deepened their relationships. She had other Iranian friends from different classrooms such as Omid and Amir. On the other hand, she mentioned that she wished to have a female friend at her age. Even though Yasmin knew Bahar and Roya, she stated that she could not get along with them because of the age gap. After a while, she got closer with a Turkish female student in her class, Fatmagül. By the end of the semester, her close social circle did not go beyond the one illustrated in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6

Yasmin's social circle in classroom A



4.3 Analysis

One of my primary aims conducting the current study was to explore how the participants socialized with their classmates in and outside of the learning environment. As a result, I focused on the interactions and specific moments between them with their classmates and how these connections provided them with opportunities to learn from each other while analyzing the collected data. Even though the participants and their peers contributed to each other's learning progress through interactions in and out of class to some extent, I found out that there were also some significant factors that hindered them from having more desired socialization experiences. Therefore, I gathered them under the theme of “desocialization” while analyzing the data. On the other hand, all the participants managed to perform successful socialization experiences to varying degrees. All the evidence related to any interactions,

relationships, or specific moments that enabled the participants to exchange linguistic or cultural information with their classmates were grouped and evaluated under the theme “socialization”. Lastly, the other significant goal of this study was to find out if language socialization experiences reflected the participants’ learner identity construction. Therefore, I analyzed any transformations, or any clues related to the participants’ learner identities under the theme “L2 identity”. In the subsequent sections, I will present my analysis in this thematic order.

4.3.1 Desocialization

For various reasons, a few participants were reluctant and resistant to even get to know their classmates and they explicitly mentioned that there was no relationship between them and their peers a few times during our interviews. During class observations, I also noticed the disconnectedness between some of the participants and their classmates in class. For example, the following fieldnote describes how unwilling they could be to talk to their non-Iranian partners even while having a group work activity:

Excerpt 1

When I entered the class, I saw Karim and his Iranian friend Bahar sitting together in the front row. Turkish students were also sitting together at the back again. I took a seat by the window. Roya was absent on that day. (...) Students were supposed to have a group work activity and the teacher wanted to decide the groups. She placed Karim and Bahar in different groups. While Bahar turned to her group members and started talking about the activity in English as soon as she was grouped with them, Karim did not even move his chair close to his group members. Students needed to imagine that wind farms would be built near their city and accordingly they would list the advantages and disadvantages of this situation after having a group discussion. During the whole activity, Karim kept his silence and did not communicate with the others. His group members were not talking to each other that much either, but they seemed like friends.

(Fieldnotes, 07/11/2023)

Even at the end of the semester, some of the participants failed to develop meaningful relationships with their classmates. Karim was one of them. As can be seen in Excerpt 1, I also observed that he was the one who had the least interaction with his non-Iranian classmates. In his class, there were two other Iranian students, Bahar and Roya. Three of them always sat close to each other in the front row. Unless their teacher asked them to work with a different partner, they had all the group and pair work activities together. Even in break times, they went out together. Whenever the teacher asked them to work with different people, Ali usually preferred to have such activities with the people sitting near the door and Roya usually went to the back. I observed that Roya still actively engaged in conversations with her non-Iranian friends whereas the only thing that Karim did was just silently listening to his new group members and answering the questions by himself as he did on the day that Excerpt 1 describes. There were times that he contributed to the group work and asked and answered questions together with his non-Iranian classmates, as well. Nonetheless, he did not participate as actively as Roya did. Furthermore, I thought that Karim's poor connections with his classmates could be unintentional, and it could be one of the things that he would have done differently from the beginning. On the contrary, it did not seem that he had such intentions:

Excerpt 2

- 1 Rabia: Would you change your relationship with your classmates if you could go back
- 2 to the beginning of the semester?
- 3 Karim: We have no relationships. What are you asking about?

(Interview, 17/01/2024)

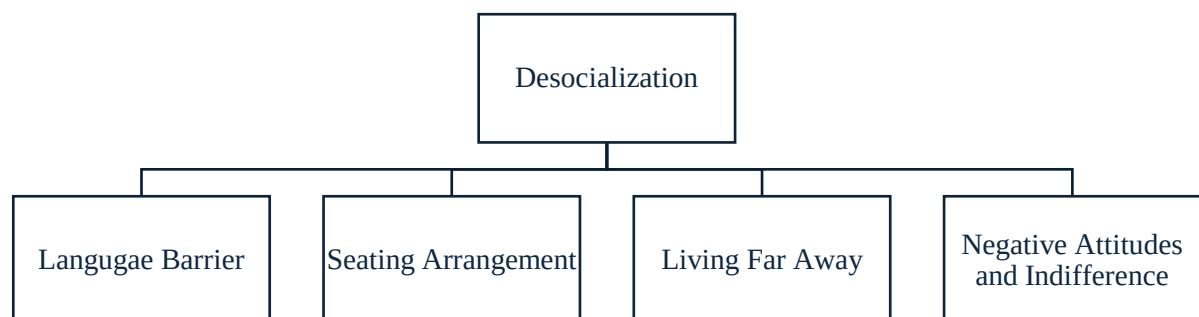
During our last individual interview, I asked Karim whether he would like to make a difference in his relationship with his classmates if he could go back to the beginning of the semester. He explicitly said that there was even no relationship that he could have improved in a sarcastic way (Excerpt 2, line 3). His response addresses an undeniable lack of social connection within the classroom setting. This situation also signals the opportunities that Karim and his classmates might have missed to learn from each other through collaboration and interaction. Unlike Karim, Omid was one of the most sociable participants in the study. Even at

the time that we had our first group interview, he stated that he already had two close Turkish friends in his class. When I asked to evaluate his relationship with them, he said “We’re friends in the classroom. In the university, we are friends but out of university, no friendship.” (Group Interview, 02/11/2023). With this comment, he acknowledged that he had already developed close relationships with them, but these interactions were only limited to the classroom environment. Outside the class, they were not spending time together. As a result, according to his definition of “friendship”, they should have probably been able to hang out and continue their dialogue outside of the class. This could have led to more opportunities for both parties to share and learn more from each other, but it did not happen for certain reasons.

Moreover, I found out that Karim and Omid were not the only participants who did not have constant connections with their classmates in and out of their classrooms. The other participants also experienced several challenges throughout their socialization process. The following parts provide the possible reasons why participants could not socialize with their classmates as expected. Figure 7 shows how I categorized those problems that appeared in the participants’ narratives, reflective journals and my field notes.

Figure 7

List of the codes under the category of desocialization



4.3.1.1 Language Barrier

One of the most important reasons why Iranian participants had poor socialization experiences was the language barrier between them and their non-Iranian classmates. Hazin, Nader, and Yasmin were the only international students in their class, the rest were Turkish students. On the other hand, the other participants shared their classrooms with a few Arabic students from different backgrounds such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, or Syria whereas Turkish ones created the majority. English is the only language that everyone can speak. However, the proficiency level of students made it difficult to freely negotiate their opinions, feelings, and beliefs with each other. As an example, the following excerpt demonstrates the significant role of sharing a mutual language in social relationships

Excerpt 3

4 Rabia: Do you have any close Turkish friends in your class?

5 Yasmin: I don't have any friends, because I cannot talk to them. There is no common
6 language.

(Group Interview, 02/11/2023)

In our first individual interview, Yasmin mentioned that she could not make any Turkish friends owing to the language barrier. Although English was expected to function as a bridge between Iranian and Turkish students in this class, Yasmin claimed that there was no common language (Excerpt 3, line 5 and 6). Probably their proficiency level did not allow them to be involved in meaningful interactions. Because it had been only one month since the school started, they may not have learned and practiced English enough to encourage them to speak to peers in the classroom yet. As a result of the poor interactions, Yasmin might have thought in this way. One month after our first interview with Yasmin, my notes below suggest that the conditions had not drastically changed in favor of her in class:

Excerpt 4

They listened to a short lecture about four different sports. Now they were asked to work in groups. First, they selected one of those sports and then created a chart showing its benefits. Nader and Yasmin were working in different groups and Hazin was absent. Yasmin's group chose team sports while Nader and his group members were focusing on culture cycling. During the discussions, both Nader and Yasmin were making a constant contribution to the group work. Nader's group was mainly speaking Turkish while the other group was using English only when communicating with Yasmin. Sometimes they spoke Turkish among themselves. Especially one of them who did not utter even one single English word. When necessary, she talked to the other lady in the group and asked her to translate to English for Yasmin. When the activity was over, the teacher told the class that they could go back to their old seats if they wanted to. Both Nader and Yasmin went back to their original chairs.

(Fieldnotes, 18/12/2023)

Despite the language barrier, I observed that both Nader and Yasmin were able to actively participate in the group task. Nader's fluency in Turkish usually facilitated the communication with his group members. His group might have felt more comfortable interacting in Turkish. However, Yasmin's group mates had to use English to be able to get her opinions. In fact, only one of them was communicating with Yasmin while the other member was only speaking Turkish. Even in the group works, being unable to understand what was being talked might have discouraged Yasmin to connect with her Turkish classmates. Besides, both Nader and Yasmin did not want to have the rest of the lesson together with their group members. They both went back to their former places to stay in their Iranian circle, which can be an indicator of important socialization challenges. This situation can be interpreted that Nader and Yasmin prioritized the ease of communication and cultural familiarity over socialization opportunities with students from different backgrounds. Another participant who suffered from the language barrier was Roya. She was more willing to interact with her non-Iranian classmates compared to Karim. Yet, the excerpt below shows that it does not mean that she had a bigger social circle:

Excerpt 5

7 Rabia: Have you tried anything new to get to know them better?

8 Roya: No. We know each other, there is no need for like new methods to start the

9 conversation or something. Whoever I sit beside, I can make friends. And

10 usually Iranians are like this so we don't have problems with this. But I don't

11 feel any need to meet new people. Because of the language barrier, I think it's

12 not going to end well.

(Interview, 20/12/2023)

During the meeting that we had in the middle of the semester, she reported that she mostly talked to her Iranian friends, namely Karim and Bahar. When I asked her whether she tried anything new to make more friends from her class, she said that she could get closer to anyone sitting next to her (Excerpt 5, line 9), but there was no need to try new things, in her opinion because she already had enough friends. Even if she made new friends, she thought that it would not be long-term because they could have communication breakdowns or maybe misunderstanding as a result of the language barrier (line 11).

Not everyone was as open as Roya to make new friends. As they had difficulties and could not take their conversations more than a few words further, participants might have lost their motivation to handle this problem and look for more opportunities to new non-Iranian people. For example, Hazin was one of the participants who seemed to lose his interest in making new friends. In one of our individual interviews, he said "Still, Turkish language barrier doesn't make me want to make new friends." (Interview, 28/12/2023). He also pointed out that the reason why he did not intend to meet new people was the language barrier. However, by "Turkish language barrier," I think that he likely meant the absence of a common language that both he and the Turkish students could speak fluently. Since he was not interested in learning Turkish, as he reported in the interviews, and focused solely on improving his English and French skills, I do not believe that Turkish was the barrier to forming deeper connections with

his Turkish classmates. Instead, he probably saw the limited English proficiency of both him and his peers as the main obstacle. On the other hand, surely, if he had been able to speak Turkish, he could have had more opportunities for social integration to the local community and also developing an understanding of the host culture. He could have attended more social events and expanded his social circle more easily. In contrast to Hazin, Yasmin maintained her attempts to form more connections with her Turkish classmates. In the excerpt below, she provided more details about how a new friendship appeared between her and one of the Turkish girls in her class:

Excerpt 6

- 13** Yasmin: Ah, that day we found something in common. She has done something, and
14 realized, and we did the high five and we became friends because of that and
15 we say hi to each other. We are friends, but we don't talk much because it's
16 really difficult for us.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

Yasmin, who was suffering from a lack of female friendships in our first meeting, finally managed to make her first Turkish girlfriend. While sharing this update with me, she seemed very happy and proud. Besides, she mentioned that she got close with Nader and Omid, and she spent her free time before and after the lessons or during break times with them. Nevertheless, she was highly willing to have a female friend, and she tried to hang out with Roya and Bahar. She might have chosen them because they were also Iranian female students in similar situations, and she probably thought she could discuss topics of interest to women, which Nader and Omid might not care about. Furthermore, she could develop a much deeper connection with them than with the Iranian boys. However, she said, “We have almost nothing in common.” (Interview, 09/11/2023). Since Roya was 42 and Bahar was 27 years old, it might have been challenging for Yasmin and them to find something in common to talk about. The Turkish female student whom she talked about in Excerpt 6 was at her age, and she may have had the potential to become a close friend whom Yasmin had been looking for since the beginning of

the semester, with an exception of the mutual mother language. As Yasmin mentioned above, the language barrier made it “really difficult” for them to get to know each other better (line 15 and 16). Their interaction was limited to only greeting at that moment. Although all the participants experienced similar problems as a result of speaking different languages or coming from different backgrounds with their classmates, it did not deter all of them from connecting with non-Iranian students. They employed various techniques to deal with those communicational problems:

Excerpt 7

- 17 Nader: My classmates can't speak Turkish English very well. I can see it. Maybe the
18 yesterday we went to the restaurant. Me, Omid and Yasmin. And the two girls
19 in my class. Omid told them “Can you speak English? We can't speak
20 Turkish.” and they answer to us “We can't speak English. Please forgive us.”
21 And I was a translate.

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

For example, Excerpt 7 illustrates how his Iranian friends used Nader as a mediator during their interactions with Turkish students. In another out-of-school gathering, Omid asked the Turkish students to speak English because he and Yasmin could not understand Turkish (line 19 and 20). However, the Turkish ones said that they could not speak English well (line 20). So, as a solution, Omid and Yasmin requested Nader to translate what they were saying into Persian once the Turkish students began dominating the conversation by speaking their own language. Although it initially seemed like a good opportunity for Nader to practice his language skills, his translation duty presented additional challenges:

Excerpt 8

- 22 Rabia: Did you have fun? How was it?
23 Nader: No, not fine. Because I'm not a good translate and I was boring. Because I had

24 to speaking Turkish and I translate to Persian. It's so bad, I prefer to hang out
 25 here just Iranian people. Or Turkish people only. It is too better for me. I prefer
 26 to go out with only Turkish or only Iranian people, so I don't have to translate
 27 and everything. The whole conversation will be in one language only.

(Interview, 20/12/2023)

The circumstances were different for Nader because knowing Turkish made negotiations with his Turkish friends much easier. However, in Excerpt 8, he did not seem to enjoy being a translator during the meetings with his Turkish and Iranian friends. Even though he had a good command of Turkish and could speak both Turkish and Persian fluently, he thought that he was not good at translating (line 23). Since he needed to translate the whole conversation simultaneously, this may have put a great amount of pressure on him and consequently, he might have felt stressed. Besides, he was less likely to contribute to the ongoing dialogue because he was busy with the translation. As a result, as he mentioned in the excerpt above, he felt bored (line 23). After this challenging experience, he stated that he would prefer to hang out only with either Turkish people or the Iranian ones in line 25 and 26. In this way, all of them would be able to speak only one language and Nader would not need to translate anything (line 27). His comments show that the stress of translating negatively affected his social relationships and made him less willing to engage in multilingual social settings in the future. It was apparent that he did not experience many communication difficulties in other situations. During in- and out-of-class interactions, he could easily handle any communication difficulties by switching to Turkish while talking to his Turkish classmates. The only situation that he wanted to avoid was being a mediator between his Iranian and Turkish friends. This made me wonder what he would do if he did not know Turkish:

Excerpt 9

28 Rabia: Different question for you, Nader. if you didn't know Turkish, do you think
 29 that you would be able to make a similar connection with your classmates?

30 Nader: Of course not. That's why I learn English.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

In our last group interview at the end of the semester, I asked the participants to evaluate their relationship with Turkish students, and Nader reported that he had a good rapport with almost everyone in the classroom. Depending on his answer, I directed the question in Excerpt 9 and aimed to find out whether Nader thinks that he would be able to form the same connections with his Turkish classmates if he did not know Turkish. As I guessed, he commented that it would not be possible. His response, “Of course not.”, indicates how essential he viewed his Turkish proficiency in forming connections with his classmates. He was likely aware that he would have gone through a much more challenging semester as his Iranian friends did. By saying “That’s why I learn English.” (line 30), I believe he meant that English would play a much more crucial role in contacting Turkish peers, so he would try to learn it harder in that case. To deal with communication problems and increase his connections with non-Iranian students, he would probably employ similar strategies as well. Aside from taking advantage of Nader’s advanced Turkish proficiency, using Google Translate and body language were two other popular strategies that the other participants used to cope with communication breakdowns:

Excerpt 10

31 Omid: If they can't speak English, they speak Turkish and I ask for Nader what they

32 say.

33 Rabia: How about when Nader is not there? What do you do when you cannot

34 understand something?

35 Omid: We will find a way to understand each other.

36 Rabia: We want to learn that way actually.

37 Omid: We ask more questions and finally, we find out. Or body language. Or Google

38 Translate.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

When I asked Omid whether he had any difficulties while communicating with his Turkish friends and if yes, how he had handled these issues, he told me that he usually asked Nader for help to translate what Turkish ones were trying to say (Excerpt 10, line 31). However, not all the time Nader would be around him, especially during the class time considering that Nader and Omid were in different classrooms. Therefore, the follow-up question was related to what he did in case of Nader's absence (line 33 and 34). First, he stated that he tried to ask additional questions probably to have more idea about what the other person was struggling to tell (line 37). It is likely that the other participants might have employed the same strategy consciously or unconsciously, but none of them except for Omid voiced it during the interviews. On the other hand, almost all of them used Google Translate to translate what they wanted to say from Persian to English or Turkish. Furthermore, Yasmin also remarked that her Turkish friends surprised her once by sending Persian messages by getting help from Google Translate while texting on social media (Interview, 14/11/2023). Lastly, body language was another way that made it possible for them to acquire a quick and simple solution for communication difficulties. Evidently, there were times when the problem was more than a small miscommunication, but the participants still wanted to be part of social events:

Excerpt 11

39 Yasmin: Once I try to bring Amir with me because he also cannot speak Turkish.

40 So, I wouldn't be alone and bored. But sometimes three of them can talk and I

41 cannot. But now, with Amit, two-two.

42 Rabia: That's brilliant.

43 Yasmin: Amir was trying to speak Turkish, so it was not that successful. I mean, what I

44 had in mind was not like that.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

To illustrate, in Excerpt 11, Yasmin talked about one of the attempts that she hoped to have a good time with her Turkish friends without minding the language barrier. She had already tried to meet her new Turkish friends out of the class, but she mentioned that they mostly spoke Turkish to each other, and she felt left out and bored in such gatherings. Therefore, she decided to invite one of her Iranian friends, Amir, to their next plan. Similar to Yasmin, Amir was studying in the preparatory program at the same university. He was in a different classroom, but Yasmin and he had become friends because Iranians seemed to create a very active social circle across the university as I observed and heard from the participants. They did not only meet the Iranians in the English preparatory program but also the ones in the Turkish preparatory program and even a few more who had passed the proficiency exam and already began studying their major. While inviting Amir to the plan with her Turkish classmates, Yasmin thought she would not feel bored if the Turkish ones spoke Turkish again because she would be able to speak Persian to her friend, Amir (Excerpt 11, line 40 and 41). In addition, by having another non-Turkish speaker with her, she hoped to create a more balanced dynamic ("two-two") where she would not feel outnumbered by Turkish speakers. Yet, things did not go well as she had planned despite her efforts. According to what she told us during the interview, Amir wanted to try practicing Turkish with the others. Her comment, "... what I had in my mind was not like that." (Excerpt 11, line 43 and 44), makes it clear that the outcome did not meet her expectations. This probably caused her to feel disappointed and frustrated. This situation also highlights the difficulty of integrating into a group where the dominant language is not her own. Whereas Yasmin was looking for solutions and new strategies to participate in social events despite a series of challenges and mishaps, Hazin seemed to quit trying to socialize outside the classroom after not a very successful experience:

Excerpt 12

- 45** Rabia: How about your relationship with your friends outside the class. For instance,
- 46** let's say you are going to somewhere or you are going to have a plan. Who
- 47** would you hang out? And what would you do?
- 48** Hazin: Once we went out to Taksim with Cem, Başak, Zelal and Selin.

