

KHAZAR UNIVERSITY

School: Graduate School of Science, Art and Technology

Department: English Language and Literature

Speciality: Linguistics

MASTER'S THESIS

Theme: Reconstruction of Azerbaijani EFL Learners' Identity in Light of SLA Experience

Student: Shamkhal Badalov Elkhan

Supervisor: Dr. Davoud Kuhi

Baku - 2024

XƏZƏR UNIVERSİTETİ

Fakültə: Təbiət elmləri, sənət və texnologiya yüksək təhsil

Departament: İngilis dili və ədəbiyyatı

İxtisas: Dilşünaslıq

MAGİSTR TEZİSİ

**Mövzu: Azərbaycanlı ingilis dilini öyrənənlərin kimliyinin ikinci dilin mənimsənilməsi
zamanı yenidən formalaşması**

Magistrant: Şamxal Elxan oğlu Bədəlov

Elmi rəhbər: t.d.ü.f.d. Davoud Kuhi

Bakı - 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW	11
1.1. Theoretical Background.....	12
1.1.1. What is identity?.....	12
1.1.2. Second Language Acquisition.....	14
1.1.3. Reconstruction of Identity and SLA.....	20
1.2. Empirical Studies.....	25
1.2.1. Studies on the Relationship between Identity and SLA.....	25
1.2.2. Norton’s Identity Approach.....	30
1.2.3. Local Studies on the Relationship between Identity and SLA.....	32
CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY	35
2.1. Participants.....	35
2.2. Instruments.....	36
2.3. Procedure and Data Analysis.....	37
CHAPTER III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	39
3.1. Interview Questions.....	40
3.2. Understanding of Identity.....	41
3.3. Importance of Identity.....	45
3.4. National Identity.....	48
3.5. Reconstruction of Azerbaijani Learners’ Identity through English.....	50
3.6. Attitudes on the Process of Reconstructing Learners’ Identity.....	56
3.7. Disadvantages of Identity Reconstruction.....	60
3.8. Views of Peers and Parents.....	62
3.9. Influential Factors.....	64
CONCLUSION	66
REFERENCES	69
APPENDICES	75

INTRODUCTION

Language is the basic tool for self-expression and self-development (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2008; Edwards, 2009). According to Ergin (1982), language is “a tool that enables understanding between people; a living being that lives and develops within its own laws; a social institution that unites and protects a nation and is its common property; An enormous structure made of sounds; It is a system of secret treaties and contracts whose foundations were laid in unknown times” (p. 14). In another saying; In addition to being a tool through which we convey our feelings, thoughts, desires and fears, a system of indicators depicting the world, it also undertakes the important task of creating awareness of togetherness among people. Because cultural, historical and religious values are largely transferred from generation to generation through language. Therefore, language is seen as an important evidence that reveals both the individual's self-identity and the identities of individuals speaking the same language in other groups (Babayiğit, 2020; Babayiğit, 2021). Whether a language becomes widespread in society or disappears over time depends on cultural, geographical and political conditions. However, it can be predicted that after the emergence of different languages in history, communities that were in contact with each other in any way needed to learn each other's languages through cultural, geographical or political relations. If the assumption that writing emerged later is accepted or based on the fact that there are communities that have not yet started using writing, it can be said that foreign language teaching and learning took place only orally in the beginning. As a result of the development of education, the increase in opportunities and the enrichment of tools and equipment, this natural and irregular form of learning has become written and disciplined (Yolcu, 2002). In our world where more than 6,000 languages are spoken, learning a foreign language has become of great importance in order to transcend borders. Learning a language other than your native language is a unique opportunity to communicate with a wider audience in our personal and professional lives. It is a known fact that learning a language has many cognitive benefits. People who speak more than one language have better memory, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, the ability to multitask, better listening skills and higher motivation than monolingual people. They also show signs of greater creativity and flexibility. In addition, being bilingual or multilingual helps prevent mental aging and cognitive decline (Karadüz, 2010; Marian & Shook, 2012).

Moreover, being able to communicate in another language allows one to get to know the traditions and customs, religions, arts, history, culture, in short, the identity of the people who use that language. It promotes greater understanding, tolerance and empathy. This provides positive attitudes and respect towards different cultures (Byram & Doye, 2005; Byram & Fleming, 1998; Karacan & Babayiğit, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that cultural awareness is an integral part of language learning. Language learning is a comprehensive and long-term experience that requires the use of the whole personality, physically, cognitively and emotionally. In this experience, language learners see themselves differently as speakers of their native language and as learners of a second language. Especially individuals who become aware of this difference experience identity confusion in the process of learning a new language (Cameron & Larsen-Freeman, 2007). For this reason, concepts such as self and identity have recently gained importance in the language learning literature.

In its broadest sense, identity includes all the characteristics of an individual. How the individual sees himself and how he is seen by society are issues related to the concept of identity. Although the concept of identity has a long history, it began to be widely used and discussed only in the 20th century as a result of modernity (Aşkın, 2007). In these discussions, how identity is formed has been a hot topic. There are two approaches to identity formation: "subjectivist and objectivist". According to the subjectivist approach, identity is the true self that is consistent and more or less the same throughout life. This approach has been criticized for emphasizing the internal structure of organisms and ignoring the external environment and changes. According to the objectivist approach, identity is an integrity, consistency and continuity formed as a result of mutual interactions and communication with an organism's internal dynamics as well as its entire external environment. The first definitions about identity can be seen in the works of symbolic interactionist and psychologist Erikson (1968). Erikson (1968) uses the concepts of identity and self together. He states that the self will be formed in the social environment where socialization takes place, that is, we will learn to take on the roles of other people in social environments. It further emphasizes that identity is an integral part of one's inhabiting social positions. Accordingly, he argues that social relationships, roles and activities affect identity development. On the other hand, Erikson (1968); It emphasizes that identity is a

chronological and dynamic concept, not an innate feature, but a process that develops throughout life. He uses the concept of identity in relation to the concept of self. It explains how the self can develop through interaction with the environment. He also sees the concept of identity as deeply shaped by historical circumstances, making this concept most attractive to those interested in psychodynamics. Therefore, it explains that identity development is affected by the psychology of the individual. Acquiring a new language also means acquiring a new identity (Lightbown & Spada, 2006; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Norton (1997) argues that language both shapes identity and is shaped by identity. Moreover, it is widely accepted that language learning and reconstruction of identity are really related (Edwards, 2009). When an individual steps into the language learning process, he brings with him his previous experiences, beliefs about himself, and attitudes towards language learning. In addition, he is affected by the social environment he lives in. This causes great influence on the process of second language acquisition.