(...)

49 Rabia: Why didn't you hang out more?

50 Hazin: Because it was difficult to talk. We were struggling.

(Interview, 28/12/2023)

Hazin told me that he and his Turkish classmates went to Taksim together one day after the lesson (Excerpt 12). This was the first and last plan that Hazin had spent time with non-Iranian students outside of the classroom environment. When I asked what they did during this meeting, he did not give me many details. He just said that they walked around a little bit and went to a restaurant to have dinner. Nevertheless, he was aware that they were all having a hard time maintaining the dialogue (line 50). To illustrate, Hazin's use of the word "struggling" underscores the difficulty of navigating social situations in a second language. This also points out how language barriers can impact the quality of social interactions. Because Hazin and his friends, as non-native speakers of English, could not fully engage in conversations owing to their poor English proficiency, this likely led to a surface-level exchange that hindered deeper connections. Furthermore, repeated negative experiences might lower learners' confidence in their language skills. Consequently, it probably reduced his motivation to engage in future social events and caused him to decide not to have such plans with Turkish students outside of the class anymore. Towards the end of the semester, his lack motivation turned to a kind of resistance. Even the times when he had to talk to his Turkish classmates, he stopped making any effort to enhance the quality of their conversations. The following excerpt exemplifies one of such situations:

Excerpt 13

51 Rabia: Was it like a challenge or difficulty?

52 Hazin: Like communication problems. Yes, we had.

53 Rabia: And it will be similar to the other questions we discussed before, but how did

54 you deal with those difficulties?

55 Hazin: I didn't do anything. I kept going the same way.

(Interview, 17/01/2024)

Alongside those who tested diverse techniques to enhance the quality of their communication with Turkish and international students, there were also a few participants like Hazin who was resistant to take any actions to handle the language setback. Rather than seeking a solution, Excerpt 13 demonstrates that he adopted a passive approach. He did nothing about how to resolve the miscommunication even though he saw such communication breakdowns as a challenge. Having such problems constantly might have discouraged him. Or it is possible that they were not talking about an important topic, and he did not care to pass his message correctly to the other person at that time.

4.3.1.2 Seating Arrangement

While I was joining lessons for the class observations, something caught my attention. All the Iranians except for Hazin usually sat in the front row. In Karim and Roya's classroom, the situation was a little strange because the classroom seemed to be divided into three zones. The first zone was the middle front row where Bahar, Karim, and Roya always sat, the second one was near the door where the Arabic students sat and finally, the back rows were where Turkish students always seated themselves. As I observed, whenever the teacher asked students to have pair work or group work activities, students in those three zones were not usually selecting anyone from a different zone as their partners. I think that this separation could be an influential factor that led participants to have fewer opportunities to socialize with students from different countries and backgrounds. First, I wanted to find out why Iranian students always sat in the front row only because this situation was not exclusively unique to Roya and Karim's classroom. Nader, Omid, and Yasmin also preferred sitting in the same place in their classes:

Excerpt 14

56 Rabia: Is there any specific reason why you sit in the front all the time?

57 Karim: We're always late and they sit there (back), and this is the only place left.

58 There are some naughty boys there. I don't want to sit with them because I

59 don't want to be considered as one of their members. One of those naughty
 60 students do the exercises for everyone, sign for everyone and the other side,
 61 they are really close. They just talk to each other. They are noisy a little bit.
 62 Also, three Arabic speakers in our classroom, and they are separated from us
 63 and them. It's like there are three states in the classroom, so the place left for
 64 us is the front.

(Interview, 22/11/2023)

When I asked about the reason to Karim in Excerpt 14, he said that other students had already selected their seats when they came to the classroom because Iranian students were always late. So, there was no other place for them to sit once they arrived every day. In the following parts of our interview, he also added that he was diagnosed with ADHD and that is why, it would be better for him to be placed near the board and teachers (Interview, 22/11/2023). In this way, he reported that he was able to concentrate on what was taught better. Furthermore, he thinks that the Turkish group who sat in the back row did “naughty” things such as signing the attendance sheet on behalf of their friends or talking excessively among themselves and disturbing others (Excerpt 14, line 59, 60 and 61). Hence, in his opinion, if he sat somewhere else near that group, he might have been labeled as “one of their members” (line 58 and 59). It can be concluded that he cared about his image, and he did not want to cause other people to have a wrong impression about him.

In the last group interview, the participants reflected on the relationships that they had formed with their classmates including both Turkish and international ones throughout the whole semester. I attempted to find out whether they had any chances to learn from their peers in class or vice versa:

Excerpt 15

- 65 Rabia: Do you remember any specific examples that you helped your classmates or
 66 the opposite?
- 67 Karim: We only help each other, Iranians. They don't talk to us. We don't talk to
 68 them.
- 69 Rabia: No connection. Is your answer the same? Did you have any opportunity or any
 70 chance to help your classmates? Non-Iranian friends?
- 71 Roya: The gap between Turkish students and Iranians and Arabs made us not to be in
 72 touch with each other. That's why we usually work with each other, help each
 73 other, and sometimes the foreigner ones we help them. They help us.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

As can be seen in Excerpt 15, both Karim and Roya agree that as Iranian students, they usually help each other. Karim asserted that there was almost no connection between them and the others by saying “They don't talk to us. We don't talk to them.” (line 67 and 68). From Roya's perspective, this disconnection between the different groups of students stemmed from the seating arrangements (line 71 and 72). In her further remark, she also mentioned that their Arabic classmates and they sometimes helped each other. As can be understood, the interaction between Turkish and Iranian students in this classroom was relatively lower.

Hazin is the only student among the participants who chose a different place away from people's attention. Hazin, Nader, and Yasmin shared the same classroom. The problem was that their classroom was not quite convenient for learning and teaching because there was a column in the middle of the room and the majority of the students always sat on the left side of the classroom. A few students sitting on the right side were like hidden because the teacher could neither see nor interact with them unless he walked up to the other side. Nader and Yasmin were always seated on the left side of the classroom while Hazin preferred to sit on the right side.

Although they changed their seats only a few times, Nader and Yasmin had been sitting in the front row throughout the whole semester. One day, I attended their listening and speaking course for the class observation. When I entered the classroom, I saw only Nader and thought that the others were absent on that day. So, I located myself somewhere at the back so that I could easily observe Nader and his actions. At the end of the lesson, I saw Hazin leaving the classroom and then I realized that he was in the classroom the whole time, but I could not see him because of the column between us (Fieldnotes, 20/11/2023). Since I think that it must be difficult for someone who sits behind the column to follow the lesson and listen to the teacher, I asked Hazin whether there was any specific reason why he always sat there:

Excerpt 16

- 74 Rabia: Last time I visited your class, I saw you sitting on the other side of the class,
75 and Kerim and I think the other person were sitting in front of you. Do they sit
76 always there?
- 77 Hazin: Yeah.
- 78 Rabia: Is there any specific reason why you sit there?
- 79 Hazin: Since the other side is really crowded and everyone speaks Turkish and I don't
80 understand anything, so I found my peace there.
- 81 Rabia: This is like your comfort zone.
- 82 Hazin: Yeah.

(Interview, 30/11/2023)

His response made me realize how much Turkish students spoke Turkish among themselves. Because he could not understand what they said, Hazin decided to stay away from that group. In addition, according to what Hazin shared with us during the interviews, there were two Turkish male students who usually sat close to Hazin's place. As they spent time together

on the right side of the classroom, they seemed to build a close friendship over there. This might have led him to think that he “found his peace there” (line 80).

In one of our meetings, Nader complained that he could not have any chance to meet some people in the class although they had spent almost two months together. I suggested that he could have a seat close to those students and this could create opportunities for him to engage in interactions with them in Excerpt 17:

Excerpt 17

- 83** Rabia: For instance, you could have changed your seats to meet those people. Why
84 didn't you do that? You always sit in the front row.
85 Nader: Actually, I was sitting there in the beginning, and we talked a little bit, but
86 right after that I became closer to some other friends. So, I would sit close to
87 them.

(Interview, 15/01/2024)

As a response to my suggestion, he explained why he kept sitting in the same place. It turns out that he had developed close relationships with people sitting around him (line 86 and 87). He should have enjoyed their company because he did not seem willing enough to change his place so that he could form new friendships. Moreover, socializing with people around him might have provided him with some sort of membership. Now, he sounded reluctant to leave his small community behind himself.

Omid's case had some similarities and differences with the other participants in terms of seating arrangement. Firstly, he was not the only Iranian student in his classroom. He had a friend named Behrooz. When Behrooz was in class, they mostly talked to each other and had activities together. Also, they usually had seats in the middle front part of the classrooms. However, Behrooz could not attend many of the classes and failed eventually because students were allowed to miss only 25% of the total class hours according to the preparatory school policy. As Behrooz kept skipping classes, Omid started contacting with other students more. He

had no other option than working with a non-Iranian student when it was time to work in groups, discuss topics, or ask questions. As an example, my notes in Excerpt 18 provide details about an unexpected update in Omid's seating preference:

Excerpt 18

It was surprising to see that Omid was sitting in a different seat than his usual place. Although his Iranian friend was in class, he decided to sit next to his close Turkish friend, Burak. On that day, they had two pair-work activities and Omid worked with Burak in both. First, they were asked to discuss their eating habits and fitness with a partner. Both Omid and his Turkish friend seemed to equally contribute to the task. They were actively speaking during the discussion. They mostly spoke English, but sometimes Burak switched to Turkish. (...) Apart from the pair-work, the interaction between them continued. They were doing a vocabulary exercise. After completing the task individually, Omid and his partner compared their answers and helped each other. While interacting, they were using a combination of English and Turkish.

(Fieldnotes, 12/12/2023)

One day when I entered the classroom to observe Omid's listening and speaking lesson, I remember that I was surprised to see him sitting in the second back row next to his close Turkish friends. Omid, who usually sat right next to Behrooz and had the majority of his in-class interactions with him, seated himself near someone else by his choice. Therefore, I felt that I needed to learn how this happened and asked him about the details in our individual interview:

Excerpt 19

- 88** Rabia: OK. But I saw you sitting in a different place this week. Sitting next to your
- 89** Turkish friends. You changed your place.
- 90** Omid: Oh, I was sleepy. I wanted to sleep.
- 91** Rabia: Can we say that now you don't have any problem sitting in a different place?

92 Now, you feel the same comfort when you are changing your place?

93 Omid: I got used to it. It's not difficult like before.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

He just said, “I wanted to sleep.” (Excerpt 19, line 90). According to his claim, he looked for a place away from the teacher’s attention so that he could sleep as he wished. However, what caught my attention was that he was not entirely sleeping during the lesson. They had two pair-work activities on that day and he and his Turkish friend, Burak, were actively completing each task together. In addition, I saw that they had short conversations among themselves and helped each other while answering the questions in the book, as well. Furthermore, he mentioned previously in the same interview that he could be a little bit silent and introverted when he met people for the first time (Interview, 14/12/2023). Therefore, I asked him if he felt comfortable enough around those Turkish students now, he stated, “I got used to it.” (line 93). This development may have affected his communication with his peers positively. Since he felt more comfortable around his classmates, he could easily initiate conversations with them, ask and answer questions. This might have created more room for socialization for him.

4.3.1.3 *Living Far Away*

Of six participants, only Omid and Karim lived relatively close to the campus. For others, it could take up to 6 hours to come to school and go back to their homes every day. Roya and Yasmin lived on the Anatolian side of Istanbul while Hazin and Nader lived in a very distant part of the European side. They needed to take at least three vehicles to arrive at school. Therefore, the amount of time that they could spend around the campus was very limited. This situation negatively affected their chances to hang out with their classmates after or before class. They had been able to socialize outside only a couple of times in one semester.

As an example, once I asked Nader if he had ever spent time outside with his peers after class, he straightforwardly said “I don’t have time to spend time in the outside and my house is very far away.” (Interview, 20/12/2023). Additionally, he made the same comment in his reflective journal, “I really like to hang out with my friends, but I don’t have time and energy.” (Reflective Journal, 03/01/2024). The reason was not that he did not have any intention to come

together with his friends, but it was that he needed to leave the school as soon as the class was over, so he could be at home on time because his home was far from the campus. He should have felt exhausted because of transportation, as well. Therefore, he could not spare any time and energy for social plans outside. Likewise, Excerpt 20 illustrates that Yasmin suffered from the same problem:

Excerpt 20

- 94 Yasmin: I have lunch before I start my lesson. Then I can go out with my friends if
 95 there is any plan. The plan would be only for half an hour because the longer
 96 we stay the latest I arrive.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

She was not as strict as Nader about not hanging out after class and she was open to spare time for her friends. On the other hand, she set a time limit for herself for such plans. She could only have “half and an hour” plans (line 95) with her friends because she did not want to go home late. Since it was a very limited amount of time and it was not enough to go to distant places, she probably would prefer to do something around the campus area. Unlike Yasmin, Roya did not even have that flexibility:

Excerpt 21

- 97 Roya: We don't do anything else. Just during the break time we're in touch. And after
 98 it's over, I go home directly because it's a long way. It takes two or more hours
 99 to go home and come back.

(Interview, 17/11/2023)

Roya was married with two children. Therefore, it must have been even more challenging for her to take care of her children and do chores in addition to her responsibilities as a student. She was probably unlikely to make more time to socialize with her friends outside. In Excerpt 21, we talked about what she did after class and whether she and her close friends

had any plans. She said, “We don’t do anything else.” (line 97) and added that they were able to spend only the break times together. She needed to go back home right after her classes were over because it could take around two hours to get home (line 98 and 99). For that reason, the only time that she could have a connection with non-Iranian friends was the class hours because they were not in touch with each other on social media platforms either. The only people whom she communicated with in and out of the classroom were Karim and Bahar.

4.3.1.4 Negative Attitudes and Indifference

Language barrier, seating arrangement and living far away were the main problems that had been experienced by the majority of the participants, and I believe their impact on the poor interaction between the participants and their non-Iranian friends was enormous. However, there were some other factors that could be important to explain why Iranian participants relatively failed to form meaningful connections with their peers. Although they were not uttered or perhaps not experienced by all the participants in the interviews, I think that they could be worth mentioning. I collected these factors under the “negative attitudes and indifference” category.

Firstly, Turkish students’ negative attitudes towards Iranian participants could be one of the critical factors that demotivated the participants to engage with them more:

Excerpt 22

100 Yasmin: As Iranians, we're sometimes disrespected in the classroom like they

101 were telling us that we're stupid because we couldn't speak Turkish. But like

102 Nader didn't have this problem because he can speak Turkish, so he was like

103 almost one of them. But for others, I feel like this is the case.

104 Rabia: Did they really tell you that you were stupid because you can't speak Turkish?

105 Yasmin: And I say to her, I can't speak Turkish. Please speak English. She told me “*Sen*

106 *aptal mısın?*” So, they were disrespectful. They make fun of my hair style

107 sometimes. Sometimes they take picture of it and to make fun of it. And this is

108 the hair style that we have in our religion.

(Interview, 10/01/2024)

For example, Yasmin mentioned two unpleasant incidents that happened to her in the classroom. In the first one, she was talking to a female student to ask about something she missed during the lesson. At one point of the conversation, the other girl started speaking Turkish. In response, Yasmin reported that she warned her and said “I don’t know Turkish. Please speak English.” (Excerpt 22, line 105). So, the other girl called her “stupid” (line 105 and 106) in Turkish. Another time, a group of Turkish students took a photograph of her hairstyle to make fun of it (line 107). As a result, Yasmin did not want to communicate with those particular students in her class. She had connections with only a few Turkish students in her class.

Similar to Yasmin’s case, Karim suggested that the reason why there was no constant communication between Iranian and Turkish students might stem from suspected racism. Furthermore, he made a connection between Iranian Azeri people and Turkish students in his class:

Excerpt 23

109 Karim: It is also Iranian Azeri people in Iran. Some of them are also like this. They
110 separate themselves from other people, so we can call them a little bit, kind of
111 like racist or something. I felt that here, as well. It's not like in a huge amount
112 that it's bothering, but you can feel. Maybe the reason that we are not
113 communicating is that they have these mindsets, even if they don't want to
114 improve it. But it is here, and I could feel that in some of them.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

He stated that Azeri people in Iran isolate themselves from other Iranians and probably see themselves superior to the other group, which is considered a racist action (Excerpt 23, line 109, 110 and 111). Karim claimed that Turkish students could have the same approach to Iranian

students in class. Therefore, it was likely that they did not talk to Iranians as a result of “these mindsets” (line 113), in his belief. He remarked that he could feel the same attitude at least in some of the students (line 111). This impression should have been discouraging for Karim, as well. Even if he wanted to get closer with his Turkish classmates before, he might have stopped trying after this experience. Lastly, participants may not have attempted to involve in many conversations with others because they did not simply want to have. They might not have needed to have any additional motives:

Excerpt 24

- 115** Rabia: Would you change your relationship with your classmates if you could go back
116 to the beginning of this semester?
117 Hazin: I don't care that much. It's not important.

(Interview, 17/01/2024)

To illustrate, Hazin made it clear that he did not give importance to the connections he had, or he could have had with his classmates by stating “I don’t care that much. It’s not important.” (Excerpt 24, line 117). His comment suggests that lack of interest or willingness might have been one of the factors contributing to the poor relationships between the participants and their classmates.

Another reason for less successful socialization was the age difference. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the age of participants ranges from 18 to 42. Considering that young students made up the greater part of the preparatory school population, it could be predicted that older participants might have had difficulties in adapting to the school environment and this might have even slowed down or obstructed their socialization process. Even though Hazin and Roya were older than him, Karim, as a 28-year-old student, was the only one who mentioned this issue a couple of times in our meetings:

Excerpt 25

- 118** Rabia: Are you happy with this? You might say that right now I don't have any

119 relationship with my classmates, but if I could go back to the beginning of the
 120 semester, I would make more friends.

121 Karim: I'm at your age. Would you go out with these kids?

(Interview, 17/01/2024)

As an illustration, in the last individual meeting, he was asked to evaluate his relationships with his classmates, but his response was “I don’t have any relationship.” (Interview, 17/01/2024). Indeed, it does not mean that he had no connection with his classmates. He engaged in short conversations in and out of the classroom environment several times. For example, he remarked that he encounters two of his classmates in the bus station and they had a short chat together. He stated, “I told them if there is something I can help you, you can always ask me that.” (Interview, 21/12/2023). Yet, these interactions were not possibly sufficient for him to acknowledge that he had a relationship with them. Therefore, I posed another question to him to learn if he would change anything in his connection with the others in the classroom if he could go back to the beginning of the semester in Excerpt 25. The question that he directed back to me (line 121) was a little surprising and enlightening for me because I did not consider the age difference as a potential problem after seeing that 42-year-old Roya was easily able to start conversations with her 18 to 20-year-old classmates. Even her Iranian friends, Karim and Bahar, had become her close friends within a very short period of time although they were also considerably younger than Roya. This question made me realize that I had neglected the fact that every individual is different from each other. Just because Roya did not have any problem with the age gap between herself and the others, it does not necessarily mean that this would not be an issue for Karim or Hazin either. By using the word “kids” (line 121), Karim made it clear that he found what his classmates did and said childish and perhaps he did not expect to learn anything from them. Hence, he set a boundary between “those kids” and himself. In the first interview, Karim mentions that he is an introverted person (Interview, 22/11/2023). So, it may not have been easy for him to meet new people. I thought that he should have felt more comfortable around his classmates after spending 14 weeks together:

Excerpt 26

- 122 Rabia: But you were together with your classmates for 14 weeks. You must feel more
 123 comfortable around them now, right?
- 124 Karim: Yes, I told them my age. They understand. Before that, they didn't know. They
 125 felt I'm doing something on purpose. This is not the real me. After they learned
 126 my age, they realized that my action and my behavior is because of the age
 127 difference.

(Interview, 17/01/2024)

He approved my opinion and also added that he told them about his age (Excerpt 26, line 124). So, in his opinion, his behaviors such as talking to younger classmates less or not hanging out with them outside became more meaningful for them at that moment. By saying “This is not real me.” (line 125), I believe that he intended to say that he would have acted differently, and more communication could have occurred between him and the other students if they were at the same age.

4.3.1.5 Summary

In this section, I analyzed the possible reasons why the participants failed to have more interactions with their classmates as I had expected. They mostly tended to have temporary relationships with others. Especially Karim and Roya had the least interaction with their classmates. Even if the other participants succeeded to form relatively long-term friendships with their peers, the number of those people was limited to 2 or 3. I believe that these participants having regular interactions with others were likely to have more opportunities to socialize and learn from each other. Based on the interviews, fieldnotes and reflected journals, I grouped the main possible reasons for the poor connection between the participants and their classmates. These are language barriers, living far away from the school and seating arrangement. There are also a few more reasons that were voiced by only some of the participants. So, I decided to

present them under the category “negative attitudes and indifference” and these subcategories are negative attitudes by Turkish students, suspected racism, age difference, and lack of interest.

4.3.2 Socialization

The participants were not entirely isolated from their Turkish and international friends in class and outside. They managed to form relationships with non-Iranian students that enabled them to socialize and have an impact on both parties’ language learning progress to some extent. I believe that the intensity and frequency of the relationship between the participants and their classmates had an impact on the quality of their socialization experiences. The more they got closer with one another, the more interactions that led to changes in their learning and L2 identity constructions were likely to occur.

As I mentioned before, Nader was the most sociable student among the participants. While the others were struggling to make connections with Turkish or other international students, Nader stated that his relationship with his Turkish classmates was “great” even in the first week:

Excerpt 27

128 Rabia: How about your relationship with your Turkish classmates in class?

129 Nader: It’s great.

130 Rabia: How did you meet them? How often do you talk to them? What do you talk
131 about?

132 Nader: The first time I remember Fatmagül is the representative in the classroom. I

133 take her number and she’s good. The first week we, our classmates, went to the

134 Starbucks and have a cup of coffee and then talk each other. It was great.

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

At the beginning of each semester, a representative student is selected so that teachers can easily connect those students to ask them to share urgent announcements with their classmates. Besides, representatives play an important role for other students in conveying their demands and complaints to the administration. Immediately after students in Nader's class selected their representative, he did not just directly go and talk to her but also got her phone number (line 132 and 133). So, this means that they had probably stayed in touch online, as well. In addition, he mentioned that he went to a coffee shop near the campus together with some of his Turkish classmates. They had a chat over there and got to know each other. According to Nader, this experience was also "great" (line 135). As can be seen, starting from the first week, Nader had shown a considerable effort to bond with his classmates.

Another positive update happened to Yasmin, who mentioned that she had no other friends rather than Nader and Omid and could not make connections with Turkish students during the first weeks:

Excerpt 28

- 135** Yasmin: These days that I was sick, I was not very good. They came to me. They
136 were really nice. I felt like they are my true friends, not only classmates, and
137 it's not important if we are not from the same country.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

Excerpt 28 shows us that she started viewing some of the Turkish students in her classroom as her "true friends" (line 136). Because she was sick and could not attend her classes for a couple of days, her friends tried to find out how she was doing. Yasmin commented that this short conversation made her feel good and she added that they were "not only classmates" (line 136). It demonstrates that the bond between them had become stronger within the time. Now, Yasmin was in a better position in terms of her connections with her classmates compared to the beginning of the semester.

Apart from Hazin, Nader and Yasmin, the other participants had Arabic students who came from countries ranging from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. Those international students might

have gone through a challenging period that the participants could empathize with since they had been studying in a foreign country, too. Thus, I thought that the participants were more likely to establish strong connections with their international classmates. Contrarily, some participants had been observed to get along with Turkish students more:

Excerpt 29

138 Rabia: How would you describe your relationship with those Arabic students?

139 Omid: Good.

140 Rabia: Better than Turkish ones?

141 Omid: No, no. We're not that close.

142 Rabia: So, you're closer to Turkish.

143 Omid: Yes.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

As an example, when Omid was directed a question about his relationship with Arabic students in his classroom, he commented that it was “good” (Excerpt 29, line 139), but not better than the one with Turkish students (line 143). He admitted that he had a comparably closer relationship with his Turkish friends, and he was not the only one:

Excerpt 30

144 Rabia: Let's you have a problem or question about an assignment. Who will be the

145 first person you talk to about it?

146 Hazin: Cem or Ahmet Kerim.

147 Rabia: Why these two people?

148 Hazin: I'm more comfortable talking to these two.

(Interview, 30/11/2023)

Even though Hazin had two other Iranian students (Nader and Yasmin) in his class, as seen in Excerpt 30, he reported that he would ask “Cem and Ahmet Kerim” (line 146) in case he had a problem or question. It was surprising to me to hear that he did not prefer to contact someone who knows Persian. In addition, feeling “more comfortable talking to these two” (line 148) might have led more interactions to occur. This progress may have encouraged Hazin to work with these two Turkish students when they were supposed to have pair work or group work activities, to go outside together in the break times, or easily share his personal problems with them, as well.

Another positive progress regarding the participants’ relationships with their classmates was reported by Roya. In our previous meetings, she mentioned that the only time that she could spend with her friends outside the class was the break times and those friends would usually be her Iranian friends. However, when I visited Roya’s class to talk to her about our next meeting, I saw her sitting with the Turkish students in a small circle at the back. Since I was in a hurry, I could not pay attention to why they were sitting like that or what they were doing, but the only thing I remember was that they were having fun. That is why I wanted to bring it up in our last individual interview:

Excerpt 31

149 Rabia: The other day when I visited your class, I saw you. You were spending your

150 break time with your classmates. I thought you were enjoying it. Can we say

151 that your relationship with them got better?

152 Roya: Yes, yes.

153 Rabia: If it's not too personal, can I ask what you were talking about when I saw you?

154 Roya: Playing UNO.

(Interview, 12/01/2024)

She remarked that she was playing UNO with her Turkish friends (Excerpt 31, line 154). This happened after Bahar, Karim and Roya’s Iranian classmate, stopped attending classes.

Normally Bahar and Roya were highly close. Roya told me that they used to go to a shopping mall and have a cup of coffee on Fridays because their class ends earlier than the other days (Interview, 20/12/2023). The fact that Bahar was back to Iran might have pushed Roya to embrace the company of her other classmates more.

The school kept accepting new international students by the middle of the semester. Hence, new people were also added to the Iranian social circle in the school. Excerpt 32 demonstrates a funny incident that happened while Omid was introducing his Turkish friends to the new Iranians:

Excerpt 32

- 155** Rabia: How about your relationship with your classmates? Do you still hang out with
156 the same people, or have you met anyone new?
- 157** Omid: I met two new Iranians. I took my Turkish friends to them because those
158 Turkish friends knew some Persian greeting and swearwords. And those
159 Iranians were surprised and shocked. I told them that they are foreigners. It
160 was a joke.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

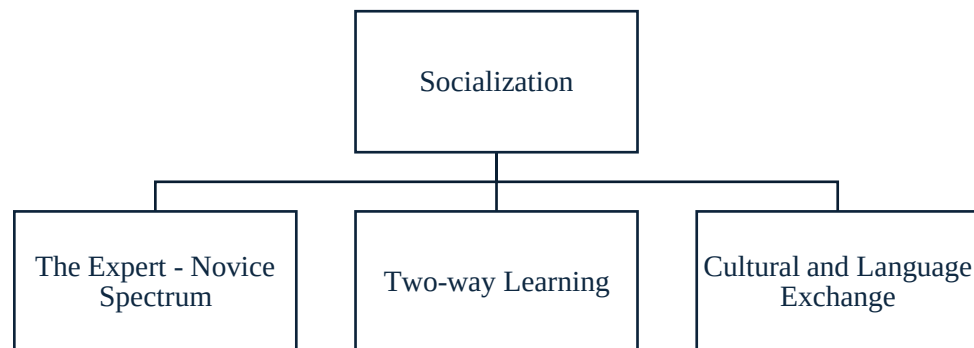
Omid had mentioned before that he taught some Persian daily expressions such as greeting words, introducing oneself to his Turkish friends. In return, they also taught similar words to him. Before Omid took the Turkish ones to the newcomers, he encouraged them to speak Persian with the Iranian ones. When the Turkish students greeted the newcomers in Persian, they probably thought that they were foreigners, as well. Then Omid said that it was a joke. This particular event shows us that Omid had been socializing his Turkish peers to Persian. In another interview, he also reported that this language exchange was bidirectional.

As it is evident, almost all participants had improved their connections with their classmates through the time that they had spent together in and out of the classroom environment

in spite of the challenges that they experienced. However, language socialization requires more than just building social relationships with other people through the target language. Individuals need to exchange linguistic or cultural knowledge with each another in such interactions. Furthermore, learners play an expert or novice role based on the information flow that occurs between them. Therefore, I categorized the further evidence into three groups (see Figure 8). The first category “the Expert – Novice Spectrum” provides my analysis of how the participants positioned themselves and their classmates. The “Two-way Learning” category illustrates how learning occurred bidirectionally between the participants and others. Lastly, “Cultural and Language Exchange” demonstrates the instances where cultural knowledge was also negotiated by the participants and their classmates, and where their language socialization occurred in other languages.

Figure 8

List of the codes under the category of socialization



4.3.2.1 The Expert- Novice Spectrum

One of the most important aims of the current study was to explore how the participants positioned themselves in the interactions that they had with their classmates in and out of the learning setting. I believe that their adjustments in conversations were unpredictable because they were international students in a foreign country where English is not officially spoken. Therefore, I wanted to include questions related to their positioning in interviews and reflective journals. In the following parts, I attempt to reveal whether the participants played expert or novice roles in the connections with their peers.

Excerpt 33

- 161** Yasmin: I think that English accents of Iranians might improve a little bit more,
162 or we pay more attention to it. So, in English accent we might try more as
163 Iranians, but Turkish people try less.

(Group Interview, 02/11/2023)

For example, Yasmin shared her comment in Excerpt 33 after being asked about the similarities and differences that she had seen between Turkish and Iranian students' language learning. She advocated that Iranian students pay more attention to the accent and as a result they try to improve themselves relatively more in this area. On the other hand, from her perspective, Turkish people do not give sufficient importance to how they speak English, and they do not try to enhance their accent enough. This illustrates that Yasmin positioned herself in a superior position in terms of accent while speaking English to her peers.

As a response to the same question about the differences and similarities among learners in his classroom, initially Karim said that they were the same. Then he clarified that both his classmates and he had weaknesses and strengths in different areas and skills:

Excerpt 34

- 164** Rabia: So, you don't see any difference between you and them?
165 Karim: Since there are differences between our skills, but I think because I know my
166 weaknesses and they also have some, they have some strength points. So, in
167 average it's going to be the same for all of us.

(Interview, 22/11/2023)

Nevertheless, he believed that those weaknesses and strengths balanced each other, and the entire class was similar in respect to English proficiency (line 166 and 167). It can be seen that Karim did not have a clear and fixed categorization of expert and novice roles for his

classmates and himself in his mind. Depending on skills or topics that learners feel more or less confident about, they might be switching their roles. Likewise, Excerpt 35 indicates that Roya, who was in the same class with Karim, had similar opinions about the level of their class:

Excerpt 35

168 Roya: As I mentioned before, I hope next semester we're going to have students with
169 different level of English because I went to other MID level classes and their
170 level was very different. One of them was very good. Some of them were
171 normal but in our classroom, everyone was at the same level so no one could
172 motivate the other people to get better.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

She believed that there must be a diversity regarding the language proficiency in classrooms so that students can push one another to improve themselves. On the other hand, she asserted that her classmates and she could not motivate each other to succeed more because there was no differentiation in their English proficiency level (line 171 and 172). In addition, she reported that she visited some other classes in the same level and saw that the level of students in those classes varies (line 169 and 170). Therefore, she hoped to be placed in a classroom with students from different levels. If the English level of students in Karim and Roya's classroom was identical as they both claimed, their chances to socialize each other to English would be possibly limited because there would not be a huge information gap among learners. On the other hand, Omid believes that the regular conversations between him and his Turkish friends could have an impact on their language learning progress:

Excerpt 36

173 Rabia: In what ways do you think you contribute to Turkish students' language
174 learning? It's not only English. Maybe they want to learn Farsi, as well. So, in
175 what ways do you think you contribute to your Turkish friends' language?

176 Omid: The normal conversation we have, I think it affects.

177 Rabia: But how does it affect? I want to learn that.

178 Omid: When two people are talking, I realize the mistake. I tell them that was the

179 mistake. They can change it.

180 Rabia: Does it happen so often?

181 Omid: Yeah. I'm not looking forward to find their problems and fix it. But sometimes

182 when I realize, I say what just happened.

183 Rabia: Do they also correct your mistakes during those conversations?

184 Omid: No.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

He claims whenever he identified a mistake in his Turkish friend's spoken language, he explicitly addressed those issues (line 178 and 179). Once I asked a question about the frequency of these immediate corrections, first he admitted that they happened often, but then he mentioned he did this action occasionally (line 181 and 182). So, we can understand that it is certain that they experienced these kinds of interventions more than once or maybe twice. However, his response to the question about whether they corrected his mistakes while having a conversation was “no” (line 184). This might imply that Omid took over the expert role in these interactions whereas his Turkish peers became novice learners. In other words, Omid provided support to his two Turkish friends in their learning process through his expertise and knowledge in English.

Hazin's remark in Excerpt 37 illustrates that he does not have any problem providing support and guidance about English to anyone who needs help in his classroom:

Excerpt 37

185 Hazin: I am willing to help the ones who asked, but not the ones who are very proud

186 and don't want to talk to us. They don't want to admit that they don't know, and

187 they need help. So, I am not volunteer to work with them.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

However, from his point of view, some of his Turkish classmates were “very proud” (line 186) to ask for help and they were not even willing to accept the fact that they did not know something, or they needed assistance. He stated that he did not want to help such students. From Excerpt 36, we can infer that he viewed himself in a position to offer help to others.

In addition to these conversational implications, I also explicitly asked the participants how they would rate their non-Iranian classmates’ and their own English proficiency on a scale of 10 to explore how they position as a learner within the entire classroom. The following table shows their ratings:

Table 3

Participants’ ratings for English proficiency

Participants	Interview 1			Interview 2			Interview 3		
	S	T	F	S	T	F	S	T	F
Hazin	6-7	6-4	-	6-7	7-2	-	7	6-7	-
Karim	3	3	4.5-5	4	3.5	4	5	6	-
Nader	6	4-5	-	6.5	4-5	-	8	3-4	-
Omid	4	3	3.5	5	4	-	6	5-6	-
Roya	6-5	4	6-5	6	5	6-7	7	6	-
Yasmin	4-5	3	-	5-6	6-8	-	5-6	5-6	-

Note. S means “self”, T means “Turkish students” and F refers to “foreigners” meaning other international students in the table above.

Hazin, Nader and Yasmin had only Turkish students in their classroom. Therefore, they were not able to rate international students' proficiency. Among these three participants, Nader was the only one who had constantly rated himself higher than Turkish students in terms of English proficiency. Yasmin placed herself in a higher position in the first interview, but then she started giving similar ratings to her classmates and herself. She reported that she was better in the beginning, but she could not study hard enough. She thought her classmates were able to improve their English skills more. Therefore, their levels were similar at the end of the semester. On the other hand, Hazin thought that there were a few hardworking and successful students, and their level was significantly better than the rest. He also must have seen himself as one of those high achiever learners because he rated his own English proficiency identically. Similarly, Roya found her own English level compatible with the foreigners.

The table also shows that Omid positioned himself higher compared to his classmates. Only in the last interview, he mentioned that there were a few Turkish students that he thought he could be at the same level with. That is why he gave them 6, but he thought the rest of the class can be 5 out of 10 on average. Besides, he mentioned that he would place the international students in the middle between Turkish ones and him by giving them 3.5. However, he did not voice anything about foreigners in the following interviews. Like Omid, Roya consistently rated her own English proficiency higher than her Turkish classmates. As for the foreign students, she said that her level and theirs were alike at first. Then she mentioned that some of them were really better than the rest of the class in the second interview. Interestingly, Karim was the one who rated himself considerably lower than the other participants. While he acknowledged that he was at the same English level with his Turkish classmates at the beginning of the semester, then his opinions changed and started rating himself higher than Turkish ones. It is interesting to see that he gave 6 to Turkish students, but 5 to himself in the last interview. When I asked the reason, he said that he made his decision based on the last exam results. 10 of the Turkish students got a score above 80 out of 100 (Interview, 17/01/2024). Therefore, he thought this was what they deserved as an average rating. In addition, he stated that the international students had a better English proficiency level in the first interview. However, he rated those foreigners and himself identically in the second interview. Upon ratings, he also added that those international

students became close friends with one another, lost their interest in lessons and as a result, their English level even got worse (Interview, 21/12/2023).

4.3.2.2 Two-way Learning

Another aspect of socialization is its bidirectional nature. It means that expert and novice roles are not fixed and stable in the process of socialization. Even the expert learners can experience the opportunity to learn from novice ones. So, learning can occur in both ways. In the following parts, I will analyze how bidirectional learning takes place in the connections between the participants and their classmates.

When they are supposed to be grouped or paired with other students for an activity in class, I wondered who Hazin would prefer to work with. Ahmet Kerim and Cem are the ones who he has a close relationship with. According to what Hazin reported before, they usually sit together and help each other when they have any problems or questions (Interview, 30/11/2023). In addition to these two Turkish students, I thought that he could choose the Iranian students in class to work with, but he surprised me:

Excerpt 38

188 Rabia: Let's say you will have a pair work or group work activity in class, and you
189 need to work with someone else. Who would you work with?

190 Hazin: Ahmet Kerim.

191 Rabia: Let's make a group of five people. One of them is Ahmet Kerim, the other one
192 is you and we need three more people.

193 Hazin: Cem, Ozan. I haven't had this kind of activities with them. So, I don't know.
194 Maybe Zelal.

195 Rabia: I think you picked the successful students.

196 Hazin: I want to learn something.

(Interview, 28/12/2023)

Instead of Nader and Yasmin, he preferred Zelal and Ozan (Excerpt 38, line 193 and 194). Depending on my class observations, I know the students who he selected as his group members took an active role during lessons and they portrayed a “hardworking/ successful” student profile in my mind. It seems that Hazin also had the same opinion about those students with me because he approved that they were successful and says, “I want to learn something.” (line 196) from them. This comment shows us that Hazin would not have resisted if one of these students tried to teach something to him or make any corrections. On the contrary, this was what he desired, and he was willing to collaborate with those particular students. Like Hazin, Nader provided a similar response to the same question although he did not specify any student from his class. In case of a pair work or group activity, he said “... I prefer activity with the wise students because they know.” (Interview, 20/12/2023). His expression, “wise students”, possibly refers to the students who were more successful, knowledgeable or maybe more experienced compared to the rest of the class. So, it means that Nader valued peer learning, and he was aware that they could benefit from each other’s expertise in the sense of language learning.

Roya’s responses in Excerpt 38 indicate that learning can occur between learners in both ways:

Excerpt 39

197 Rabia: Do you think that you contribute to Turkish students’ language learning? Do

198 you have any effect?

199 Roya: Yes, yes. Because we are foreigners, they pay more attention to us to see how

200 these foreigners talk. So, because they pay attention, I think yes, they learn

201 from us.

202 Rabia: Can we say that you might have some effect on the accent, maybe on their

203 pronunciation?