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

The process of second language acquisition (SLA) is not solely about acquiring linguistic skills; it also involves a profound transformation of identity, shaped by the interaction between the learner's native culture and the target language and culture. While numerous studies have explored the intersection of language learning and identity construction, there remains a gap in understanding how Azerbaijani learners reconstruct their identity through the SLA experience. Azerbaijan, situated at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, boasts a rich cultural heritage and a complex linguistic landscape. As Azerbaijani learners engage with a second language, such as English, Russian, or another, their experiences of identity negotiation are likely to be influenced by factors such as historical legacies, geopolitical dynamics, and sociocultural contexts. However, there is limited research that specifically addresses the intricacies of identity reconstruction among Azerbaijani learners within the framework of SLA. The purpose of this study is to explore the reconstruction of identity among Azerbaijani learners in light of their SLA experiences. By investigating the ways in which Azerbaijani learners navigate their sense of self within the context of second language learning, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relation among culture, identity and language. Specifically, the study

seeks to: Examine the strategies and processes through which Azerbaijani learners negotiate their identity in the course of SLA. Identify the sociocultural, historical, and linguistic factors that shape the identity construction of Azerbaijani learners in the context of SLA. Explore the impact of Azerbaijan's cultural and linguistic diversity on the identity formation of SLA learners. Provide insights and recommendations for language teaching and learning practices that promote a more holistic understanding of identity and culture in the Azerbaijani educational context and beyond. By addressing these objectives, this study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on identity and SLA while also offering practical implications for language education policy and pedagogy in Azerbaijan and other multicultural contexts.

Significance and Justification for the Study

The study holds several significant implications both academically and practically, contributing to the fields of second language acquisition (SLA), sociolinguistics, and educational policy. The following points outline the significance and justification for conducting this research:

Despite the growing body of research on identity and SLA, there is a notable dearth of studies specifically focusing on the experiences of Azerbaijani learners. By filling this gap, the study will provide valuable insights into the ways in which Azerbaijani learners negotiate their identity through the process of SLA, thus enriching our understanding of relation among culture, identity and language.

Azerbaijan's unique geopolitical position at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, coupled with its rich cultural heritage and linguistic diversity, makes it an intriguing case study for exploring identity reconstruction in the context of SLA. Understanding how Azerbaijani learners navigate their identity within this multifaceted sociocultural landscape can offer valuable lessons for educators and policymakers in Azerbaijan and beyond.

The findings of this study can provide insights into effective language teaching and learning practices that promote a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to SLA. By understanding the factors that influence identity reconstruction among Azerbaijani

learners, educators can tailor instructional strategies to better meet the needs of diverse learners and foster a more supportive learning environment.

In an increasingly globalized world, intercultural competence is a crucial skill for navigating diverse social and professional contexts. By examining the experiences of Azerbaijani learners in SLA, this study can contribute to the development of educational initiatives aimed at fostering intercultural understanding and appreciation.

The findings of this study may have implications for educational policy in Azerbaijan, particularly in terms of curriculum development, teacher training, and language policy. By highlighting the importance of considering identity and culture in language education, policymakers can work towards creating more inclusive and culturally responsive educational systems.

The study will contribute to theoretical frameworks in SLA and identity studies by offering new insights into the ways in which identity is reconstructed through language learning. By examining the experiences of Azerbaijani learners within the context of SLA, the study may generate new theoretical perspectives and concepts that have broader applicability in the field.

In summary, this study holds significant implications for advancing our understanding of identity reconstruction in the context of SLA, informing language education practices, promoting intercultural understanding, and shaping educational policy in Azerbaijan and beyond. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship and practice in the fields of language education and sociolinguistics.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to meet the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated:

Q1. How do Azerbaijani EFL learners perceive and define identity?

Q2. How do Azerbaijani EFL learners assess their national identity (i.e., as Azerbaijani)?

Q3. How do Azerbaijani EFL learners perceive identity reconstruction through learning English?

Based on the above research questions, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

H1. Azerbaijani EFL learners perceive and define identity as a dynamic construct influenced by cultural heritage, language proficiency, and interactions. They view identity as encompassing nationality, ethnicity, language, and cultural values, reflecting the diverse sociocultural context of Azerbaijan.

H2. Azerbaijani EFL learners assess their national identity (i.e., as Azerbaijani) by emphasizing cultural pride, linguistic heritage, and historical consciousness, contributing to a strong sense of belonging to the Azerbaijani cultural and linguistic community.

H3. Azerbaijani EFL learners perceive identity reconstruction through learning English as a multifaceted process that involves blending elements of their Azerbaijani cultural identity with aspects of English-speaking cultures.

Definition of Key Terms

Reconstruction, as used in the research, pertains to the act of re-configuring or altering specific elements of Azerbaijani learners' identity. This may entail alterations in their self-perception, cultural associations, and linguistic behaviors due to their experiences in acquiring a second language.

Azerbaijani Learners: This word specifically denotes those who are either from Azerbaijan or strongly identify with Azerbaijani culture, and are actively involved in the acquisition of a second language. The learners may belong to various age groups and competence levels, and they could be located either in Azerbaijan or in other situations where the Azerbaijani identity is significant to their language learning experiences.

Identity refers to the complex ways in which individuals see and define themselves in relation to different social, cultural, and linguistic influences. It encompasses elements such as citizenship, ancestry, sex, faith, linguistic ability, and customary behaviors. The research

will focus on investigating the impact of second language learning on the formation and transformation of Azerbaijani learners' identities.

Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is the term used to describe the process by which individuals gain fluency in a language that is not their native or first language. The process encompasses multiple stages, tactics, and elements that impact the linguistic development of learners. These include the amount of language input they are exposed to, their opportunities for engagement, their motivation, and their individual differences.