204 Roya: Not only that. 2-3 days ago, some Turkish students came to us and started
 205 talking for no reason because they just wanted to talk to foreigners to see how
 206 it is. It was interesting for them to speak English or to know about us or I don't
 207 know, so that thing, it helps.

208 Rabia: Do you think that they have an impact on your English language learning?

209 Roya: Yes.

210 Rabia: In what ways?

211 Roya: There's nothing special I can mention, but I think the atmosphere of being with
 212 English learners affects. I might learn a word while they're talking. So yeah.

(Interview, 17/11/2023)

From her perspective, Turkish students were highly curious about how foreign people speak English (line 199, 200 and 201). It is likely that they wanted to be exposed to different accents of English. Even though she still did not quite understand why they did so, she reported that some Turkish students came to her and tried to speak English to her. She thought that they found it “interesting” (line 206) to talk to foreigners and learn about them. They might have wondered what kind of culture and lifestyle those international students had in their home country. She commented that having such conversations might have helped them in a way. When I asked her how such interactions exactly affected their learning and whether they were limited to accent or pronunciation, she replied “not only that” (line 204). Although she could not provide more details to explain why she thought so, I believe that what she meant was that the impact of those conversations on Turkish students’ English learning was more comprehensive, rather than being restricted to the pronunciation or the accent. When I questioned if Turkish students contributed to her English language development, she could not remember any specific example again, but she thought that even “the atmosphere of being with English learners” should have had an impact on her learning (line 211 and 212). Being surrounded with English learners like her could create opportunities for them to learn from each

other. For example, Roya said she could notice and learn a new word while other students were speaking English (line 212). In parallel with Roya's comments, Hazin also talked about the reciprocal learning experiences that his Turkish friends and he had in the following excerpt:

Excerpt 40

213 Rabia: In what ways do you contribute to your Turkish friends' English language

214 learning? Do you feel like you have an impact on their learning?

215 Hazin: Yes, sometimes.

216 Rabia: Can you give us an example? Is there any moment when you taught them

217 something?

218 Hazin: Mostly pronunciation. I have a good impact on them. 70% of pronunciations

219 are being pronounced in the wrong way by them. So that's why I can make it

220 better.

221 Rabia: Do they contribute to your English language learning?

222 Hazin: There are some words that I don't know, and I can learn from them.

223 Rabia: So, can we say that there are contributions in both ways?

224 Hazin: Yes.

(Interview, 30/11/2023)

He thought that his Turkish friends pronounced English words incorrectly around 70% (Excerpt 40, line 218 and 219). Therefore, he mostly helped them enhance their speaking by providing the correct pronunciation of those words. He should have viewed himself as more knowledgeable than those Turkish students in terms of pronunciation. Once he was asked if they made any contribution to his English learning progress, he stated that they sometimes used words that Hazin did not know while they were talking. In such a case, similar to Roya, he

believed that he could learn new words from his Turkish friends (line 222). It means that Hazin played an expert role in pronunciation and taught the correct way to say those words to his friends while Turkish ones sometimes switched to the expert role from being novice when they were teaching him a new word. This also indicates that connections between Hazin and his Turkish friends provided benefits for both sides, and learning took place bidirectionally between them. Additionally, I wanted to ask Hazin if he enjoyed that his Turkish friends and he taught anything to each other:

Excerpt 41

225 Rabia: Do you enjoy this exchange of language?

226 Hazin: Yeah, it's really good for learning.

227 Rabia: When you talk to your Turkish friends, do you feel like they increase your

228 motivation to learn?

229 Hazin: Yes.

(Interview, 30/11/2023)

He said that he found it “really good for learning” (Excerpt 41, line 226). So, we can understand that he appreciated the contributions made by his friends and he was aware that this was also part of learning. Furthermore, I wondered whether he felt more motivated to learn English as he engaged in such conversations. He admitted that he felt so (line 229).

The Excerpt 42 shows us that the participants and their classmates did not only socialize each other into or through English, but Turkish, as well:

Excerpt 42

230 Rabia: In what ways do they contribute to your own language learning? Again, it

231 doesn't have to be only English. You can talk about also Turkish.

232 Omid: For Turkish, because I don't speak, I don't think it's too much. But for English,

233 they talk to me, and I learn.

234 Rabia: What do you learn?

235 Omid: Some words they teach me because I don't know. They asked me to repeat this

236 word and they gave me the English definition of that word. This is how they

237 teach me Turkish.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

To illustrate, Omid stated that his Turkish peers promoted his Turkish language learning by teaching him some words even though he could not speak Turkish and improve it “too much” (line 232 and 233). As a first step, they usually started with the pronunciation and made him repeat the target word. Next, they explained its meaning in English. I also mentioned before that Omid had been teaching basic Persian words to his close Turkish classmates (Excerpt 32). So, it is evident that there was a language exchange between Omid and the Turkish students, and their impact was not just limited to English. Here is another example of how Turkish students affect a participant’s Turkish language learning:

Excerpt 43

238 Rabia: Do you feel like they improve your English language?

239 Nader: No, but they improving my Turkish language.

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

During a conversation while we were talking about Nader and his classmates’ English learning progress, I posed the question above to him (Excerpt 43, line 238). The fact that he knows and speaks Turkish very well led his Turkish friends to constantly speak Turkish to him. Consequently, he believed that they had a more impact on his Turkish language development rather than the English one (line 239). The following excerpt shows us one of the examples of how Turkish students promoted Nader’s Turkish vocabulary knowledge:

Excerpt 44

240 Nader: I learned the word “*istişare*” in Turkish. I told them to explain to me what is it.

241 Rabia: What is it?

242 Nader: *Bir konuda tartışıyorlar insanlar ve anlaşıyorlar. İstişare buna denir dimi?*

243 (People discuss about something and then they agree. This is called “*istişare*”,

244 isn’t it?)

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

One of Nader’s Turkish friends used the word “*istişare*” while having a conversation in a group. Nader wondered what that word meant and asked his friend to explain it. He had not heard this word before probably because it was not frequently used. Once he mentioned how he learned it, I asked him to explain it to me, as well (Excerpt 44). I wanted to ensure whether he learned it correctly. He did not just manage to meet my expectations, but he also did it in Turkish (line 242, 243 and 244).

Excerpt 45 demonstrates that even Karim, who claimed that there was no connection between him and any of his classmates including both Turkish and Arabic students, had a chance to learn from them:

Excerpt 45

245 Rabia: For instance, do you feel like you're learning something new when they are

246 speaking maybe to the teacher or to the others?

247 Karim: Sometimes I learn some words, but their accent is not good. So, I think because

248 of that I cannot learn much, but it has happened because I asked specifically

249 that they used a word and I learned.

(Interview, 22/11/2023)

Even though it was not an outcome of a direct interaction, Karim mentioned that he noticed a word that he had not known before while a classmate of his was speaking in class (Probably he was talking to the teacher.). Then he approached to that student and asked about the word (line 248 and 249). It seems that even being in the same learning environment can still provide chances for students to contribute to each other's learning progress even if they have not been communicating directly or constantly. Furthermore, Karim found the Turkish students' accent "not good" (line 247). Having a poor accent might have negatively affected the intelligibility of the words and expressions that they used. Hence, he claimed that he "cannot learn much" from the Turkish students in his classroom (line 248).

4.3.2.3 Cultural and Language Exchange

In language socialization, learners do not merely socialize into a new language. They can get familiar with a new culture through the language, as well. As learners maintain their connections with others from different countries or backgrounds, this can create opportunities for learners to talk about their cultures, which can be also influential in their identity construction. What they have learned can shape their perception of cultures and languages.

Unlike the other participants, Nader's proficiency in Turkish played a significant role in his language socialization process. According to him, his Turkish classmates were "really curious" about how well he can speak Turkish:

Excerpt 46

250 Nader: They're really curious how I can speak Turkish that well.

251 Rabia: Did you also talk about the culture?

252 Nader: Yes. They asked me about the Iranian government, and I answered the

253 question and then to be sad about the Iranian government.

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

This curiosity might have stimulated those students to initiate more interactions with Nader. I asked him if they talked about culture during those conversations (Excerpt 46, line

251). He replied that they asked him about the Iranian government and the current situation in his country (line 252). Upon his answer, he also added that they empathized and felt “sad” about what had been going on in Iran (line 253). The interesting thing was that Hazin and Yasmin did not provide any specific moment that they talked about culture with their classmates in the interviews. The reason why Turkish students contacted only Nader about Iranian culture could be that they knew that they would be able to have the conversation in their native language, Turkish. So, we can say that Nader’s knowing Turkish may have functioned as a facilitator in cultural exchange with Turkish students. They could easily deepen their dialogue without struggling with language barriers.

On the other hand, Turkish proficiency is not the only way that enabled the participants to engage in cultural interchange with their non-Iranian classmates. Considering that Nader’s case was an exception, the rest of the participants had been expected to socialize to other cultures and languages mainly through English since it was the only language that all interlocutors can speak. In Excerpt 47, for example, Omid described one of his experiences of learning about Turkish culture through language socialization:

Excerpt 47

254 Omid: They just taught me about their culture and their greeting. Like with girls, they
 255 kiss on their cheek and with boys they hit their heads against each other. These
 256 kind of things that is necessary to have here. They taught me. I didn't teach
 257 them. They didn't ask me anything.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

With this experience, Omid learned that there were various ways to greet people in Turkish culture. He considered learning about such cultural elements as “necessary” (line 255 and 256) because possibly being more sophisticated about local culture would facilitate his integration into the Turkish community. However, he added that his friends did not wonder or ask anything related to his home culture (line 256 and 257). So, it might initially seem that the cultural

exchange between Omid and his Turkish friends took place unilaterally. However, he was contradicting himself because he provided the comments below during the same interview:

Excerpt 48

258 Omid: They have asked some. How is Iran? Where is the capital? They asked me
259 while having a Turkish-Azeri football team. It's really famous because the
260 supporters are really enthusiastic. So, they ask which city is it located in.
261 That's it.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

As can be seen in Excerpt 48, he previously claimed that his Turkish friends did not ask anything about Iranian culture. However, in his response above (Excerpt 47), we can see that, in fact, Turkish students were willing to explore about Iran, its capital city, and the Iran-Azeri football team. It is likely that he did not see these topics as cultural elements. His understanding of culture could be only limited to universal components of a country such as traditions, lifestyle, food, music, or fashion.

The following excerpt underlines the interconnectedness of language and culture and also the cross-cultural exchange that occurs in language socialization:

Excerpt 49

262 Omid: I have a friend in class. His name is *Nevzat*. Do you know what it means?
263 Rabia: I don't know.
264 Omid: Yeah, because it's a Persian word and it means a baby like infants. We have a
265 kind of kebab in Iran. It's called *şişlik* and other person's surname was *Şişlik*.
266 So, some names and surnames might be even meaningless in Turkish, but
267 meaningful in Persian. We were interested in this stuff.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

First, Omid mentioned one of his classmates whose name is “Nevzat” and then introduced the origin and its meaning to me (Excerpt 49, line 264). It turns out that this word used as a proper name in Turkish corresponds to the word “baby” in Persian. Another example is that Iranians have a specific type of kebabs in their country, which is called “şişlik” and Omid had another classmate whose surname was the same with this kebab (line 265 and 266). We can understand that his Turkish friends and he were interested in such commonalities that Turkish and Persian languages share. The fact that these names and surnames that are meaningful in Persian but not in Turkish might have enabled Omid to recognize the cultural and linguistic diversity. As a result, this may also have impacted his understanding of culture and language. In terms of a transformation in understanding of culture, Yasmin seemed that she experienced one:

Excerpt 50

268 Yasmin: I used to think that our cultures are completely different, but now I realize it's
269 the same culture but in different forms. But cultures are really similar to each
270 other.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

Yasmin’s comments in Excerpt 50 demonstrate that she used to have a different perception of Turkish culture. She used to think that the Iranian and Turkish cultures did not hold any similarities, on the contrary they were “completely different” (line 268) from each other. Since she moved to Turkey with her mother, she had a chance to experience and observe Turkish culture in person. As she observed Turkish people in her immediate environment and explored cultural clues through broadcast media such as popular tv series, she must have reshaped her understanding of Turkish culture and decided that Iranian and Turkish cultures were “the same but in different forms” (line 269). This also implies that Yasmin developed a recognition of cultural diversity and openness to different cultures.

4.3.2.4 Summary

Although the participants have experienced some challenges in their journey of socialization, they have been able to build relationships with their classmates in and out of the classroom environment to different degrees. I classified my findings in the analysis of the collected data related to language socialization under three primary themes. The first one is about how the participants have positioned themselves during their engagements with their classmates. The second theme represents the bidirectional nature of language socialization and exemplifies how the participants switch between novice and expert roles and how they experience both teaching and learning while communicating with their non-Iranian friends. Lastly, I analyzed if the participants interchanged any cultural information with them.

4.3.3 L2 Identity

Learners can form new identities or reshape their existing ones as they keep learning new languages. Learning English in Turkey can have significant impacts on EFL Iranian learners' identity constructions. Besides, they have been naturally exposed to Turkish language and culture. Therefore, one of my primary aims is to investigate how their experiences have shaped their learner identity. In parallel with this goal, I asked the participants questions such as how they felt about these languages, if they saw themselves as a speaker of these languages, or if they perceived any changes in their identity.

Omid's reflective journal entry above illustrates a significant shift in his perception of his English language learner identity:

Excerpt 51

I feel that there has been a big change in my English language, I am no longer afraid to speak, my self-confidence has increased and I am not afraid of making mistakes.

(Omid, Reflective Journal, 10/11/2023)

In the past, he might have identified himself as someone who lacked confidence, was terrified of making mistakes and speaking English. Now, it seems that he has been experiencing a transformation in his learner identity. This transformation could influence his social identity, as well. He might have started perceiving himself more competent and proficient. As a result, it may have increased his tendency to socialize and engage more interactions with his peers. In the first group interview, the participants were asked how they feel while they are speaking English to have a better understanding about their approach to this language:

Excerpt 52

271 Rabia: How does it feel speaking English?

272 Hazin: Good.

273 Hazin: The most common language in the world.

274 Yasmin: Yeah, the language that I feel excited about speaking it the most is English.

275 Hazin: It's also simpler than other languages.

276 Hazin: I tried to learn another language that was really difficult.

(Group Interview, 02/11/2023)

Hazin remarks that he feels “good” (Excerpt 52, line 272). Yasmin does not just agree with Hazin, she also adds that she feels “excited about speaking” English (line 274) because it is the most commonly spoken language around the world. Besides, Hazin says “It's also simpler than other languages.” (line 275). He attempted to learn French in the past and now he had a chance to practice it with his roommate from Morocco. That is why, he mentioned that he was studying French along with English in his free time in the university library. Depending on his experiences, he found learning French more challenging than English and believed that English should be simpler than the other languages, as well.

During the interviews, the participants' comments also enabled me to see how much value they ascribed to English or Persian as a language. For example, Excerpt 53 exemplifies the significance that Yasmin attaches to speaking English:

Excerpt 53

277 Yasmin: So, because you can speak with almost everyone in English, you feel that you
 278 have improved yourself. That improvement feels good, but in Persian, of
 279 course it's you haven't done anything for it, and you can only speak to Iranians,
 280 and so, it's normal.

(Group Interview, 02/11/2023)

It is clear that she valued speaking English more than Persian because from her point of view, knowing how to speak Persian would enable someone to only talk to Iranian people (line 279). On the other hand, if they learn English, they would be able to access a variety of people from different cultural backgrounds. English can make it possible for them to communicate with “almost everyone” (line 277). Consequently, she believed that this progress would make them feel “good” (line 278). It seems like she viewed learning English as a personal growth. Although Yasmin kept expressing her positive attitude towards speaking English many times, she did not seem satisfied with her current proficiency level:

Excerpt 54

281 Yasmin: I enjoy speaking English a lot, most of the time, so that's why I don't like the
 282 fact that I cannot speak very well. That's why I need to improve my speaking.
 283 If I do most of the time, I mean OK with this and I'm going to enjoy.

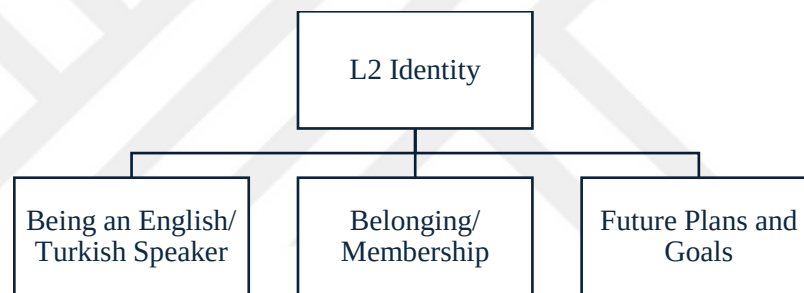
(Interview, 14/12/2023)

She acknowledged that she had some weaknesses that she needed to enhance, and she could not speak as much as she desired (Excerpt 54). Therefore, she hoped that she would enjoy speaking English more in the future if she could improve her proficiency and fluency in English. Her statement “I need to improve my speaking.” (line 282) indicates that she was motivated to take actions that serve to her goal at that moment.

The analysis of the collected data enabled me to generate three categorizations related to L2 identity (see Figure 9). The first category concerns whether the participants conceptualized themselves as English or Turkish speakers. The second one presents if the participants developed any sense of belonging to their classmates as a result of their social connections. The last one addresses their future plans, and how they pictured themselves in the future as an English learner.

Figure 9

List of the codes under the category of L2 identity



4.3.3.1 Being an English/Turkish Speaker

Viewing oneself as a speaker of a language can provide many insights about the identity of a learner. Therefore, I repeatedly asked the participants if they saw themselves as speakers of English or Turkish in our interviews because as they kept building their knowledge and being exposed to these languages, their perceptions might have changed. When I asked the participants if they saw themselves as an English speaker, I have received various answers:

Excerpt 55

284 Yasmin: If they don't consider my grammar mistakes, yeah, I can consider myself as
285 someone who speak English.

(Interview, 10/01/2024)

As an example, Yasmin gave me a partly negative response. In Excerpt 55, she admitted that she could not speak very well but she did not specify its reasons. Then she mentioned that she had some weaknesses in grammar (line 284). She could be making frequent grammar mistakes considering her English proficiency level or could feel afraid of making mistakes. Therefore, she may have hesitated to speak to someone in English. This also negatively affected her perception of herself as an English speaker. If someone ignored her weakness in grammar and speaking, then she would say she could categorize herself as an English speaker. Excerpt 56 implies that Roya had a similar approach to the concept of an English speaker as Yasmin does:

Excerpt 56

286 Rabia: Do you see yourself as an English speaker?

287 Roya: No.

288 Rabia: Maybe in the future?

289 Roya: We can speak English fluently, but sometimes not. Sometimes a simple

290 sentence I cannot make, but sometimes I'm really fluent, so I don't know.

(Interview, 17/11/2023)

First, Roya reports that she did not view herself as an English speaker. She did not find her speaking performance consistent. She said sometimes she could speak English highly fluently while she was incapable of making even “a simple sentence” (line 289 and 290). Therefore, she could not decide whether she was an English speaker or not. Perhaps she conceptualized an English speaker as someone who spoke fluently without making any grammar mistakes. In fact, I think this might apply to other participants, too. None of the participants excluding Omid and Nader provided a positive answer to the question about being an English speaker. In the following extract, Roya clarifies the reasons why she thought she was not an English speaker:

Excerpt 57

- 291 Roya: Because I'm not good at speaking because we don't speak, we don't practice
 292 speaking. So how can I know this? I mean, I'm English speaker or not, so I
 293 think I'm not because I don't practice. I don't use it.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

According to Roya, the underlying reason for her incompetence in speaking was that students were not offered enough opportunities to practice and enhance their speaking skills (Excerpt 57). Being deprived of such opportunities caused her to feel insecure and self-doubt about her skills (line 292). Hence, this also highlights the significance of providing learners with supportive learning environments that equip them with all necessary resources. If Roya had had enough chances to practice speaking in class, maybe she could have improved herself more and as a result, she could have seen herself as an English speaker. Roya's situation can be an indicator that external factors could be influential in shaping L2 identity. Another participant who did not consider himself as an English speaker was Hazin. Contrary to Roya, he thought that the main reason was not entirely external:

Excerpt 58

- 294 Rabia: Do you see yourself as an English speaker?
 295 Hazin: No.
 296 Rabia: Why don't you see yourself as an English speaker? You completed one
 297 semester here learning English.
 298 Hazin: I don't have enough self-confidence.
 299 Rabia: In what areas do you feel like you need more improvements?
 300 Hazin: Some people to talk to. Only with some Arabic speakers, I could speak
 301 English, and we don't have any in our classroom. And with the Iranians, we

302 only speak Persian. There are also some Turkish people who speak English
 303 very well, but they are not in our classroom.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

Even though Hazin completed one whole semester by receiving highly dense education, he still did not identify himself as an English speaker (Excerpt 58, line 295). We can understand that Hazin's sense of identity was not merely shaped by formal language education, but it also included various factors such as self-confidence and language use patterns (line 298 & 300). He complained before that Turkish students in his class usually spoke Turkish even during the lesson and also, they were not willing to speak English (Interview, 30/11/2023). So, he did not want to contact those kinds of students. Arabic students and Turkish ones with a good command of English were the only people who Hazin could practice speaking English with (line 300 and 302). Because he had none of them in his class, he could not improve his speaking performance. In consequence, these circumstances prevented him from seeing himself as an English speaker, in other words, his L2 identity construction.

Yasmin, Roya and Hazin's situation applies to Karim, as well. He said, "If I can speak fluently, I'm going to feel good about it." (Group Interview, 24/01/2024). He did not view himself as an English speaker at that moment and he was not satisfied with his current status, but we can say that he was optimistic about the future. His future self-image depends on his progress. If he manages to improve himself and speak English fluently, he said he was going to "feel good about it". So, fluency was the major criterion for him to determine who would be an English speaker in the future.

Unlike the others, Nader did not refrain from confidently expressing that he identified himself both as an English and Turkish speaker (Interview, 15/11/2023). This indicates that he found himself competent enough in these two languages. For almost two years, he and his family had been living in Turkey. Besides, he completed the senior year of his high school education in Turkey, too. His exposure to Turkish had been considerably high the past two years. Therefore, I think the fact that he recognized his Turkish identity was predictable. Even though he used English relatively less than Turkish in his daily life, he also saw himself as an English

speaker. On the other hand, he was the only participant who insisted speaking English while answering the interview questions although all the participants were informed that they did not have to use English, and they could always provide their responses in Persian before starting each interview. Besides, he mentioned how much he wanted to improve his English knowledge many times in the interviews. Nevertheless, based on the interview recordings and my observation notes, it was evident that he was having serious difficulties in basic English skills such as forming grammatically correct sentences or memorizing vocabulary items. Despite his weaknesses, Nader claimed an ownership of his English speaker identity. Additionally, this indicates that Nader embraced a multiple language identity. In Excerpt 57, Nader points out the transformative impact of learning multiple languages:

Excerpt 59

304 Nader: I know if I learn a new language, I can be a new person.

305 Rabia: Why do you think you can be a new person when you learn a new language?

306 Nader: If I speak Persian. Just speak Persian. Because I can communicate in that

307 language in a better way. So, I feel like I'm another person who can

308 communicate in the other language.

(...)

309 Rabia: How is Nader as a new person?

310 Nader: I think the new person can be successful, can then learn English. Because when

311 I learn English, I can be international. I know the international news.

(Interview, 20/12/2023)

He did not just see languages just as a means of communication. He was aware that learning a new language could transform him into a new person, as well (Excerpt 59, line 304). When I asked him what he thought about the new Nader, he made a connection between learning English and being successful (line 310). He viewed the new Nader who could speak English as

a successful person. Learning English would assist him to reach more people from diverse countries and cultures. As a result, he would become “international” and access global news and information in this way (line 311). So, we can understand that learning English served broader goals and opportunities for Nader. Here is another example that demonstrates Nader’s awareness of multiple language identities:

Excerpt 60

312 Nader: I don't know character. But I thinking about that in my home and I think I can
313 answer this question. When I learned the new language, I feel I made new
314 human and new personality. When I learned the Turkish, I just tried to
315 communicate and be social in Turkish. But after, I tried. I decided to learn
316 English just for the success for the serious person, because when I start to
317 speaking in English and when I learn and practice English. My friends or my
318 teachers say to me you're so serious person and I think yes, I'm serious. When I
319 speak English, because when I speak Turkish, I try to say funny sentences in
320 Turkish and we laughing.

(Interview, 15/01/2024)

Nader talked about his past language learning experiences and the impact of these multiple languages on his identity construction. First, he embraced the fact that learning languages leads to constructions of new identities once more. In lines from 314 to 317, we can also see that he attributed distinctive roles and goals to speaking Turkish and English and switched to different identities depending on the language that he spoke. He visualized himself as someone who was more sociable and possibly easygoing and fun, could make jokes and make people around him laugh while speaking English. On the other hand, the Nader who spoke English was a more “successful” and “serious” individual. Besides, he asserted that this was not just his own perception, but this was also how other people thought about him (line 317 and 318). Although

Omid could not speak Turkish as fluently as Nader does, he was the one who seemed more interested in learning colloquial Turkish among the other participants. In one of our interviews, I asked him how he felt about his Turkish language learning progress:

Excerpt 61

321 Omid: For shopping, how to communicate is a bit difficult because you don't know
322 what to say when you want to buy something. In the beginning we were a bit
323 more afraid of saying this is OK. If say this, what should I do?

(Group Interview, 02/11/2023)

In Excerpt 61, Omid reflected on the challenges that he had while communicating in Turkish and stated that he used to feel afraid of making mistakes, saying wrong things, being misunderstood by Turkish people. Especially in the early stages of when he moved to Turkey, even shopping was quite difficult for him. From his statement “in the beginning we were a bit more afraid of saying this is OK.” (line 322 and 323), we can understand that he started feeling more comfortable while engaging in interactions with Turkish people. Here is another example showing changes in Omid’s identity:

Excerpt 62

324 Omid: I was more like introvert, not willing to join groups, but I'm not like that
325 anymore. So, I feel like I can do it more freely. I’m more willing to join groups
326 and meet new people.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

Although Omid’s statements do not seem directly related to L2 identity construction, learners might experience a shift in their L2 identity as they keep engaging with the language and people who speak the target language. The fact that Omid improved his Turkish and English skills might have increased his confidence and led him to feel more comfortable in social

settings since he knew how to communicate with them better now. Therefore, he could feel “more willing to join groups and meet new people” (Excerpt 62, line 325 and 326).

Like Nader, Karim explicitly reported that he portrayed a different persona while speaking English in Excerpt 63:

Excerpt 63

327 Rabia: How do you feel when you are speaking Farsi? How do you feel when you are
328 speaking English?

329 Karim: I try to have more sense of humor when I speak English to be able to make
330 friendship.

331 Karim: I just had a conversation with my teacher in English. I made fun of this. Like,
332 “I hope not to see you anymore.”.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

The difference between them was that Karim attempted to be a more fun person in English whereas Nader did so in Turkish. Additionally, Karim shared the reason for his choice with me. He said that he used a sense of humor to build a good rapport with other people (line 329 and 330). So, a sense of humor served as a communication strategy for Karim in the interactions with non-Iranian people. As an example, he talked about the conversation that he had with his teacher on the last day of classes. While leaving the classroom, Karim told his teacher “I hope not to see you anymore.” (line 332). It might sound very rude to a person who hears this sentence without the context. In fact, the proficiency exam was going to be held a very short time after this conversation happened. So, Karim actually wished to pass the proficiency exam and not be a preparatory school student anymore with this statement. Because his teacher and he would be in different campuses, they would probably not see each other again.

Roya’s comments in Excerpt 64 demonstrate that the L2 identity construction process can vary from person to person:

Excerpt 64

333 Rabia: Do you feel any changes in your personality, in your feelings?

334 Roya: Because we don't speak English that much, I don't know. I'm not sure about

335 my feelings and personality changes. You might feel more comfortable and

336 more confident, but we are not that much sure about this because we are new

337 to it.

(Group Interview, 24/01/2024)

While Nader, Omid and Karim noticed some salient changes in their identities, Roya stated that she was not sure if she experienced any alteration either in her feelings or in her personality (line 334 and 335). Just before this conversation, I provided her with a few examples based on my experiences to make the question clear enough. Therefore, she said “You might feel more comfortable and more confident...” considering that I have been speaking English for a long time (line 335 and 336). However, in her opinion, it had not been such a long time since they started learning English and they were “new to it”. This addresses that it might take more time for some learners to be able to experience changes in their learner identities.

4.3.3.2 *Belonging/ Membership*

One of the primary reasons for socialization is to gain membership into a group or a community. Besides, as individuals share the same learning environment for a period of time, they can develop a sense of belonging towards others. This can be also influential in their identity construction and might serve as a catalyst for language socialization. I posed the question in Excerpt 65 to all the participants in the last individual interviews. The underlying reason behind it was that I thought that their answer could provide an insight into the dynamics in social identity formation:

Excerpt 65

338 Rabia: So, you must know each other better now. So, do you feel like you belong to

339 that community? The whole class? Or do you feel like you belong to a smaller

340 group in your class or do you see yourself as a separate person?

341 Karim: Individual.

(Interview, 21/12/2023)

Karim's response in Excerpt 65 was partly predictable for me, but I also had expected him to identify himself with a smaller group in class because he had a very close relationship with Roya and the other Iranian student, Bahar. By selecting the "individual" option, Karim revealed that he saw himself as a separate person from the entire class including his Iranian friends. He may not have felt strongly attached to either the entire class or his Iranian peers. This situation could be the result of various factors including personality traits, cultural background, or age gap between him and his classmates. Like Karim, Hazin provided the same answer, as well. He emphasized that he identified himself as a separate "individual" (Interview, 28/12/2024) from the larger community. In contrast to Karim, he was able to connect with a few Turkish students in his class. Nonetheless, it seems that he did not feel connected enough to those students to form a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, Nader's response to the same question was "First option would be a smaller one, then the second one is the whole class." (Interview, 20/12/2023). It suggests that individual differences can occur in students' perceptions of belonging and group membership even if they share the same class. Although Nader and Hazin were classmates and they both came from similar backgrounds, Nader reported that he had a sense of belonging to a smaller group and then the entire classmates while Hazin perceived himself as a separate individual from them. This addresses that Nader had a stronger connection with a particular subgroup within the class. As an extension of this relationship, then he identified himself as a member of the whole class. Another unexpected answer came from Yasmin, who was the other Iranian classmate of Hazin and Nader:

Extract 66

342 Yasmin: I belong to MID 12.

343 Rabia: That's really good. And have you had any chances to talk to every single

344 person in your class so far?

345 Yasmin: No, not yet.

346 Rabia: But even if you haven't had that chance, you will feel you belong to the whole

347 class?

348 Yasmin: It doesn't matter if I haven't talked to each of them. I belong to them.

(Interview, 14/12/2023)

Among these three Iranian participants, Yasmin was observed as the one who had less connections with her Turkish classmates. She was able to connect with only one Turkish girl from the class and she reported that she was having difficulty communicating with her due to the language barrier (Excerpt 6). Other than her, she was hanging out with Iranian students such as Nader and Omid. Therefore, I thought that she would feel she belonged to a smaller group. However, she stated that she belonged to the entire class (Extract 66, line 342). When I questioned whether she had any chance to talk to everyone in her class, she said that this was not necessary (line 348). Despite not being connected with each member of the class, she still felt attached to all of them. However, almost one month after our second interview, it seems that there was a shift in her social relationship dynamics because her statements in Extract 66 and 67 are contrasting:

Extract 67

349 Rabia: Who would you stay in touch with from your class after this semester? You

350 know, maybe next semester you will be in different classes.

351 Yasmin: No one.

352 Rabia: Even not with Fatmagül?

353 Yasmin: Yeah. No one. New friends. We're not that close to keep in touch.

(Interview, 10/01/2024)

Even though Yasmin asserted that she had a sense of belonging to the whole class in the former interview, now she said that she did not want to stay in touch with anyone next semester because they were not “that close” to maintain this relationship (line 353). One of the reasons for her decision could be that she could still feel a sense of belonging to the classroom as a whole but she may not have formed any personal relationships with individual classmates, or she might be seeing these engagements limited merely to the classroom environment. Moreover, Yasmin’s statement of “new friends” (line 353) can suggest that she had an intention to expand her social network and form new connections rather than sustaining old ones. Yasmin was not the only participant who provided contrasting answers. Roya’s response to the belonging question also seemed conflicting at first glance:

Excerpt 68

354 Roya: The whole class. I love all them.

355 Rabia: So, when you go to your classroom, do you feel like you're home or something
356 like this?

357 Roya: Yes, I like it.

(Interview, 20/12/2023)

Earlier, Roya mentioned that she wanted to be in a different classroom with students from different levels. However, the reason for this wish was that she thought that students in her class could not motivate each other to improve themselves because their English proficiency level was almost the same. This does not imply anything regarding how she felt about the social connections that she made with her classmates. Now she said that she felt like she belonged to “the whole class” and she loved all of her classmates (Extract 68, line 354). It was interesting that she did not talk to or know everyone in her class, even so, she stated that she loved all of

them. On the other hand, they spent 15 weeks together in the same learning environment. Unavoidably, she might have developed a sense of belonging with her classmates. Likewise, Omid revealed that he has a sense of attachment to the entire class community (Interview, 14/12/2023) regardless of whether he has interacted with every individual in class. Besides, in the last interview, I asked him if he would keep in touch with his old classmates next semester:

Extract 69

358 Rabia: Would you still spend some time or text your old friends from this semester?

359 Omid: I'm going to be in touch with the old ones.

(Interview, 11/01/2024)

His response indicates that he intended to maintain his engagement with them in the future (Excerpt 69, line 359). Unlike Yasmin, he may not be seeing the connection with his Turkish friends restricted to the classroom setting or temporary. Within a very limited time, he might have formed deep and genuine relationships with them. This may have contributed to his sense of identity and belonging within the larger classroom community, as well.

4.3.3.3 Future Goals and Plans

From the first interview to the last one, I kept asking the participants what plans and goals they had for their future and constantly checked if there were any changes in them. In fact, what I really wanted to learn is how they pictured themselves in the future. This would represent their imagined identity, and it could be influential in shaping their current L2 learner identity as well.

To start with Roya, she has portrayed two possibilities for her future in Excerpt 70:

Excerpt 70

360 Roya: I haven't thought about it, but if it's possible, I would prefer to immigrate to

361 Canada do the PhD there. If not, I will stay here, but I don't study. I will

362 continue studying only if I immigrate to. Otherwise, I will work with the

363 masters I get from here and stay here.

(Interview, 17/11/2023)

The first option was to immigrate to Canada. She wanted to pursue her PhD degree there after graduation. If she could not manage it, she was planning to settle down in Turkey. She said that she would look for job opportunities with her master's degree that she gets from this university. In the option of her moving to Canada, she would be primarily using English both in her daily life and academic life considering that English is one of the official languages there. In the other option, she will have passed the proficiency exam and completed her English-medium master education. Both possibilities require her to improve her English skills. Therefore, we can say that her imagined L2 identity has better English proficiency compared to now. In fact, she was also aware of this and utters it in another interview. She said, "It's my wish, my dream, to speak to English fluently." (Group Interview, 24/01/2024). She believed that she could not speak it as fluently as she wishes. Based on that, it can be concluded that the distance between her present identity and imagined one can be preventing her from viewing herself as an English speaker now.

Another participant who aspired to go abroad and sustain her life there was Yasmin. In our first group interview, she said, "I want to start my department as soon as possible, and I need to go to the US in the future and continue there." (Group Interview, 02/11/2023). Her primary goal was to pass the proficiency exam and start studying her major. Probably after graduation, she wanted to go to the US and build her future life there. Although it was not clearly mentioned, this implies that she desired to have better English skills in the future. We can say that learning English plays an instrumental role in the way to reach her future goals. Nevertheless, she did not seem to invest herself in making her dreams come true. My notes from one of the listening and speaking lessons revealed a conflict between Yasmin's imagined identity and existing learner identity:

Excerpt 71

The teacher wanted to start the lesson with presentations that he had asked students to prepare last week. However, only a few students did their homework. It seemed that Nader and

Yasmin also forgot to do their task. While one of the students was giving a presentation about a meditation club, both were busy with their mobile phones. I think they were gathering information to be able to present. After a couple of students, Yasmin wanted to be the next presenter and she talked about Yalda night, which is the longest night celebrated by Iranians and believed that it brings happiness and abundance. Then Nader took the floor to give information about Nowruz, in other words, the Persian New Year. They both read from their mobile phones while presenting. (...) Students were having a listening activity about important inventions in history. In the middle of the listening, Yasmin wanted to go out to take a call, but the teacher did not allow her and asked her not to let it happen again. However, the teacher had to warn her around 10 minutes later again because she was constantly playing with her mobile phone and not focused on the lesson. Nader seemed distracted, too. He was also busy with his phone.

(Fieldnotes, 25/12/2023)

My notes demonstrate that Yasmin did not portray a learner profile who was highly invested to learn and improve oneself. There were two indicators of low level of investment in the reported incident above (Excerpt 71). The first one was not following the deadlines and not giving enough importance to assignments. If she had done this task at home and allocated sufficient time to prepare her presentation, she could have taken advantage of this opportunity to enhance her speaking skills better. On the other hand, it would not be reliable to directly label her as a less invested learner just depending on this particular event. However, her constant use of mobile phones was another thing that I observed many times during my other visits, as well. The teacher seemed to be bothered by this distraction because this was not the first time that he warned Yasmin. Furthermore, he kept warning her in the second block session as well. Then Yasmin had to put her phone on the teacher's desk. Even so, she might be highly motivated to learn English and could see herself as someone with advanced language skills in the future. Nevertheless, she had not been making adequate effort in class as far as I observed.

Excerpt 72 demonstrates Omid's strategic and proactive approach to language learning and career planning:

Excerpt 72

364 Omid: Because I need English for my job as well. While I'm improving my English,
365 I'm not only thinking of passing the exam but also improving myself so I can
366 start my job while I'm starting my own department, not after it's finished. So,
367 the only thing I need to start is English.

(Interview, 09/11/2023)

First, he emphasized the significance of English proficiency in his future professional goals (Excerpt 72, line 365 and 366). He did not want to improve his English skills only to pass the proficiency exam, but also, he saw them as essential for his self-growth and professional development. Moreover, he was acting proactive, as well. He does not want to wait until he completes his degree. Instead, he aimed to achieve his goals of language learning and starting a job concurrently (line 365 and 366). This can also suggest that his learner identity would shape his professional identity. Similar to Omid, Karim showed a strong commitment to language acquisition in Excerpt 73 because he was willing to study English even after passing the proficiency exam:

Excerpt 73

368 Karim: Maybe I'm going to get better in English even if I take the proficiency exam
369 and even if I pass, I will continue studying because I want to get even better. I
370 want to get perfect in it.

(...)

371 Karim: Going to the library is one of the things I achieved. I wouldn't go before now I
372 do. Even if I don't study, even if I know that I'm not going to study, being in
373 the library makes me check at least the things that we have learned. So, it's

374 good for me. I do that this is something that has been added.

(Interview, 21/12/2023)

This can be a sign that he recognized the importance of ongoing learning and development. In addition, he stated that he went to the library even when he knew he would not study (line 372 and 373). Like Omid, he was taking actions to achieve his goals. By going to the library, he might want to make regular study sessions part of his daily routine. In other words, he tried to integrate language learning into his daily life. As a learner, he portrayed a committed, invested and life-long learner profile. Likewise, Excerpts 74 and 75 illustrate Nader as a committed learner, as well.