Experience refers to the various interactions, activities, and learning opportunities that Azerbaijani learners go through while acquiring their second language. This includes structured language education in academic contexts, casual language usage in social environments, interaction with media and cultural objects in the desired language, and any additional pertinent encounters that influence their language acquisition journey.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

As with any research, there were certain limitations and delimitations in the present study. The major limitation was the relatively small sample size of Azerbaijani learners involved in the study, which may restrict the generalizability of findings to a broader population. This limitation may occur as a result of practical factors such as time constraints, limited resources, and restricted access to participants. When the sample size is limited, there is a possibility that the results may not precisely reflect the variety and intricacy of the larger community of Azerbaijani learners involved in second language acquisition (SLA). Another limitation of the study was that certain participants showed a deficiency in comprehending the notion of "identity" throughout the process of data collecting. This constraint emerged due to the diverse interpretations and understandings of the phrase among Azerbaijani learners, which potentially might impact the thoroughness and precision of their answers to interview questions or survey prompts.

To manage this research, it was necessary to delimit its methodologically in several ways. This study is delimited to a qualitative research design, focusing exclusively on the exploration and interpretation of rich, contextually embedded data to examine the reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity in light of second language acquisition (SLA)

experience. Another delimitation is that only students majoring in English teaching and translation at Khazar University are selected in the study because they have been exposed to English more and have more knowledge about what identity is than younger learners.

CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW

Fluency in a foreign or second language (FL/SL) and the ability to comprehend both native and non-native speakers of that language go beyond basic communication and information exchange. Furthermore, becoming a multilingual speaker (MLS) is now a widespread occurrence. By acquiring a foreign language (FL), MLSs gain more than just knowledge of the denotations of words from dictionaries and the ability to follow a set of rules known as grammar. They also develop an understanding of the contextual, cultural, and pragmatic connotations of these words. During this process, individuals assimilate vocabulary, grammar, as well as linguistic and socio-cultural nuances, thereby transforming language learning and usage into a dynamic and subjective experience (Kramsch, 2014). These processes of constructing meaning have a tendency to initiate alterations in the identities of speakers, enabling them to acquire new identities or even leading to the loss of their previous identities. Hence, the development of one's identity, which occurs unconsciously through identity formation, and consciously through identity construction, encompasses various emotional, psychological, social, cultural, and symbolic processes.

People acquire foreign or second languages for different reasons, including education, survival, career advancement, or personal pleasure. Irrespective of the objectives, learners develop distinct identities during the process of acquiring the target language(s). According to scholars like Giddens (1991) and Bourdieu (1977), identity creation is a dynamic process rather than a permanent and unchanging outcome. According to Wenger (2000), an identity is not a conceptual notion or a designation, such as a title, an ethnic classification, or a characteristic of one's personality. It is a personal encounter of feeling a sense of inclusion or exclusion. An individual with a strong identity forms profound bonds with others based on shared pasts and experiences, reciprocity, affection, and reciprocal obligations" (p. 239). Concurring with Wenger, I maintain that those who have acquired foreign or second languages would acknowledge that the process of language acquisition entails the formation of novel identities with several dimensions and intricacies. Aside from being a language learner, an individual may possess other identities that are influenced by their gender, social class, physical ability, and so on.

Nevertheless, the researchers and theorists of second/foreign language instruction have paid less regard to the notion of learner identity. According to Block (2007), prior to the 1990s, there was a lack of research on identity as a place of conflict, the process of managing differences, uncertainty, the relationship between structure and individual agency, communities of practice, symbolic capital, or any other concepts related to post structuralist identity (866- 867).

1.1. Theoretical Background

This part aims to critically examine the existing theoretical literature pertaining to the current research and assess its compatibility with the prevailing perspectives in the field. Since this research touches upon several aspects of identity and second language acquisition, it has been necessary to divide the review of the literature into separate sections. This section will begin by providing a detailed explanation of identity reconstruction and the process of learning a second language. It will then proceed to create the theoretical foundation for the study. It will provide information on the types of identity, its relationship with learning a second foreign language, and its reconstruction while learning a foreign language. Lastly, the following section will conclude with an examination of the empirical foundations of identity approaches to Second Language Acquisition (SLA), along with the corresponding research conducted in the setting of Azerbaijan.

1.1.1. What is Identity?

Identity pertains to an individual's response to the inquiry, "Who are you?" This question can be asked and answered either directly or indirectly, to other people or to oneself. When discussing identity, there is a tendency to focus on either personal aspects or social aspects, as well as either individual experiences or societal influences. This chapter presents essential factors for a comprehensive comprehension of identity, asserting that identities are inevitably both individual and societal, in their substance and in the mechanisms by which they are shaped, sustained, and transformed throughout time. Utilizing insights from psychology and related fields, this study explores the vast and interwoven aspects of identity content and the convergence of societal, relational, and individual processes that shape the formation, maintenance, and evolution of identities

across time. The dual nature of identity, encompassing both personal and social aspects, grants it significant theoretical potential by offering a means to gain understanding of the connection between the individual and society.

Identities are intricate and diverse constructs that span multiple elements of self-perception, affiliation, and social classification. Researchers from several academic fields, including as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and cultural studies, have examined various forms of identities, acknowledging that individuals might possess numerous identities that intersect and change over time. Here are few prevalent categories of identities:

Cultural identity encompasses the feeling of affiliation and connection to a specific cultural group or community. Cultural context refers to the collective norms, traditions, values, beliefs, language, and practices that influence how individuals perceive themselves. Cultural identity is frequently shaped by elements such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, and historical history. **Ethnic identity** refers to the feeling of belonging and identifying with a certain ethnic group or lineage. It encompasses personal emotions of unity, satisfaction, and affiliation with one's racial ancestry, along with acknowledgment of common cultural customs, language, and encounters within the collective.

National identity is the expression of an individual's sense of belonging and loyalty to a specific nation-state or country. National sentiment covers emotions of patriotism, allegiance, and connection to the political, cultural, and historical symbols and stories associated with one's country, including citizenship, language, and national emblems.

Gender Identity: Gender identity pertains to an individual's internal perception of their own gender, which may correspond with or deviate from the biological sex assigned to them at birth. It refers to an individual's comprehension of their own gender identity, which can be categorized as male, female, both, neither, or another gender identity. Gender identity is shaped by social, cultural, and psychological variables and has a significant impact on how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others.