Excerpt 74

375 Nader: I can be better to improving the English. I try to improving my English every
376 time every day because the three hours I came to the university I read. I read
377 the book or I try to study English. It's very useful to me.

(Interview, 15/11/2023)

Excerpt 75

378 Nader: My plan is improve my English and to be more focused English in the
379 semester and in the home I try to learn a little English and I want to learn
380 JavaScript language in my home.

(Interview, 15/01/2024)

It seems that he thought about his future goals before and already started shaping his life accordingly because he talked about specific plans and actions to make them come true. For example, he stated that he desired to improve his English skills. For this purpose, he tried to use the time that he spends transporting effectively by studying English and reading books and he found it “very useful” in Excerpt 74 (line 376 and 377). His emphasis on “every day” in line

376 can be also important to show us that he aimed to practice English constantly. This portrays an invested persistent learner. In addition, he wanted to learn JavaScript, a programming language, through self-study (Excerpt 75). He allocated his time at home to learning JavaScript (Excerpt 75, line 379 and 380). This demonstrates that Nader adopted a self-directed approach to learning.

We can understand that Hazin values the significance of language learning from Excerpt 76. His future goals mainly shape around his academic success:

Excerpt 76

381 Rabia: We can talk about your future plans and goals. What are you planning to
382 achieve this year or maybe next year after you become a student at your
383 department?

384 Hazin: To improve my English in prep school. After prep school to achieve my degree
385 successfully. And also learn I mean not only the degree.

386 Rabia: Are there also some other plans you want to do such as learning another
387 language or learning coding or something like that?

388 Hazin: I am already working on French. So, I will continue after I start the
389 department.

390 Rabia: Are you planning to go to France sometime in the future?

391 Hazin: Maybe.

(Interview, 30/11/2023)

First, he hoped to pass the proficiency exam and then complete his degree “successfully” (Excerpt 76, line 384 and 385). Improving his French skills was also one of the goals that he wanted to achieve in the future. After graduation, he was likely to move to France. Although his

primary focus was on his English skills now, he was planning to pay more attention to improving his French proficiency after starting his major (line 388 and 389). So, his imagined identity needs to be proficient both in English and French.

4.3.3.4 Summary

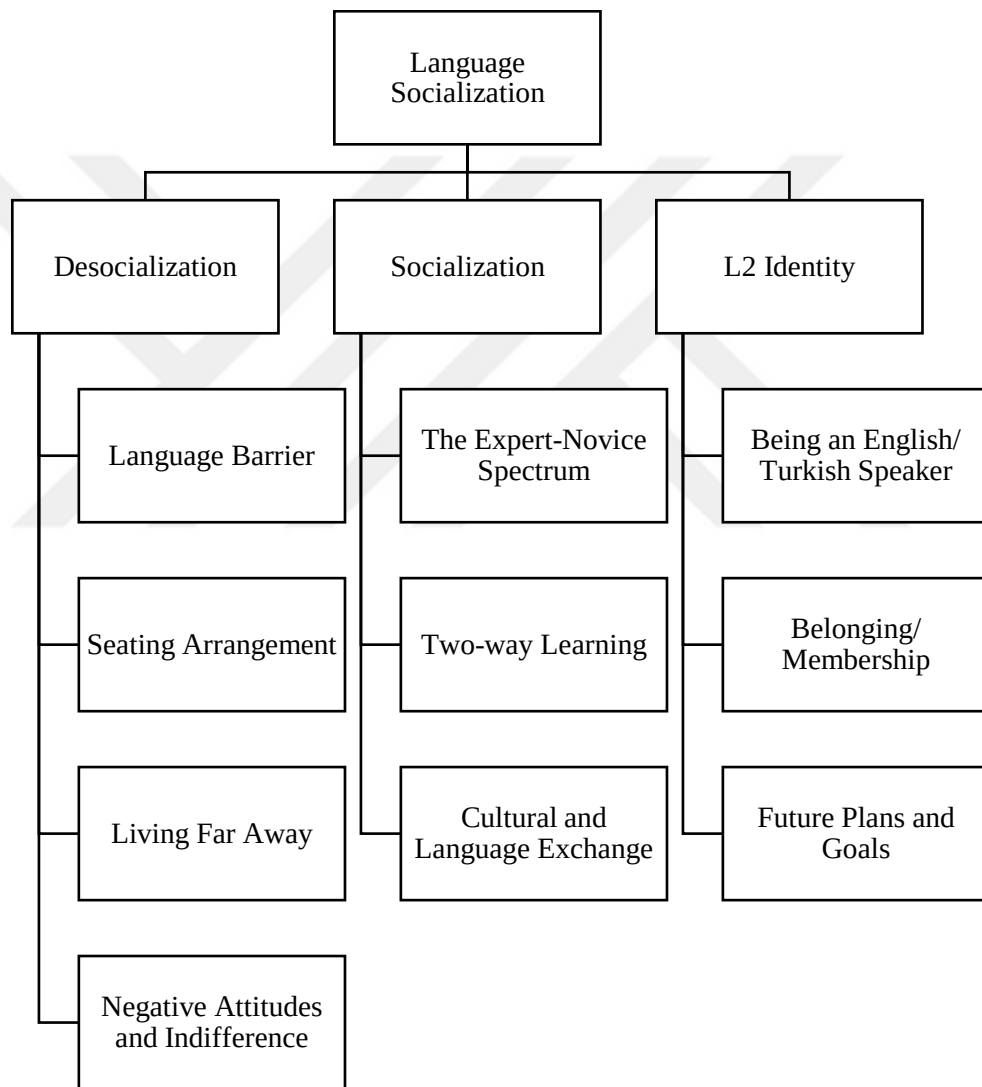
In this section, I focused on the analysis of how the participants constructed their learner identity as they kept learning English and sometimes Turkish and also interacting with their non-Iranian classmates. I presented my findings through three main themes. The first theme is about if the participants view themselves as an English/Turkish speaker. The second one presents my findings related to the participants' sense of belonging and membership and through the last theme, I analyzed the participants' future goals and plans to explore the relationship between their imagined identities and the existing learner identity.

4.4 Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I provided my analysis of the results derived from the collected data. I presented them under three main themes: desocialization, socialization and learner identity. In the first section, I analyzed the challenges that prevented the participants from engaging in more connections. The second one was devoted to the successful socialization experiences of the participants showing that they all accomplished connection with their classmates to some extent. Finally, I analyzed the L2 identity construction of the participants. I attempted to find out if they had experienced any transformation in their identities as they kept interacting with their classmates. Figure 10 demonstrates the complete list of the main themes and categories used in the analysis of the data collected through group and semi-structured individual interviews, reflective journals and class observations.

Figure 10

List of the main categories and codes used in the study



5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter includes my interpretations of the key findings about the participants' language socialization experiences and L2 identity constructions based on the language socialization (LS) framework and the poststructuralist theory as well as in relation to the existing literature and relevant studies. I presented them in three categories: socialization, positioning and learner identity in parallel with the following three research questions that shaped the entire research:

RQ 1: How do Iranian EFL learners experience language socialization in and outside of the classroom environment?

RQ 2: How do Iranian EFL learners position themselves as a learner in their interactions with their classmates?

RQ 3: Do socialization patterns interact with learners' L2 identity construction?

5.2 Socialization

Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) assert that language socialization is an ongoing, "life-long process" (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008) that begins with individuals' first social interactions with others in their lives. In addition, the sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which has been highly influential in shaping the LS framework, sees learning as a social process in which interactions and cultural tools play a significant role. So, there is an ongoing interplay between interactions and learning. Especially in ELF settings where English is the only shared language between different groups of learners, the more individuals improve their English knowledge, the more interactions are likely to happen, and vice versa. Besides, socialization does not have to take place exclusively in the classroom environment, learners can have opportunities to learn from each other even in a daily conversation without even noticing it. They can hear a new word

or saying, recognize a grammar structure, or realize the correct way to pronounce a word. It can happen in the form of a cultural exchange as well. Through social interactions, learners are likely to explore the social norms, customs, beliefs, or lifestyles of other people. Therefore, I focused on the social connections between the participants and their classmates in and outside of their classrooms to find an answer to the first research question. I attempted to find out to what extent they socialized through the language or to learn the language. Since English was the only language that all the participants and their classmates could speak, I mainly focused on the interactions including the use of English.

Previous LS studies have shown that the level of socializations among learners can vary. For example, Surtees (2018) examined the peer language socialization experiences of three Japanese study abroad students in Canada. Although one of the participants, Ami, was highly motivated to form deep and long-term relationships with others and the school where the study was conducted offered many programs such as dance club or language exchange to create room for socialization among students, her connections tended to be relatively less successful and short-term. Unlike Ami, Samantha and Lisa accomplished building multiple relationships, especially through the social activities offered by the institution. Lisa even reported that she could not find enough time to have plans with all of her friends and she felt more comfortable while talking to her roommates. Consistent with Surtees' (2018) findings, I also found a similar variation in the level of socialization between my participants and their classmates. The comparison of all the participants' experiences indicated that Karim was the participant with the fewest interactions with non-Iranian students in his classroom. He was already in the same class with Roya, and both were friends with the other Iranian student, Bahar. Starting from the first week, they developed a very close relationship, and the majority of their interactions happened within their inner circle. Unless the teacher asked them to work with others, they tended to complete the tasks together. Karim's narratives also revealed that he was not in touch with anyone outside of the class aside from Roya and Bahar. His connections with other students were usually limited to the classroom. I believe this situation stemmed from Karim's personal traits and prejudice that he and his classmates did not have anything in common owing to the age gap. Although their experiences were similar in many ways, what differs Roya's case from Karim's is that Roya was more open to collaborating with other students and she was actively

contributing to group work activities when she was paired with non-Iranian students. Furthermore, Roya was observed connecting with non-Iranian students more after Bahar dropped out of the school.

Omid's case was very similar to Roya's because he went through very identical stages of socialization. He initially had an Iranian classmate, Behrooz, in addition to the Turkish and other international ones. He was naturally close with Behrooz but he was also building relationships with a few Turkish students at the same time. After Behrooz failed owing to absenteeism and stopped attending lessons, Omid got even closer with those Turkish students, Erdem and Burak.

Depending on my observations and the participants' narratives, Nader was the most sociable student among the participants. Even during the first week of the semester, he already started expanding his social circle while others were trying to figure out how to communicate with non-Iranian students. He had two advantages: he knew Turkish, and he had lived in Turkey for two years. Nader, Hazin and Yasmin were in the same class and the rest of the students were all Turkish. Throughout the semester, Nader had a chance to get to know almost everyone in class while there were some students whom Hazin and Yasmin did not even say a word to. Recently, Hasegawa and Shima (2020) also found out that the more proficient learners are in the local community's language, the greater social circles they can form. In their study, they focused on the social networks that their three international participants had in and outside of a residence house at a university campus in Japan. None of the participants' first language was English and they were all matched with a Japanese roommate. Out of three, only the one with the best Japanese proficiency, namely Sue, was observed to have the highest number of connections at the end of the semester. In this respect, Sue's case is similar to Nader's. However, Sue was socializing only through Japanese. She avoided speaking English because of her lower English proficiency. On the other hand, I did not observe any avoidance in Nader's socialization process. He was open to socializing through both English and Turkish although he was not as proficient in English as he was in Turkish. It was probably because of Nader's higher self-confidence, willingness and investment to learn English. Even during the interviews, he insisted using English although he was constantly reminded that he could switch to his mother language. In comparison to Nader, Hazin and Yasmin's socialization process was not that successful. The

number of their relationships they built did not go beyond two or three by the end of the semester.

Considering that there were other international students in the preparatory program who were going through similar stages in the adaptation to a new country or a relatively new academic context, it could be expected the participants to form more connections with them because it would be easy to empathize, and they could have bonded over the problems and concerns they had as in McGregor's (2012) dissertation. One of her participants, Katie, preferred to connect with English-speaking exchange students more during her sojourn in Germany. One of the main reasons for Katie's preference was her poor German proficiency and she intentionally avoided interacting with German people. The other one was that Katie and other members of this English-speaking community came from similar cultures. So, she did not need to negotiate new cultural values in group interactions. On the contrary, the participants in the current study rarely talked to their international classmates. Only Karim, Roya and Omid had international classmates from other countries such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, Turkish students constituted the majority in both the classrooms and the institution. As expected, most of the participants' connections occurred with Turkish students. Consequently, a large proportion of the data came from the interactions between the participants and their Turkish classmates. The participants' tendency to connect more with Turkish students may have been driven by their desire to gain membership in the local community. Through these interactions, they had opportunities to explore the language and culture of the Turkish community, which likely made their daily lives in Turkey easier and accelerated their social integration into Turkish society.

The main discrepancy between L1 and L2 socialization is rooted in the degree of access, acceptance and accommodation within new discourse communities (Duff, 2007). In that vein, Wang (2020) highlights that successful L2 socialization is not guaranteed in every instance whereas this is a situation less common in L1 socialization. Various factors, such as having less access to the target language, rejection by the host community members, learners' own reluctance or hesitation (Duff & Talmy, 2011), can prevent learners from establishing social connections that play a critical role in enhancing language skills, exchanging opinions, beliefs, and ideologies, and gaining cultural insights. Similar challenges were also encountered in a case

study conducted by Diao (2016) in a dormitory in China. She examined how gender was negotiated and constructed in emerging Mandarin practices between three American students, namely Ellen, Mac, and Tuzi, and their Chinese roommates. In comparison to the others, Mac could not even spend enough time with his roommate. Because his roommate was doing an internship and Mac's family visited him, they could not socialize as Ellen and Tuzi did with their roommates. Furthermore, Mac's roommate tended to use English while talking to Mac, but not Mandarin. As a result, Mac experienced a poor socialization process in comparison with Ellen and Tuzi. Likewise, my participants faced plenty of challenges in their LS journey, which impeded them from building more successful relationships with their classmates.

The current study revealed that language barrier was the most frequent and common problem experienced by almost all the participants. This finding is also in agreement with that of Du (2015) who investigated identity construction of 29 American university students studying Mandarin Chinese in China. All of her participants reported experiencing a sense of "otherness" because they could not fully understand community members who spoke Mandarin with an accent. In the present study, language barrier became a more serious problem because five out of six participants were unable to communicate with the local community unless they were spoken English. For instance, Yasmin was the one who more frequently brought this issue during the interviews and seemed to suffer from it most. Although she stayed open to make new friends throughout the entire study, her proficiency level did not allow her to negotiate her feelings, opinions or beliefs freely. She managed to make only a few Turkish friends by the end of the semester. However, they were able to communicate with the help of Nader, otherwise, they could not deepen their conversations. Additionally, Roya and Hazin voiced the same issue during the interviews, yet Roya did not seem to be bothered by that. It was probably because she already bounded with Karim and Bahar and did not need to make any more friends.

Since the participants experienced frustrations owing to the language barrier and could not fluently and actively interact with their classmates as they desired, it does not mean that they stopped trying to expand their non-Iranian circle. None of the participants entirely isolated themselves from the other students. All of them showed efforts – even they were minor- to socialize in or outside of the class. To illustrate, Nader and Yasmin went to the shopping mall together with their classmates several times. Omid accompanied them once. Hazin once went to

a restaurant and had dinner with a different group. However, after this experience, he reported that he decided not to get involved in such gatherings anymore because he realized that both he and his classmates were struggling communicating freely. This difficulty further resulted in a kind of resistance against taking actions to resolve communication breakdowns. He stated that he “did nothing” when I asked him how to handle problems while communicating with his classmates. Likewise, some Chinese participants in Ou and Gu’s (2021) study reported that they felt “discomfort” and a similar struggle while speaking English to international students. In the study investigating a group of Chinese students’ intercultural communication at an international university in China, those who experienced language-related challenges were observed either to stay in their L1 community or to bond with Hong Kongese students coming from a similar background. Besides, one of Ou and Gu’s (2021) participants mentioned that she initially formed many connections with her international classmates, but eventually, they turned to “hi-bye” friendships. It means that their conversations started not going further than greeting each other within time. This suggests that language barrier, especially in ELF contexts, does not solely affect the linguistic proficiency, but also the social integration of learners to the local community. Effective socialization and the formation of social networks are often hindered by language proficiency. Consequently, learners can feel disappointed and frustrated. Constantly experiencing communication difficulties might discourage them from further attempts to socialize. Or it can even cause them to doubt their English skills and lower their self-confidence. For example, in case of a communication problem, Hazin confessed that he did not take any actions to resolve that issue; he just “kept going”. This shows that he probably felt frustrated, stopped trying to be understood by others and adopted a passive approach owing to the repetitive communication difficulties.

Aside from linguistic constraints, Zappa-Hollman (2007) found out that her participants also experienced sociocultural and psychological challenges while preparing and delivering their presentations in a study examining the academic discourse socialization of six non-native graduate students through oral academic presentations and. In addition, the findings demonstrated that the participants developed strategies to overcome these setbacks such as selecting a familiar and interesting topic, rehearsing and speaking slowly during the presentation. In a similar vein, I found that my participants employed particular strategies to

overcome the linguistic constraints as well. One of the most popular techniques was using Google Translate when they failed to transmit a message to a non-Persian speaker. Others were using body language and asking clarification questions. The one that was unique to the current study's context was to use Nader as a translator during conversations with Turkish students. In this sense, Nader played a similar role in his Iranian friends' socialization progress like Aki, the roommate of one of the focal participants in Hasegawa and Shima's study (2020). Mary described herself as an introverted person and stated that she was not good at building relationships. On the other hand, she became closer with her roommate, Aki, within time. One of Aki's important contributions to Mary's socialization was that she was very popular across the residence hall because she was organizing many social events for students. Hence, living together with Aki provided Mary with access to a great number of people and opportunities to expand her social circle. In a similar way, Nader in my study functioned as a gatekeeper like Aki and facilitated Omid and Yasmin's socialization. He did not only serve as a translator, yet also introduce them to his Turkish friends. Furthermore, Nader was also aware that he would not have formed the same relationships and could not have expanded his social circle as much as he did now. Since he already could speak another language to communicate with his Turkish classmates, he admitted that he was not investing himself in learning English as much as he could have done if he did not know Turkish. This also demonstrates how critical and influential language proficiency can be in learners' socialization process.

Secondly, another significant challenge that led participants to form fewer connections with their classmates was the distance between the school and their homes, which was not one of the issues reported by previous studies because a great deal of data in LS research came from students living in a dormitory or homestay studies (e.g., Du, 2015; Diao, 2016; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Hasegawa & Shima 2020). In these studies, learners usually have chances to socialize in their immediate environment and have easy access to a diverse population. Therefore, they do not need an additional space, put extra effort or save time for socialization. On the contrary, four out of six participants in the current study lived far from the campus. As a result, whereas being in class on time was already a challenge for them, they also had to leave the school immediately after the classes were over because of the traffic or their additional responsibilities. Naturally, this situation reduced their chances to spend more time with non-Iranian students and

organize social events. Yet, this was not the only disadvantage. Because of the location of the campus, the transportation was difficult, too. They needed to take at least three vehicles to come to school. Even the connections that the most sociable participants, namely Nader and Omid, had with their classmates were limited to the classroom environment. They did not stay in touch with their “close Turkish friends” outside of the class very much. Nader stated that he could not find any energy to socialize even if he would like to stay longer around the campus to hang out with his classmates. The circumstances for Roya were even more challenging because she was married and had two children. Due to her additional responsibilities, such as caring for her children and performing household chores, she was particularly sensitive about leaving for home early. The only place that she could use to socialize with her classmates, aside from the classroom environment, was the school cafeteria during the break times.

Disconnectedness between different groups of students or isolation from others might hinder learners from having a peaceful and supportive learning environment. These conditions can negatively affect both learners’ social relationships and their learning progress (Wang, 2020). To illustrate, Ou and Gu (2021) found out that a group segregation appeared between their Chinese participants and international students. Because of their non-nativeness, some of the participants were afraid of not expressing themselves properly or being misunderstood. So, they avoided engaging in intercultural communication. Furthermore, when their international classmates used Chinese to start a conversation, they were observed replying back in English. Therefore, isolation of the participants did not only lower their own, but also their international friends’ chances to learn from each other. Similarly, in Zappa-Hollman’s (2007) study, only two out of six non-native participants asked their native peers for help in improving their oral presentation performance. She also reported that some of the participants did not even attempt to interact with their peers unless it was obligatory. In my study, group segregation was already observable even in the first weeks of the study. During my class visits, I found it very interesting that Karim and Roya’s classroom seemed to be divided into three zones: groups of Turkish, Iranian and other international students. Turkish students sat in the back rows; the international ones had the place next to the door and the middle front row was reserved for the Iranians. The interaction level between the groups was considerably low. Roya also stated that Iranian and Arabic students sometimes helped each other at the group level but it did not happen between

them and the Turkish ones. The reasons for this disconnectedness could vary and needed for further investigation. However, it was clear that this situation led Roya and Karim to have less opportunities to bond with their classmates and socialize into a new community. One advantage of this seating arrangement was that Roya and Karim's relationship turned into a friendship also including Bahar as they all maintained sitting close to each other. As a result, they interacted with each other most frequently.

Similarly, Nader preferred to stay in the Iranian circle although he did not report any communication difficulties that he had talking to his Turkish friends. Yasmin usually sat next to him in the front row. They might have felt more comfortable around people with a shared cultural understanding together with the ease of communication. The reason why Nader did not change his place was not entirely related to his friendship with Yasmin. He also developed close relationships with Turkish students sitting close to them. With the contributions of Nader, Yasmin became friends with them, as well. Interestingly, as the other Iranian student in the same class, Hazin preferred to sit not only away from them, but also away from the majority of the class. He explained the reason for his isolation as the constant use of Turkish among Turkish students even during in-class group work activities. Within the time, Hazin deepened his relationship with two Turkish students usually sitting in front of him. The tendency to stay within the Iranian circle also applied to Omid. He used to sit near where Behrooz had his seat, or vice versa. They were usually around the front row. However, after Behrooz dropped out, Omid was observed changing his seat to be closer to his Turkish friends although he claimed that other factors, such as avoiding the teacher's attention, influenced his decision. I believe that lack of Iranian students in their classrooms could have motivated the participants to form more connections with others. In that case, communicating with non-Iranians would be inevitable to complete in-class tasks or learn about assignments, exams and announcements. This might have even led to emerge out-of-class interactions. However, it seems that having Iranian classmates created a comfort zone for the participants that they were usually not willing to leave unless they were pushed in the current study. Roya's and Omid's increased interactions with Turkish students after the departure of their close Iranian friends also supports this notion.

Prior LS studies have also shown that expert and novice learners socialize each other into a new linguistic, academic or cultural discourse through social interactions. In other words,

language socialization does not happen only in one direction, instead, it is bidirectional (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Recently, Kinginger and Wu (2018) examined the interactions between two American learners of Mandarin with their roommates in a residence hall in China and provided supporting evidence for the bidirectional nature of LS. The analysis demonstrated that both participants, namely Puppies and David, were socialized into Mandarin by their roommates mainly through contextualized learning practices such as storytelling and language game. In return, their roommates had the opportunity to explore American culture more deeply. Specifically, Puppies' roommate had a keen interest in American romantic relationships and wanted to find out if it was as depicted on TV. In accordance with the existing literature and also supporting Kulick and Schieffelin' (2004) idea of the interconnectedness of language learning and culture, Omid and Nader were observed to perform cultural exchange with their classmates. What was unique about Nader's case was that the other participants in the same class (Hazin and Yasmin) did not report any cultural exchange. Turkish students in their class interacted only with Nader when they wanted to talk about the Iranian government or the current situation there. I believe the reason why they preferred talking to Nader about such issues was likely the ease of communication. Thanks to Nader's Turkish proficiency, they did not have to have those conversations in English. In this way, they had a chance to ask anything in their mind without bothering themselves to find a way to express it in another language. Similar to Nader, Omid's Turkish friends had an interest in Iranian culture. However, it was probably at the surface level because they were interested in learning about some general topics about Iran such as Iran's capital city or the football team. On the other hand, Omid seemed to be more enthusiastic to explore Turkish culture, especially the social norms like the difference in greeting people based on gender. He was probably aware that learning social norms would positively affect his social integration to the Turkish community.

Yasmin used to think that the Iranian and Turkish cultures did not hold any similarities, on the contrary they were "completely different" from each other. Although it did not result from direct interactions between her and her peers that could be considered a form of socialization or she did not utter anything related to peer impact, she experienced a transformation in her understanding. Nevertheless, her classmates' behaviors, attitudes, ideas, beliefs, way of speaking or dressing might have been influential in the way she conceptualized

Turkish culture as well because they were the only Turkish people who she saw the most frequently for three months. In contrast to Yasmin's reconstruction of Turkish culture, two participants in Ou and Gu's study (2021) thought that they were culturally so different from their American peers that they could not sometimes internalize their cultural references or experiences. Moreover, this situation forced them to take over a passive and "silenced" receiver role in their intercultural communication.

One of the primary motivations for socialization among learners is to gain membership in a group or community (Duff, 2011). Drawing on Lave and Wenger's (1998) concept of a community of practice, community members should also share common interests. If the target group does not exhibit desirable behaviors or share similar life perspectives, values, beliefs, or opinions, individuals may experience conflict or even isolate themselves from others. For example, Kim and Duff (2012) examined the socialization progresses of two Generation 1.5 Korean-Canadian female students in Canada through a longitudinal study including both their high school and university experiences. They first socialized into a local Korean-Canadian community in Canada to gain membership and stay in touch with their Korean roots. However, even speaking English was considered as an act of betrayal to their Korean identity in this community, which was the main conflict experienced by the participants. They both aimed to become more proficient in English although they were also willing to maintain their membership to their Korean-Canadian community at the same time. Therefore, they looked for additional opportunities to enhance their English skills through work. Unlike Kim and Duff's (2012) participants, Karim set a boundary between himself and the ones with non-desirable actions in the classroom community. He thought that some of the Turkish students who usually seated themselves in the back row displayed some behaviors, such as talking to each other during lessons or signing the attendance list on behalf of someone else, that Karim did not approve, in his words, "naughty things". He explicitly said that he was afraid of being labelled as one of them if he would sit close to them. Besides, referring to those students as "kids" and finding their behaviors "childish" indicates that he did not value what his classmates did or said much. Likewise, Yasmin avoided communicating with a few Turkish students in her class because they were humiliating her. They took a photo of her hair just to make fun of her hair style a few times. Similarly, Karim thought that racism could be one of the reasons for why Turkish students

did not interact with Iranian or probably other international students. This situation addresses that learners can be more enthusiastic and invested to socialize into the target community if the community members perform more desirable behaviors.

5.3 Positioning

According to the L2 socialization framework, Duff (2011) emphasizes that learners assume two distinct roles, experts and novice, based on the direction of information flow as they socialize 'through language' or 'to use language.' The framework conceptualizes these roles as flexible and co-constructed. As learners engage in interactions, they can switch roles between expert and novice, creating opportunities for reciprocal learning (Duff & Talmy, 2011). Many studies on study abroad programs focus on students in environments where the target language is predominantly spoken, such as Japanese learners of English in Canada or American learners of Chinese in China (e.g., Surtees, 2018; Diao, 2016). In such contexts, the positioning of expert and novice roles can be somewhat predetermined, as native speakers are likely to assist sojourners in developing their language and academic skills, as well as in exploring the beliefs, customs, and values of the host community. On the other hand, how learners assume these roles in ELF settings may not be predictable in advance because the information gap between learners may not be as noticeable as the gap between native speakers and those learning English as an additional language.

In the current research context, Turkish students would be expected to play an expert role in introducing Iranian participants into the social norms, customs or beliefs of the Turkish community through social connections considering that they were the legitimate members of the host community. However, how the participants would position themselves and their classmates in their interactions in terms of English language competency was ambiguous because none of the students regardless of their background was a native speaker of English. Therefore, I aimed to explore this issue through the second research question.

My findings revealed that the participants had a tendency to assume an expert role in the interactions with their classmates. To illustrate, it was evident that Omid usually played an

expert role in conversations that he had with his Turkish friends. He said that he usually provided guidance to them by correcting their mistakes. However, he claimed that the opposite did not occur very often. Similarly, Yasmin placed herself in a superior position in terms of the accent. She thought that Turkish students did not pay sufficient attention to their pronunciation and accent. Although Hazin did not explicitly locate himself as an expert learner, he seemed to be proficient enough to detect what his classmates knew or did not know. He was aware that the Turkish students were having problems in their English learning, but he believed that they did not want to admit that they needed assistance. Hence, he was reluctant to provide support unless they sought it out. Surtees (2018) reached similar findings in her study investigating the language socialization experiences of Japanese study abroad students in Canada. In the study, the Japanese participants were required to find a native speaker, regularly talk about their English development with them and record these sessions. In addition to formal interviews with the Japanese participants and the recorded “talk-about-language” sessions, Surtees (2018) also conducted individual interviews with the native partners to explore their insights about the focal participants’ performances. The findings demonstrated that the native speakers in the study, in other words, the expert partners, were observed being reluctant to provide guidance unless the participants asked for help and showed willingness to learn through interactions with their native peers. So, having the competence and the expertise to identify the weaknesses of novice learners and assist them accordingly does not necessarily ensure the information flow between learners and motivate the expert ones to take action. It appears that many dynamics affect the actions of expert learners.

On the other hand, Karim did not claim any specific positionings for himself. He felt that both he and his classmates possessed varying strengths and weaknesses in language learning. However, he believed these balanced each other out, resulting in a generally similar level of English proficiency for the entire class. Roya also approved Karim’s idea by asserting there was no diversity in terms of language proficiency in their classroom. This situation probably reduced the information gap between learners. Therefore, novice and expert categorizations were not salient, which is less likely to observe in many sojourn or homestay studies. To illustrate, in Ou and Gu’s (2021) study, even though Chinese participants were members of the host community in China, and they were creating the majority of the population at an international university,

this did not prevent them from positioning their international classmates as expert speakers of English. In addition, the participants conceptualized themselves as “vulnerable ESL learners” and the findings revealed that the participants believed that they would never develop native-like English fluency and competence and this lack of proficiency would impede them from effectively communicating with foreigners. Another interesting finding was that one of the participants, Shi, located her international friends as experts in terms of linguistic and also political knowledge.

In the individual interviews, the participants were also asked to rate both their classmates’ and their own English proficiency on a scale of 10. The analysis of their ratings showed that all participants viewed their own proficiency level higher than their Turkish classmates. Furthermore, there was an agreement among the participants that there were also a few considerably hardworking and successful (or in Nader’s word “wise”) Turkish students in their classes. However, those with poor English proficiency made up the majority. Therefore, they gave lower ratings when they evaluated the English proficiency level of the entire Turkish student population in their class. As for the international students, only Karim, Omid and Roya could comment on their proficiency level because Hazin, Nader and Yasmin had only Turkish classmates. The analysis revealed that there was no consensus among them, surprisingly even between Karim and Roya. While Roya consistently found her own and their English levels identical, Karim asserted that they were more proficient than himself in the first individual interview. In the second interview, he changed his mind and decided that his own and their levels were identical, as well. On the other hand, Omid viewed his English competency slightly better than the international students in his class.

The current study provided supporting evidence for the dynamic and changing nature of socialization. Although the participants tended to position themselves as an expert in the sense of language proficiency, they seemed to be aware that their roles were not fixed and stable. It was also apparent that they were still likely to learn from their classmates. However, they appeared to be open to collaborating not with every student in their class. Some of them explicitly valued the students that they categorized as “successful” ones more. For example, Hazin mentioned that he wanted to work in groups including Turkish students that he positioned as “successful” or “hardworking” learners. Similarly, Nader wanted to work with “wise”

students in his class. This also indicates that the participants did not just position themselves, but their classmates as well. Although they did make such a differentiation as Hazin and Nader did, Surtees' (2018) Japanese study abroad participants in Canada stated that they valued the native speakers with experiences with international students more. The findings also suggested that not all English-speaking partners can be "good experts". To clarify, Surtees (2018) highlighted that "doing expert" might require more than having good language proficiency. She also notes that experts need to recognize novices' needs, have the ability and knowledge to infer what causes a difficulty and suggest a logical solution for them.

The analysis of the participants' narratives also revealed several examples for how the participants and their classmates switched their roles and had chances to learn from each other. For instance, Hazin assisted his Turkish friends to enhance their speaking skills mostly by teaching them the correct pronunciation of new words. In return, they were helping Hazin expand his linguistic knowledge by teaching him new words. As a result, such language exchanges positively impacted Hazin's motivation and attitudes to learning. In one of our interviews, he said that exchanging information with his friends felt "good". Roya believed that even sharing the same learning atmosphere could provide learners with numerous opportunities such as being exposed to different accents, noticing the correct pronunciation, exploring a new word or a grammar point even if they were not directly interacting with each other. In fact, a very similar example happened to Karim. Despite the lack of direct interactions, he noticed a new word that one of his classmates used while talking to the teacher. Later, he approached that particular student and asked about the word's meaning and noted it.

The findings demonstrated that Nader and Omid's socialization extended beyond English to include Turkish as well. Omid's Turkish friends introduced some Turkish words and cultural practices to him, and in return, he taught them a few Persian words. Although Omid assumed an expert role in English-related interactions, he and his Turkish friends frequently switched roles during their language and cultural exchanges. For Nader, having many Turkish classmates provided a great opportunity to practice his Turkish. They helped him learn new words and he believed that Turkish students had a more positive impact on his Turkish language development compared to his English development. This also suggests that Nader switched between expert and novice roles depending on whether he was using Turkish or English. Omid

and Nader's cases corroborate the findings of Takei and Burdelski (2018) who analyzed the dinnertime conversations of a Japanese immigrant family living in Australia to explore how the expert and novice roles were constructed and shifted between the parents and their young adult daughter. Their analysis revealed that the parents socialized their daughter into her heritage culture and language while she was helping them foster their English knowledge. Their roles were observed to shift frequently depending on the language being used. Surprisingly, the father was often positioned as the ultimate expert in Japanese due to traditional gender roles, even though both parents were highly proficient in the language.

5.4 Learner Identity

Weedon (1997) argues that social relationships are crucial for comprehending how individuals “are constructed and construct themselves”. In line with that, the final research question sought to discover if socialization patterns interacted with the participants' L2 identity construction.

Drawing on the poststructuralist theory that views identity as “diverse, contradictory, dynamic, multiple, and decentered” (Norton Pierce, 1995), one of the significant focuses of the current study was to track the identity constructions and transformations of the participants through weekly reflective journals, class observations, and monthly interviews. The analysis of the collected data revealed that only a few participants noticed changes in their identities. However, it was difficult to determine whether these changes resulted from the social interactions between them and their classmates. For example, as a learner, Omid used to have low self-confidence and a fear of making mistakes or speaking both English and Turkish. Especially during the early period of his accommodation in Turkey, he was afraid of being misunderstood in daily interactions with Turkish people. Towards the end of the term, he believed he experienced a significant transformation in his identity. He became a more confident and sociable person. I thought that it was probably because his improved language skills enabled him to communicate with others more easily and as a result, increased his confidence. Another possible explanation for this is that learners can feel more comfortable while interacting with their non-native peers and foster better language proficiency in lingua franca contexts, which

also agrees with the findings of Virkkula and Nikula (2010). They investigated the identity construction of seven Finnish engineering students who temporarily moved to Germany for their internships. Through the interviews conducted before and after their experiences in Germany, Virkkula and Nikula (2010) found out that the participants developed a sense of confidence and more favorable conceptualizations of themselves as they interacted with non-native speakers in a lingua franca setting. In a similar way, Sung (2020) provided evidence for the discrepancy in identities constructed in learners' interactions with native and non-native speakers through a recent study involving identity construction experiences of 18 Chinese undergraduate students at an international university in Hong Kong. The analysis showed that the participants adopted a language learner identity both during interactions with native students and also in classroom settings while they shifted to a language user identity in connections with non-native students and outside of the classroom. Additionally, they reported that they were able to express themselves easily and confidently in ELF communications without worrying language constraints like grammar use or correct pronunciation.

Likewise, Nader felt that learning a new language was turning him into "a new person". This highlights the interconnectedness of language learning and identity construction. Furthermore, Nader reported that his identity differed depending on the language he was using. While English-speaking Nader tended to adopt a more serious attitude, Turkish-speaking Nader appeared more sociable and talkative. This situation highlights the coexisting of multiple identities, which is also in agreement with the findings of Gu (2011) who examined the language use and identity construction of Hong Kongese and Chinese students in Hong Kong. The findings indicated that Chinese participants assumed three different identities depending on people they were interacting with while Hong Kongese students presented only Hong Kongese identity. The reason why Chinese students adopted multiple identities was that they wanted to resist stereotyped mainland Chinese culture and to gradually build a multilingual identity. For this purpose, they adopted a Chinese identity while communicating with their L1 group and also with international students who could not differentiate Hong Kongese and Chinese students. On the other hand, they tended to use a combination of three languages in intercultural interactions with Hong Kongese students to foster their multilingual identity. Similar to Chinese students, Nader in the present study presented a multilingual identity and he also switched between these

identities based on the language he was using or people he was talking to. Nader also claimed that the changes in his identity were not merely his own opinion; people around him also made similar comments about his personality while speaking different languages. This not only supports the notion that identity is context-dependent but also socially constructed (Weedon, 1997), as others' comments contributed to Nader's identity construction.

When the participants were asked if they viewed themselves as English speaker, I found out that the main criterion shaping their decision was fluency. The more fluently they could speak English, the more likely they conceptualized themselves as an English speaker. Despite all the participants' tendency to position themselves as an expert in their interactions with their classmates and to view their English proficiency better, only Omid and Nader claimed their English speaker identity without any hesitation. In Hazin's opinion, the lack of people to practice was one of the main reasons why they could not develop their English speaking skills. Because Turkish students tended to speak mostly Turkish in and outside of the class, he viewed the other international students as the potential counterparts to practice speaking. However, he did not have easy access to such students because they were in different classrooms and his own class included only Iranian and Turkish students. If the Turkish students had not avoided speaking English with the Iranian participants, it could have motivated the participants to form more connections with them, while giving the participants more opportunities to improve their own English speaking skills. This might have positively influenced their L2 identity construction, allowing them to see themselves as English speakers. In a similar vein, Ou and Gu (2021) recently revealed that their Chinese participants studying at an international university positioned themselves as "vulnerable ESL learners" because they lacked native-like accent, pragmatic competence and confidence in speaking English. Therefore, they were observed that they avoided communicating with international students or deepening their conversations. In the current study, both Turkish students and the participants, aside from Omid and Nader, may have positioned themselves in a similar way.

According to the concept of a community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1998), my participants' classrooms could be classified as communities of practice since students regularly met in their classrooms for a shared interest, learning English, and assisted each other and contributed to their classmates' language development when necessary. From that perspective,

they might have developed a sense of membership as a result of these practices and interactions. Consistent with this notion, I investigated whether participants felt any sense of belonging to their classes during the final individual interview. The analysis revealed a variety in the participants' sense of membership, even among those who were in the same class. For example, Hazin, Nader and Yasmin learned English in the same class throughout the entire semester. Hazin saw himself as a separate individual rather than being a member of his class. Nader developed a sense of belonging to a smaller group, even though he maintained a good rapport with the majority of the class. On the contrary, Yasmin identified herself as a member of the entire class even though she did not even say a word to many of her classmates. She was even uncomfortable around a few students who sometimes made fun of her and stated that she would not stay in touch with any of them next semester. Therefore, I found her answer very contradictory.