Religious identity refers to an individual's association with and commitment to religious beliefs, rituals, and customs. It includes a feeling of being part of a religious group,

following religious beliefs and customs, and participating in spiritual activities. Religious affiliation can have an impact on people's beliefs, actions, and interactions with others.

Linguistic identity refers to an individual's connection with language and their use of communication methods. Linguistic identity encompasses the recognition and association with particular languages or linguistic variations, along with one's beliefs and behaviors regarding the use of multiple languages and language use in social contexts. Linguistic identification frequently intersects with cultural and ethnic identities and can impact an individual's sense of belonging and social integration.

1.1.2. Second Language Acquisition

The language(s) learned after acquisition are generally defined as second languages (Benati and Angelovska, 2016; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 2014; Littlewood, 2007; Mitchell and Myles, 2004), and are also commonly called the target language (Saville-Troike). (Saville-Troike, 2012). Second Language Acquisition includes informal second language learning/acquisition that takes place in natural communication contexts, formal second language learning/acquisition that takes place in formal educational settings, and second language learning/acquisition that involves a combination of these environments and conditions. According to the examples given by Saville-Troike (2012), informal learning occurs when a Japanese child is taken to the USA and learns English by playing with children who speak his native language and by going to a school where no specific language is taught. Informal learning is also when an adult Guatemalan immigrant in Canada learns English through communication with native speakers or other workers who speak English as a second language. Formal learning occurs when high school students in England take a French class, or when a lawyer in Colombia attends evening class classes to learn English. The combination of formal and informal learning refers to an American learner learning Chinese in a classroom in Taipei while also using Chinese for daily life experiences in a social interaction environment outside the classroom. Similarly, a combination of formal and informal learning occurs in Israel when an adult Ethiopian immigrant learns Hebrew both by attending a private class and by interacting with other workers or residents. It is seen that some researchers make various distinctions in naming the language being learned

and the act of learning, based on formal and non-formal contexts. Accordingly, we encounter the distinctions between second language and foreign language, as well as learning and acquisition, and depending on these distinctions, we encounter the terms Foreign Language Learning and Second Language Learning/Acquisition.

A second language, as mentioned above, is any language learned or acquired other than the mother tongue (Benati and Angelovska, 2016; Ellis, 2008; Loewen and Reinders, 2011). According to this definition, second language also includes a foreign language. A foreign language is generally speaking a non-first language. More specifically, it is a language that is not spoken as an official language or majority language in a country (Loewen and Reinders, 2011). A foreign language is not primarily used in learners' social contexts, nor does it function as a widespread means of communication. It is learned in the formal education environment, within the framework of the educational program, but it has no priority or applied use (SavilleTroike, 2012). For example, a child who starts learning English in primary school in Turkey is in the process of learning a foreign language. On the other hand, the child learns his second language because he has largely completed the acquisition of his mother tongue. As can be seen in the definitions of second language and foreign language, a foreign language can be a second language or a second language can be a foreign language, depending on the learning sequence. However, a clear distinction is made between second language and foreign language in order to determine the context in which the target language is learned or based on context.

When the target language is learned in an environment where this language is spoken - for example, learning English in England - it is considered as a second language, and when it is learned in environments where this language is not spoken, especially in a classroom environment, for example, learning German in Turkey, it is considered as a foreign language (Vanpatten and Benati, 2015). :181). Based on this perspective, Foreign Language Learning and Second Language Acquisition are mostly mentioned. Second Language Learning/Acquisition describes the learning of the target language in natural environments and/or formal education in the environment where native speakers live. Foreign Language Learning is used to refer to language learning in contexts where the target language is not spoken outside the classroom, and Second Language Learning/Acquisition is used to refer

to language learning in contexts where the target language is spoken outside the classroom. The main distinction between second language and foreign language contexts is based on the amount of exposure the learner has to the target language outside the classroom and the opportunities to experience the target language. In the foreign language context, language input is less and limited than in the second language context. So far, it can be seen that a differential determination has been made between a foreign language and a second language within the framework of conditions based on learning contexts, and the concepts of learning with a foreign language and learning and acquisition with a second language have been matched. In these mappings, learning marks the process of becoming a competent user of the target language, and acquisition marks the general second language development process that occurs when learners experience second language input in natural communication environments outside the educational environment (Loewen and Reinders, 2011). However, it should be noted that in some of the mentioned mappings, the use of the concepts of learning and acquisition is optional and the concepts are used interchangeably as superordinate terms (e.g., Ellis, 2008; Lightbown and Spada, 1999). However, since the second language, due to its location, involves a natural communication environment, and acquisition involves the intuitive and natural reception and internalization of language input, as in the mother tongue, some researchers (e.g., Krashen, 1985; Ringbom, 1987) emphasize the learning of a second language in natural contexts. They prefer the term Second Language Acquisition for this purpose. The social and functional position of the second language marks the process of "acquisition" of a second language. When considered from a social and functional perspective, a second language is defined as "a nonnative language that is used for communicative purposes in a country or region, has an instrumental function in the fields of education, management and economy, but is not a native language", for example, in the context of social/regional bilingualism, second language. It is possible to talk about language acquisition. The definition of a second language, from a functional perspective, as "the dominant language needed in formal environments or for education, work and other basic purposes" refers to the process of second language acquisition, for example, the second language acquisition of heritage language learners. In the specified contexts, there is a sequential acquisition process in which the second language is learned with natural participation and largely incidentally, and the knowledge and skills that constitute language competence are internalized. Regarding this, Nicholas and Lightbown

(2008) state that second language acquisition occurs in childhood until a certain age and in adulthood.

On the other hand, especially in Nativist approaches, it is seen that, in addition to contextual features, acquisition and learning on the cognitive plane are evaluated as concepts expressing two different processes, and accordingly, a clear distinction is made between Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning. According to Krashen (1981, 1985:1), adults have two separate and independent paths in developing second language competence. The acquisition process is the spontaneous and natural assimilation process that occurs through understanding and use of the target language in meaningful communicative processes. It is a similar process to that in which a child acquires his or her native language. Children use language without being aware of the rules that govern its use. Learning is the process of consciously studying a second language, either individually or in an educational environment. Learning is largely determined by correcting mistakes and studying language rules explicitly. According to Krashen, acquisition and learning are used in specific ways in second language acquisition. Education has only one function; is the router (monitor) or controller (editor). The router is a mental mechanism for controlling and correcting the output. This mechanism, by its function, is related to acquisition and learning. Acquisition starts the speaker's utterances and is responsible for speech fluency. The router changes the output of the acquired system before or after the utterance is produced (Krashen, 1985:1-2; McLaughlin, 1987:30). According to Krashen, acquisition can only occur under one condition: experiencing language in communicative contexts. Since learning involves explicit linguistic information, it remains limited in the learner's ability and cannot turn into acquisition. According to this assumption, foreign language learning is a process that takes place with conscious participation in formal education environments (Johnson and Johnson, 1999:134; Johnson, 2001:76; Krashen, 1985:1-2) and cannot turn into acquisition due to the determined limitations. McLaughlin (1987) criticized the distinction between acquisition and learning by stating that it is impossible to observe the consciousness element underlying Krashen's acquisition-learning assumptions in the individual's mind. Schmidt (1986, 1990) emphasizes that the concept of consciousness should be redefined in second language acquisition and that there may be a difference

between purposefulness and randomness within the scope of the concept of consciousness. It states that in the case of intentionality, learners come to the educational environment with the purpose of learning, and in randomness, they do not aim to learn, but in both cases, they exhibit a conscious attitude and focus on the input. According to Ellis (1997), this distinction between acquisition and learning is quite "sharp". Because with the distinction made, the knowledge learned can never be acquired knowledge. However, the internalization of a grammatical structure through repetition, that is, its spontaneous production, constitutes an example against this situation. Regarding the learning-acquisition distinction, Loewen and Reinders (2011:68) state that there is not enough evidence regarding the qualitative difference of cognitive processes in second language learning.

Vanpatten and Benati (2015) state that making a distinction between Second/Foreign Language Learning and Second Language Acquisition may be useful in sociolinguistic terms to clarify the contexts in which the target language is spoken and not spoken outside the classroom. However, according to researchers, this distinction has little linguistic and psychological validity. "Individuals and language learning mechanisms do not change from context to context. Contexts affect the pace of learning and ultimate competence, but not the learning processes. The mind/brain functions the same in a formal educational environment or in the context of interaction with other speakers. Social contexts may vary regarding whether the language is spoken or not spoken; "The quality and quantity of input and interaction may vary for learners in different contexts, but the linguistic, psycholinguistic, and cognitive dimensions of language acquisition do not vary by context." (Vanpatten and Benati, 2015:181). Mitchell and Myles (2004) gather all learning under the umbrella of Second Language Learning, stating that learning limitations and purposes may vary, but the learning processes are the same.

Ellis (2008) emphasizes that the distinction between Second Language Learning and Second Language Acquisition has superficial validity and is also problematic, stating that it is difficult to determine the "consciousness" of the processes, and therefore it is more accurate to provide a broad framework on how learning processes can be similar or different. indicates that it will happen. Ellis uses the superterm Second Language Acquisition to include all learning contexts. Similarly, Doughty and Long (1998),

Vanpatten and Benati (2015) brought together learning contexts that include natural, guided and a combination of the two, and Saville-Troike (2012) brought together formal second language learning and informal second language learning under the umbrella term Second Language Acquisition. In summary, it is seen that the term Second Language Acquisition is used in the literature as a superordinate term marking second language learning in various learning contexts. In this context, we encounter with a series of questions, for example;

- How the second language develops,
- How the process of second language development can be compared to first language development,
- Why children acquire their first language flawlessly, while most adults cannot replicate this experience in a second language.
- What are the individual factors
- What is internal to the learner, what is taken from the learning environment other than raw language data,
- Whether second language learning occurs in the same way for all learners or whether there are significant individual differences that affect the process and speed of acquisition,
- How the educational practice, or more generally the learner's cultural group, influences or is affected by second language learning,

It is seen that these questions are tried to be answered through theoretical and experimental studies carried out with various research methods (see Ellis, 2008; Ortega, 2009; Vanpatten and Williams, 2007).

A series of assumptions about language learning have been put forward by combining this approach with Behaviorism. According to behaviorism, learning a native language is a habitual acquisition; It occurs as a result of the repeated combination of a chain of positively reinforced warnings and reactions. Foreign/second language learning is the process of forming new habits that can exceed the influence of habits acquired in the mother tongue. It is assumed that a foreign/second language learner starts learning a second language with the habits formed in his/her mother tongue. During the learning process, native language habits negatively affect the second language, and this leads to mistakes in

the second language. Difficulties that learners may encounter and possible negative transfer errors can be determined in advance by Differential Analysis (Ergenç, 1983:195-206). Reflecting this determination in teaching with appropriate teaching techniques allows mistakes to be prevented. Cognitivist researchers who criticize the Discriminative Analysis technique and especially question the theoretical order of differential description argue that the difficulties and language errors experienced in the learning process cannot be attributed to negative interlingual transfer. Other mechanisms that cause errors in the learning process should also be taken into consideration. The Error Analysis technique developed accordingly provides information about how the second language system is internalized.\

Interlanguage is a system consisting of rules that develop through different cognitive processes such as transfer, supergeneralization and simplification (McLaughlin, 1987:61-63). Interlanguage creates a language system independent of the mother tongue and the learned language. It is determined by rules that represent the assumptions made by the learner, which are similar to the rules of the first and second language in terms of systematicity. The concept of interlanguage refers to a cognitive orientation in the study of learning processes that emphasizes the ever-changing and active contribution of the learner. It is stated in the literature that D2E Research began to stand out as a field in the 1970s with the studies of Corder and Selinker (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 2014).

1.1.3. Reconstruction of Identity and SLA

Identity is formed within the parameters of social, cultural, religious, and political frameworks. This encompasses not only an individual's self-awareness, but also their perception of how society defines the self, both within their specific social group and in the larger society. Bhabha (1994) asserts that an individual's cultural identity can only be determined and expressed in an uncertain third space that exists between the individual and the world. This space is influenced by both the social processes of identity formation and the personal sphere, and its boundaries are shaped by one's own comprehension. The person in question is referring to his own self. Consequently, inquiries regarding one's identity remain perpetually unresolved as the process of "self-understanding" is ceaseless. Identity is shaped by social, cultural, and political forces that influence every element of daily life. This prompts individuals to critically examine and reconsider different ways of living

within a specific community. The process of questioning is perpetual, as identity consistently manifests as an encounter with ambiguity and skepticism. Language, language teaching, and materials are sociocultural phenomena that play a significant role in the negotiation of different identities. According to Kramsch (1993), sociocultural identities are dynamic and not fixed structures that English language teachers and students possess when they enter the classroom and retain unmodified after the lesson or course. Norton (1997) found that the connection between language and identity is intricate, contradictory, and diverse when viewed from a poststructural perspective. This relationship is influenced by various factors and is interconnected with larger processes that can be dynamic, co-constructed, coercive, or collaborative over time and space. These findings have implications for applying this understanding in the classroom.

Identity has become a prominent topic in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as scholars have recognized the importance of identity in language learning. Norton (2000) defines identity as an individual's perception of their connection to the world, how this connection is shaped over time and in different environments, and their understanding of potential future outcomes (p. 5). Comprehension of identity in language acquisition and the correlation between the language learner and the learning environment sheds light on the aspects that previous theories about the impact of emotional factors were unable to clarify. Specifically, it explains why certain learners achieve success while others fail, despite having seemingly comparable abilities, levels of motivation, and circumstances. Nevertheless, ideas of motivation suggest that learners who deliberately avoid engagement are unable to generate such opportunities for themselves (Norton, 2000). In addition, motivation theories have not provided an explanation for why an individual may display motivation and actively seek interaction with speakers of a target language in certain situations, yet exhibit reluctance, lack of motivation, and disengagement in other situations. Research on identity is starting to illuminate this apparent paradox in second language acquisition.

Language learning goes beyond acquiring linguistic skills; it involves negotiating and reconstructing identity. When individuals engage with a new language and culture, they navigate complex identity dimensions influenced by socio-cultural background, language proficiency, and personal experiences.

Sociocultural theorists argue that learning takes place through engagement in social activities. Researchers in this field mainly rely on the writings of Lev Vygotsky, who posits that children acquire knowledge by assimilating the behaviors, customs, language, and concepts of their surrounding community. The sociocultural approach regards learning as being intricately connected to social events, where individuals engage with other individuals, objects, and occurrences. Tharp and Gallimore (1988) assert that a significant characteristic of this viewpoint is that more advanced cognitive abilities emerge via social interaction. Vygotsky contends that comprehending a child's growth necessitates an examination beyond the person. It is necessary to analyze the external social environment in which the individual's life has evolved. (Valenzuela, no date, paragraph 1). In the realm of society, the identity of individuals plays a crucial role in their personal growth and the establishment of connections with both themselves and others. Moje argues that identity is significant because it plays a role in how individuals comprehend the environment and their interactions with it, including their engagement with texts. Moje's statements have significant significance for comprehending the functions of identity in the process of learning, which is inherently a social endeavor. The identity of individuals is significant not just in shaping their interpersonal connections, but also in influencing how others perceive and comprehend them. These understandings significantly influence people's behavior towards each other. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that identities frequently undergo transformations. However, numerous educational scholars struggle to comprehend the concept of learners possessing multiple identities. Each of an individual's several identities enhances their ability to excel in a specific career compared to others. Individuals, as they progress through life, acknowledge and identify with different aspects of their identity. However, their comprehension of their own subjective perspectives significantly influences the way they form connections with others. In this context, the concept of relationship extends beyond interpersonal connections to include the connections with written materials. In this article, the term "text" is defined as "cultural tools" and "ways of knowing" (Moje, Dillon, & O'Brien 2000, p. 167), despite the fact that it has acquired several interpretations. Hence, the formation and preservation of individuals' identities are intricately linked to their interactions with diverse texts. Researchers and teachers should recognize that learners have diverse and evolving identities, rather than

simply considering them as people with certain learning needs, such as English language proficiency.

In the prevalence of many identities is a widespread occurrence, as demonstrated by the increased accessibility of information and ease of contact in our worldwide society, which necessitates the acquisition of language skills. The process of second language acquisition (SLA) involves adopting a new identity, which is more intense among polyglots than monolingual speakers. Polyglots, who speak multiple languages, can gain insights into different worlds through their languages and incorporate these worlds into their own identities. Likewise, the act of associating oneself with a different language, culture, and the people who speak that language and belong to that culture (Risager, 2005) can be understood as a consequence of a continuous and ongoing process of development. Identity is not separate from the circumstances and environment in which it exists. Instead, it develops and is formed through social interactions. Therefore, identity may be seen as the social behavior that defines a person or a group (De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012, pp.156-159). Kramsch (2009, p. 18) defines identity creation as the ongoing development of subjectivity, which is formed through the use of symbolic forms. Languages have the ability to symbolically include, exclude, or discriminate against specific persons, groups, or communities based on disparities in language usage. Identity formation through differentiation indicates one's connection to the Other, resulting in the marginalization of specific persons or groups. This process develops and sustains social structure and hierarchy (Butler, 1997, pp. 3-41; Hall, 2000, pp. 17-18). In addition, identity is also subjected to racial and gender categorization, which might hinder academic success. For instance, it is extremely unlikely that an individual belonging to a racial minority would thrive as a student in a school where white dominance and prejudice prevail. Similarly, it is improbable that this person would feel a connection to a language and culture that promotes racist beliefs. Undoubtedly, this person will express opposition to the SLA and assume a persona of defiance. Despite being unrelated to desire, investment, or ability, this impediment can impede learning progress. MLSs' identify and diverse identities influence their cognition, ideas, emotions, speech, and behavior during the process of second language acquisition (SLA). Kramsch (2009) classified symbolic FL use into two categories from a post-structuralist perspective. The first kind posits that each language consists of a collection of symbols that represent the sociocultural and psychological aspects

of a certain speech group, which are agreed upon through convention. Consequently, by acquiring and adhering to certain linguistic norms, learners are given symbolic permission to join a specific speech community and consequently gain acceptance as members of this community. Utilizing this form of symbolic language enables MLSs to have a deep understanding of the new language and the social aspects intertwined within it. Nevertheless, learners may find their ability to express themselves and the content they may communicate restricted by the necessity to adhere to regulations. This particular form of symbolic language usage highlights the intrinsic connection between language and culture in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (Kramsch, 1998). Conversely, the second form of symbolic language usage is the unfamiliarity of the new language, which allows learners to generate personal and unique interpretations that do not correspond to how native speakers derive meaning in their original language. The utilization of symbolic language allows learners to establish a sense of detachment from the unfamiliar lingua culture or manga culture (Risager, 2005). The terms used interchangeably denote the intrinsic relationship between language and culture across various dimensions. The subjective practices of MLSs generate different emotional responses in learners, highlighting the fact that language acquisition involves the engagement of the brain, mind, and body of the learner (Damasio, 1994, 2010). Language learning and use elicit core identification reactions in MLS that Kramsch (2009) categorizes as 'desire'. Being able to speak many languages allows MLSs to explore new avenues of self-expression that are linked to the range of languages they are proficient in. Certain individuals enthusiastically embrace the linguistic, social, cultural, and psychological changes that occur with acquiring a new language to reconstruct their sense of self and effectively become distinct individuals when communicating in that language. This identification response elicits many emotional reactions in MLSs, such as enthusiasm, pride, terror, or worry, when using the language. Nevertheless, certain learners may perceive Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as merely assigning other terms to identical concepts in a different language, all the while expressing their reluctance to embrace the notion of transformation within and via the new language. However, these sentiments reveal the significant transforming power of SLA, which poses a risk to the MLS's current identities. These learners have a preference for using the meaning-making methods that are familiar to them in their first language (L1), along with the cultural aspects that are intertwined with it. In her research, Fekete (2019) introduced the concept of "the language

learner's imagined second language (L2) habitus" to describe how multilingual speakers (MLSs) express themselves, think, experience emotions, and behave differently when speaking an L2 compared to their native language (L1). Research conducted by Fekete (2019, 2020, 2021, in press), Ótrott (2023), and Williams (2020) has provided insights into the repetitive patterns that define the language learner's conceptualized L2 habitus. Regarding cognition, MLSs exhibit distinct patterns of thinking, such as thinking like native speakers, generating novel ideas, or experiencing a shift in self-perception. Variations in speech typically involve adjusting volume, pitch, and accents, or employing code-switching when speaking different languages. When it comes to behavioral changes, language learners often report recurring patterns such as displaying varying levels of confidence, altering their use of body language and facial emotions, and adapting their approach to tasks by employing alternative languages. Ultimately, learners exhibit a variety of emotions when transitioning between their languages or in various communication scenarios, as well as when engaging with diverse conversation partners. Fekete (2019) discovered that the intensity of MLSs' emotional reactions to SLA corresponds to the changes they have undergone and incorporated through language.

1.2. Empirical Studies

1.2.1. Studies on the Relationship between Identity and SLA

The empirical studies reviewed in this section provide valuable insights into the dynamic process of identity reconstruction among language learners within the context of second language acquisition (SLA). Grounded in diverse theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches, these studies offer nuanced understandings of how individuals negotiate and navigate their identities as they engage with new languages and cultures. By examining the interplay between linguistic, cultural, and social dimensions of identity, these empirical investigations shed light on the complex factors that shape learners' sense of self in multilingual contexts. Additionally, empirical studies in this section delve into the role of language attitudes and ideologies in shaping learners' identity affiliations and language choices. By examining learners' perceptions of their own language abilities, as well as societal attitudes towards bilingualism and multilingualism, these studies provide insights into the socio-political dimensions of identity construction in SLA contexts. Moreover, by employing quantitative surveys and experimental designs, researchers have sought to quantify the relationship between language proficiency, identity salience, and

acculturation outcomes among language learners.

However, the complexity of the relationships between contexts, language use, and social memberships is evident. In addition, Miller (2000) stated that language is the basic way of representing social identity and forming social groups. In summary, an individual's language influences the way that individual perceives himself in relation to his environment and therefore has a crucial impact on the construction and development of his identity.

Giampapa (2001) investigated how Italian-Canadian adolescents construct their identities through their use of language; found that participants had multiple identities and positions that changed and developed in different environments. The researcher stated that language is a powerful factor in helping participants find a place in society and have an identity. He also concluded that the participants constantly displayed different identities, that the identity was never permanent, but was a complex, multicultural and multilingual expression of the participants' desires. In his study, Duff (2002) focused on students' language learning and identity construction in a language class consisting of 28 local and foreign students for two years in Canada; During this period, he watched the students and the teacher and interviewed the students. The findings of the study revealed that although the teacher acted with a personal and official ideology that respected cultural diversity and tried to provide speech rights to local students, this did not produce the expected result of providing equal access to all. Most of the foreign students

They were observed to remain silent and avoid verbal interaction for fear of being criticized or ridiculed for their English; It was understood that they did not take the identity positions that the teacher attributed to them. In addition, it has been observed that both local and foreign students show different identities, discourses and expectations regarding how and which language they should speak throughout the process. This reflects Norton's definition of identity as a dynamic and complex process. In his study of adult immigrants to Canada, Cervatiuc (2009) reveals how successful 'linguistic and cultural' identity formation helps students develop themselves professionally and achieve high proficiency in the target language. In the study, 20 immigrants, who resisted being positioned as outsiders by native English speakers and developed their own counter-discourse, relied on their cultural 'investments' as multilingual and multicultural people and

acted actively. They actively participated in conversations with native English speakers in different social environments and assumed this identity by defining themselves as 'legitimate beings who deserve to talk and be listened to'. In this way, they have shown great success in learning the language. Drawing on Norton's (2001) concept of 'imagined communities', Cervatiuc (2009) describes the success of immigrants as being a member of an imaginary 'multilingual and multicultural community of people'.

There are very few studies addressing issues related to the social and cultural aspects of students studying abroad. Some studies suggest that speakers can show their identities through their native language, as well as in a second language they have learned. For example, in studies conducted by Kasper (1992) and Tamimi Sa'd (2017) and Modirkhamene (2015), it was observed that participants preserved the norms of their native language, such as speaking with a native accent, to indicate their identity, not as a negative sign of pragmatic transfer. Walsh and White (2007) examined identity-related issues encountered in two distance language teaching programs in Australia. This study concludes that as innovations in distance education and training increase, it becomes imperative to find ways to address the philosophical, pedagogical and professional issues that arise, and that identity issues for both teachers and students are important factors in each of them. The interest of many researchers in the importance of digital technologies for language learning and learner identities will undoubtedly increase the number of studies that will provide a better understanding of this relationship in the future.

There are a limited number of studies on the relationship between identity and language learning in Turkey. Atay and Ece (2009) investigated how prospective English teachers in Turkey approached foreign language learning and identity issues and their multiple identity conflicts. In particular, they focused on whether learning English affects the development of Turkish English teacher candidates' socio-cultural identities. The researcher also examined how these participants discussed their multiple identities with each other and what their attitudes were towards the possible conflict of multiple identities created by the process of learning English. The results of the interviews and observations conducted for two months showed the existence of many identities in the participants, such as Turkish, Muslim and Western, and it was understood that learning English was the main

factor behind the formation of the participants' Western identities. Participants were aware of their multiple identities and all considered their Turkish and Muslim identities privileged over their Western identities. Most participants stated that learning English helped them understand the differences between their own culture and Western culture. In addition, the participants stated that this awareness helped them see the positive exchanges between different cultures, approached cultural issues from a broader perspective, and enabled them to reconsider their own personalities.

Polat and Mahalingappa (2010) conducted qualitative study with Kurdish girls and boys, with a specific focus on gender as an identity category. Their objective was to find differences between genders in the acquisition of Turkish, the dominant language. Although the focus of the research is on gender differences in acculturation, it has been revealed that girls' identification with Turkish culture and Turkish society is stronger. It has been observed that girls have more access to Turkish social networks and show more Turkish identity patterns, thus they begin to have a 'Turkish-like identity'. In addition, it was determined that girls had a more local accent in Turkish than boys, whose identification with the Kurdish identity was stronger. Pullen (2011) investigated the relationship between cultural identity, accent level, and non-native English students' attitudes towards English pronunciation. Advanced English-speaking participants were selected from two English-speaking universities in Turkey, and these participants completed a survey about cultural identity, attitudes towards pronunciation, and language background. In addition, audio recordings were made based on three different tasks, which were later scored by five native English speakers according to the degree of accent. The findings showed that there was no significant relationship between cultural identity and degree of accent, and a significant relationship between cultural identity and the perception of how important native pronunciation is. Results also showed that participants did not view native-like pronunciation as a threat to their cultural identity and therefore believed that pronunciation teaching should take individual preferences and goals into account. Moreover, it has been stated that teaching pronunciation should not be ignored due to the claim that trying to change pronunciation would interfere with cultural identity. Another study touching on the relationship between identity and language learning belongs to Ortactepe (2013). Ortactepe tried to examine the restructuring of the identity of a Turkish-origin student doing a

doctorate in the United States. The study revealed that this student experienced feelings of loneliness and marginalization because he was unable to develop meaningful relationships with the American people. As a result, it was understood that he could not acquire a successful language learner identity because he could not access social networks or imaginary communities where he could practice English and learn cultural and social norms. In the study conducted by Aydemir (2013), the relationship between cultural identity and accent has been examined. It focused on the relationship between the identity perceptions of 20 native English speakers and those who have been living in Turkey for a long time and the Turkish accent in terms of proximity to the locality. A cultural identity survey was applied to the participants, audio recordings were made while reading a few Turkish texts aloud, scored, and interviews were held afterwards. The findings of this research have shown that there is a relationship between cultural identity and accent, the more the participants define themselves as "Turkish", the better their accent scores are, that is, the second cultural identity acquired increases the pronunciation success of the learned language. In the qualitative study conducted by Ersin (2014), the relationship between a student's foreign language learning and identity structuring was examined. The data in this long-term study; It was obtained through face-to-face interviews with the student and the student's teachers, the student's language diaries, video recordings of his lessons and the researcher's diary. The results of the analyzes showed that the student initially invested in English learning practices both in and outside the classroom to become a member of the imagined community. However, it was observed that the student's investment decreased over time as the period in which the study was conducted progressed. It has been determined that this situation is due to the negative impact of the student's identity closely related to "investment" because the more a language learner imagines being part of a community through the target language and thus develops an imagined identity, the more he or she may invest in language learning practices.

Norton's (2001) is sufficiently descriptive in terms of identification with a second language community and interpretation of its integrity, because the language learner's "imagined community requires an imagined identity, and the learner's investment in the target language must be understood in this context" (Norton, 2001, p. 166). According to Norton (2001): "Teachers can encourage students to consider themselves living in a variety of communities, including the classroom community, the target language community, and the imagined community, by helping students question their own unique possibilities and limitations in their investment in the community they imagine." they can simultaneously address the risk of not participating in the language class" (p. 170). Norton (2001) contributed to the understanding of the nature of language learners' future dreams. Addressing the identity problems of language learning students has also helped to create greater impact in teacher education programs for non-native English speaking teachers. Thus, it has paved the way for other theories that place great emphasis on the role of identity in capturing foreign language learners' intentions towards language learning. The study of language acquisition is experiencing a growing interest in studying the connection between language and identity.

Relevant research has examined different cultural groups and different social contexts in which immigrants exist. Regarding immigrants, Miller (2000) investigated the relationships between second language use, participation in various communities, and social contexts of 13 immigrant high school students in Australia. The results showed that different factors affected participants' language acquisition, identity formation, and social interaction.

1.2.2. Local Studies on the Relationship between Identity and SLA

There are a limited number of studies on the relationship between identity and language learning in Azerbaijan. In 2018, J. Garibova investigated "Formation of the Language-Identity Relationship in Azerbaijan and the Role of Turkish." The article discusses the process of identity rebirth in post-Soviet Azerbaijan in the context of expanding relations between Azerbaijan and Türkiye. Various forms of identity expression, especially at the linguistic level, are examined in terms of possible factors arising from the development of political, economic structure in the second language. The results

revealed that the student showed slower and lower levels of improvement in the classroom. In other words, the results of the analysis showed that there are important factors that prevent the student from fully investing in English language development (teachers' attitudes, teaching methods, course materials, etc.), and these affect student identity throughout the language learning process.

In the case study conducted by Tarhan (2015), the relationship between the social identity change experienced by students studying in the English preparatory program of a foundation university in Turkey, the students' self-system types and their academic performance was examined. The data used in the study was collected through interviews with the students and the instructors who taught these students, and through evaluation and performance reports prepared by each instructor twice in a semester. The results of the research show that all students with