A similar discrepancy appeared in Karim and Roya's sense of membership. While Karim conceptualized himself as a separate individual, Roya felt that she belonged to the whole class. It was predictable for Karim, as he had almost completely isolated himself from his non-Iranian classmates and rarely interacted with them, which likely led him not to feel a sense of belonging with them. Although he had close relationships with his Iranian classmates, Bahar and Roya, he did not want to identify himself as a member of that small group, either. Lastly, Omid developed a sense of belonging to his class similar to Roya and Yasmin. Given the diversity in the participants' perceptions, it can be concluded that predicting how learners developed a sense of membership or belonging through social interactions was challenging in this research context. However, previous research has demonstrated that sometimes it is predictable why learners cannot develop a sense of membership to target communities. To illustrate, Chen (2010) explored how a 9-year-old Chinese student who recently immigrated to the USA negotiated and constructed his identities in three communities of practice: mainstream classroom, advanced Math group and English language learner (ELL) program. Chen (2010) found out that the participant, Evan, experienced an identity conflict. He was struggling to acknowledge his poor English learner identity in ELL program because he identified himself as a successful and smart student in other communities. As a result, he did not want to view himself as a member of the ELL community.

The analysis suggested that many of the participants were highly invested in learning English. With the exceptions of Nader and Yasmin, none of the participants missed more than a few classes over the three months unless due to an emergency. When present, they were carefully following instructions, completing tasks meticulously, or asking clarifying questions to their teacher. Their commitment to learning English extended even beyond the classroom. Hazin, Karim, and Roya reported that they often went to the school library to study English before or after their classes, or even on weekends. Only Nader and Yasmin were observed to have relatively less investment to learn English in comparison to the rest of the participants. For Yasmin's case, the problem was that the profile that she portrayed in the interviews did not entirely match with her performance during the lessons. Since the first interview, she consistently emphasized the importance of learning English for her future plans such as living in the USA. However, I noticed that she was not investing herself sufficiently to learn English, which would enable her to achieve these goals. She was occasionally paying her attention to the lessons, listening to the teacher, following the instructions or meeting deadlines and her responsibilities as a student. Instead, she was constantly busy with her mobile phone or often asking the teacher's permission to go outside and coming back to the class 15-20 mins later. Therefore, it can be concluded that she could be motivated enough but not invested to learn English. This situation might have arisen from many reasons. For example, the instructor's teaching style or the learning material may not have matched with her learning style and failed to attract their attention. Or it could be a deliberate action as a sign of resistance to learning resulting from the negative attitudes of their classmates, which was also voiced by Yasmin in the interviews. To exemplify, when she once asked a course-related question to her Turkish classmates in English, they called her "stupid" and mocked her just because she could not speak Turkish. This negative experience might have diminished her investment to learn and speak English in a classroom shared with those students. This pattern is similar to the findings of Vasilopoulos (2015), who investigated 10 adult Korean bilinguals with more than four years of study abroad experience. He found that his participants feared being labelled as "elitist" or having their actions seen as disloyal to their Korean identity if they spoke English to the local community members. Therefore, they presented their bilingual identity only when interacting with international individuals or the ones with similar experiences. Yasmin's reluctance to engage could stem from a similar fear of social rejection.

Like Yasmin, Nader was observed to perform similar actions in the class although he mentioned that he tried to study English even on his way to school or back to home many times. Compared to Yasmin, he seemed slightly more invested. I observed that he was answering the teacher's questions or making comments on the introduced task or content more often. What made Nader's case different from Yasmin's was that Nader's lack of investment was limited to the class while Yasmin appeared to show less effort even outside of the class. In parallel with Nader's case, Sung (2019) also found that the investment level of his participant changed depending on the context. He examined how a Hong Kongese undergraduate student constructed his identities with a longitudinal single-case study. After analyzing the data collected from three main contexts (university, workplace and study abroad), Sung (2019) concluded that Liam, the participant, performed different levels of investment across these settings. Although he appeared to be highly invested while actively interacting with foreign customers at work and the host family as a sojourner in the UK, he avoided presenting a competent student identity in a school setting as Nader did in the current study. Given that Nader developed the largest social circle in his classroom throughout the semester, his low level of investment during lessons was less likely to stem from negative attitudes by the local community or poor social interactions as Yasmin's did.

5.5 Summary

This chapter provided a discussion of the participants' language socialization experiences, their positioning within social interactions, and their L2 identity construction, drawing on relevant literature and the key findings of the study. The next chapter will present the conclusions derived from these findings, along with the study's limitations and recommendations for further research.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The current qualitative multiple-case study aimed to shed light on the way Iranian EFL learners in Turkey socialized into or through English and how this socialization reflected to their L2 identity construction. For this purpose, I focused on the experiences of six Iranian pre-intermediate students studying in an English preparatory program at a private university in Turkey. I employed multiple data collection tools, which were individual and group interviews, class observations, reflective journals and background questionnaires, to capture a more comprehensive and information-rich insight about the participants' experiences. The current research was informed by Schieffelin and Ochs' (1986) and Duff's (2007) works regarding language socialization and Norton's (2000) poststructuralist view of identity.

Drawing on the literature and the analysis of the collected data, I found that all the participants fulfilled forming connections with their classmates at different levels. Although they were limited, they had opportunities to exchange linguistic and cultural information. The study also revealed that language socialization of two participants went beyond English and included Turkish as well. Through peer interactions, they had a chance to expand their Turkish language and cultural knowledge. However, the participants encountered significant challenges that impeded them from having more successful socialization experiences. Language barrier, distance to the school, and the seating arrangement in classrooms were the main problems reported by the participants. A few participants also mentioned additional challenges such as other students' negative attitudes, racism and the age gap. As a result, they failed to connect with their classmates more deeply.

Secondly, although some of the participants avoided explicitly positioning themselves as an expert, the analysis of the collected data demonstrated that all the participants tended to position themselves as experts particularly during the interactions with Turkish students. Lastly, the study also revealed that whether it was a direct result of social interactions or not, a few participants reported that they noticed important transformations in their identities such as

higher level of confidence. On the other hand, one participant (Roya) stated that she did not realize any alterations in her identity, and she believed that they needed more time to experience such a significant change.

6.2 Implications

The experiences of Iranian EFL learners in Turkey in the current study provide valuable insights into the complexities of EFL classrooms and the significance of English as a lingua franca in such settings. Primarily, cross-cultural communication should be encouraged both inside and outside of classrooms to promote socialization among students from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds. One key reason for the participants' poor socialization in the current study was group segregation and the lack of teacher guidance to foster connections between different student groups. To enhance peer interaction, particularly in EFL settings, teachers and curriculum designers should incorporate more interactive and communicative activities that create opportunities for meaningful socialization. Students should also be encouraged to work with different partners, ensuring that they interact with all members of the classroom.

For international students in EFL contexts, navigating both linguistic and cultural differences can be overwhelming and can slow down their integration into the local community. To address this, institutions can offer seminars or materials on cross-cultural communication to raise awareness among both local students and newcomers. Furthermore, international students should be motivated to contribute to the learning environment by sharing their own cultural assets. Activities that promote cultural exchange and language practice can help bridge the gap between different groups. Interactions within educational settings not only contribute to learners' language development but also influence how they perceive and negotiate their identities. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for educators and policymakers aiming to create supportive learning environments that foster positive communication and identity development.

While English is expected to serve as the lingua franca in EFL settings, the frequent tendency of Turkish students to switch to Turkish during one-on-one conversations or even in-class pair or group work activities posed challenges for the participants in my research. This made it difficult for them to have meaningful conversations with classmates and hindered their social integration into the host community. This situation underscores the need for EFL educators to encourage the use of English and limit the use of L1 (native language) in the classroom. The more learners practice English with their peers, the more opportunities they have to develop their language skills and exchange cultural and linguistic knowledge. However, language barriers often hinder effective communication and integration, affecting learners' engagement and sense of belonging. Therefore, EFL teachers should facilitate student-to-student interactions by offering support when communication difficulties arise.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of extracurricular activities in EFL contexts. Student clubs, festivals, and social events such as sports competitions or movie nights provide excellent opportunities for international students to meet new people across an institution and maintain their existing connections beyond the classroom.

6.3 Limitations

The distance to school became a challenge for me as for the participants. As mentioned before, many of the participants lived far from the campus and the time they could spend in the school was very limited. This situation negatively affected also the arrangements of the interviews. I usually had to schedule the interviews 30 to 60 minutes before their classes. In fact, this was the main reason why not all the participants could attend the group interviews. Fortunately, every participant was able to join at least one of the group sessions. For instance, Karim, Omid, Roya and Yasmin attended only one of the group interviews whereas Hazin and Nader were present in both. As for the individual interviews, a couple of participants arrived late to our appointment because of the transportation, traffic or whether conditions a few times. Consequently, we had to start the interview late and keep it short so that they could go to their classes on time. Or there had been times that we had to reschedule it too, but I did not want to cancel or delay any group interviews because it was already difficult to arrange a day or time

that fitted to everyone's schedule. Nevertheless, I managed to meet all the participants individually.

Another challenge I encountered was related to my own schedule as a teacher. I conducted my study at a private university where also I worked. On Tuesdays, I was teaching in the morning in a different class. Right after having a quick lunch, I was running to the participants' classrooms to have my class observations. As can be guessed, I sometimes felt overwhelmed and had difficulties concentrating on the participants' actions.

I collected data only for one academic semester because of the time constraint. If I had managed to extend the duration of the study to the following semester, I could have had more information-rich cases because the participants would be in new classes with new classmates and start over their socialization process. The comparison of two semesters would provide a more comprehensive understanding especially of the participants' identity constructions.

Other perspectives such as Turkish students or other international ones could be included to obtain a more comprehensive understanding about the participants' experiences. In addition, the language barrier became a significant obstacle hindering them from having more social connections since all the participants were pre-intermediate students. Therefore, another study can be conducted with more advanced level learners of English.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Studies

Future research should explore the concept of information-rich environments in EFL contexts more thoroughly. Studying how these environments, which include varied linguistic inputs and cultural interactions, affect language learning and identity formation can offer a more detailed understanding of the learning process. To track EFL learners' L2 identity construction over time and provide more insights about the challenges and transformations learners experience, there is more need for longitudinal research that also includes more perspectives such as teachers and classmates. Furthermore, we cannot ignore the increasing popularity of social media platforms or digital tools. Further investigations can also focus on online

interactions among non-native learners of English to examine language socialization instances and how they negotiate and construct their identities through these online platforms.



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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the Study: Language Socialization Experiences of Iranian EFL Learners in Turkey

Research Advisor: Hakan Şentürk

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Researcher: Rabia Mercan

Affiliation: Yeditepe University

Email Address: [REDACTED]

Phone Number: [REDACTED]

Introduction:

You are invited to participate in a research study investigating language socialization experiences and L2 (second language) identity constructions of Iranian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners. This study is being conducted by Rabia Mercan, a researcher at Yeditepe University. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and this consent form provides you with information about the study and its purpose. Please read this form carefully before deciding to participate.

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study is to explore how Iranian EFL learners construct their L2 identity through language socialization focusing on interactions with their Turkish peers. The research aims to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of Iranian EFL learners in their language learning journey.

Procedures:

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to:

- Engage in individual interviews, group discussions, or written reflections to share your experiences related to language socialization and L2 identity construction.
- Share personal narratives, language learning experiences, and any relevant documents (e.g., journals, assignments) that contribute to your language socialization experience.
- Participate in audio or video recordings, where applicable, during interviews or group discussions. These recordings will be treated with strict confidentiality.

Benefits:

Participation in this study may not yield direct benefits for you. However, it can contribute to a better understanding of language socialization and L2 identity construction, potentially benefiting educators and researchers in the field of language education.

Confidentiality:

All information provided during the study will be kept confidential. Your identity will be protected by assigning a code to all data, and your name will not be disclosed in any reports or publications. Audio or video recordings will be stored securely and destroyed after analysis.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose to stop participating at any time without any consequences. Your decision will not affect your relationship with your institution or any other party.

Risks:

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you can contact the researcher Rabia Mercan, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Consent:

I have read and understood the information provided in this consent form, and I voluntarily agree to participate in the study, "Language Socialization Experiences of Iranian EFL Learners in Turkey."

Participant's Name: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if participant is under 18 years old):

APPENDIX B: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL



T.C.
YEDİTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
Avrupa Çalışmaları Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü



04.12.2023

Sayı : E.61350595-050.06-327
Konu : Rabia Mercan'ın Etik Kurul Onayı Hk.

İLGİLİ MAKAMA

Üniversitemiz Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans öğrencilerinden Rabia Mercan'ın Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Hakan Şentürk danışmanlığında gerçekleştireceği 'Language Socialization Experiences of Iranian EFL Learners in Turkey' başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler Etik standartlarına uygunluğuna ilişkin Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulu onayı ekte sunulmuştur.

Gerekli iznin verilmesi hususunu bilgilerinize arz ve rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Fatma Yeşim EKİNCİ
Rektör Yardımcısı

Ek: 28112023 Sosyal Bilimler Etik Kurul Kararları.pdf

YEDİTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ BEŞERİ VE SOSYAL BİLİMLER

ETİK KURUL KOMİSYONU

28.11.2023 TARİHLİ

45/2023 No'lu TOPLANTI KARARLARI

21) Yeditepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Klinik Psikoloji Yüksek Lisans öğrencilerinden Ezgi Güneş'in ***'The Relationship between Parentification and Separation Individuation and the Mediator Role of Mentalization'*** başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler etik standartlarına uygunluğu, Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulu tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve onaylanmıştır.

22) Yeditepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans öğrencilerinden Seher Yonca Debbağ'ın ***'The Investigation of Teaching, Social and Cognitive Presence Levels of Pre-Service EFL Teachers During the Mandatory Hybrid Education After Kahramanmaraş Earthquake'*** başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler etik standartlarına uygunluğu, Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulu tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve onaylanmıştır.

23) Yeditepe Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Yüksek Lisans öğrencilerinden Rabia Mercan'ın ***'Language Socialization Experiences of Iranian EFL Learners in Turkey'*** başlıklı araştırmasının Beşeri Bilimler etik standartlarına uygunluğu, Yeditepe Üniversitesi Beşeri ve Sosyal Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etik Kurulu tarafından değerlendirilmiş ve onaylanmıştır.

APPENDIX C: BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

A. Participant Information

Name:

Gender:

Surname:

Nationality:

Age:

Marital Status:

Contact Information

Email:

Phone Number:

Family:

What is your father's ...

Age:

Job:

What is your mother's ...

Age:

Job:

Do you have any siblings? If yes, what is their ...

Age:

Job:

Age:

Job:

Age:

Job:

Location:

- 1) Where were you born?
- 2) List the cities and countries where you have lived so far.
- 3) Where do you live now in İstanbul?
- 4) Who do you live with?
- 5) When did you move to Turkey?
- 6) Have you visited any other cities in Turkey? If yes, which cities?

B. Language Background

- 7) What is your native language (L1)?
- 8) List the languages that you speak below:

- 9) When did you start learning English?
- 10) How proficient do you consider yourself in English (L2)?
- Beginner
 - Intermediate
 - Advanced
- 11) How did you learn English as an L2?
- Formal Education
 - Self-study
 - Language courses
 - Other (please specify):
- 12) Have you lived in an English-speaking country? If yes, for how long?
- 13) What language do you use ...
- a) At home with your family members:
 - b) At school with your friends:
 - c) Outside with random people:
 - d) On social media:
- 14) What language do you think you use most in your daily life?

C. Educational Background:

- 15) Complete the table below.

	School Names	Place	Years
Primary School			
High School			
University			

- 16) Why do you study in Turkey?
- 17) Have you attended any other higher education before? If yes,
- School name: Place: Years:

D. Additional Comments:

18) Is there anything else you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation in this research study. Your responses will contribute significantly to our understanding of L2 identity construction through language socialization in EFL classes.

APPENDIX D: GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) You have completed 4 weeks of your preparatory education. What are your general comments about it so far?
- 2) Was it difficult for you to adapt to a new country and school? What was the most challenging thing that you have experienced so far?
- 3) Can you tell me about your relationships with your Turkish students? What differences and similarities do you see between you and your Turkish students as a learner?
- 4) Are you also in touch with them outside the class? What language do you usually use to communicate with them? About what topics do you talk to them?
- 5) Tell me one thing that your Turkish friends have learned from you.
- 6) Tell me one thing that you have learned from your Turkish friends.
- 7) Do you see yourself as an English speaker? Do you see yourself as a Turkish speaker?
- 8) How do you feel while interacting with Turkish peers? Do you see yourself differently in these conversations? Do you feel more or less comfortable/ confident/ knowledgeable/ modern? Do you feel like a different person?
- 9) How would you feel if you had used your first language in these conversations? Would you act differently?
- 10) Have you noticed any changes in your language use, accent, or communication style when interacting with Turkish friends compared to interactions in your home country?
- 11) In what ways do your Turkish peer interactions contribute to your language development and cultural understanding? Do you think these interactions affect you as a language learner?
- 12) In what way do you think you contribute to your Turkish friends' language learning?
- 13) Have you experienced any challenges while communicating with Turkish students because of language barriers or cultural differences? How did you overcome these challenges? Is there any specific strategy that you use?
- 14) What are your future plans and goals this year in the prep school and also after it?

- 15)** How does interacting with Turkish friends influence your motivation to learn English?
Have you noticed any changes in your language learning goals and desires as a result of these interactions?



APPENDIX E: SEMI-STRUCTURED INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Could you briefly introduce yourself?
- 2) Is there anyone else who speaks English in your family? Do you speak English with them? If yes, how often?
- 3) Have you ever used English outside the class in Iran? If yes, with whom, how?
- 4) How long have you been living in İstanbul? Are you happy with your life here?
- 5) People migrate to other countries for many reasons such as job opportunities, education, better living conditions, or family issues. What was yours?
- 6) What challenges have you experienced in your daily life/ at school so far?
- 7) Has anyone helped you deal with those problems? If yes, who?
- 8) Can you describe your typical day at school? What do you do?
- 9) Who do you interact with mostly at school? What do you talk about?
- 10) Do you interact with any of your Turkish classmates?
 - If yes, how often/ for how much time do you interact with them? What do you usually talk about?
 - If no, what are your thoughts/observations about them?
- 11) Do you have any classmates from other countries? If yes, how would you describe your relationship with them compared to Turkish ones?
- 12) How long have you been learning English?
- 13) On a scale of 10, how would you rate your English proficiency? Why?
- 14) Do you see yourself as an English speaker?
- 15) On a scale of 10, how would you rate your Turkish friends' English proficiency? Why?
- 16) Do you have any difficulties communicating with your Turkish friends because of language barriers or cultural differences? If yes, how do you cope with those challenges?
- 17) In what ways do you contribute to Turkish students' English language learning? Do they also want to learn Farsi? If yes, what do you teach them?

- 18)** In what ways do Turkish students contribute to your English language learning? Do you also want to learn Turkish? If yes, what do they teach you?
- 19)** What are your future plans and goals in the prep school/after graduation?



APPENDIX F: REFLECTIVE JOURNAL SAMPLE

As a part of my research, I have created these tasks to explore what you think about your progress in language learning and also socialization experiences with other students in and outside of the class. Please create your paragraphs depending on the provided questions.

Thank you for your contribution to my study.

- 1) How was your week in general? What did you learn?
- 2) Do you enjoy being at school? Did you have fun at school this week?
- 3) Write about one of your favorite activities/tasks that you had in class this week.
- 4) Write about one of the activities/tasks that you did not like this week.
- 5) Did you have any plans with your friends outside the class? If yes, what did you do?

Note: You can write your answers in Farsi too. They do not have to be English. Please feel free to share your opinions.

Name-Surname:

Date: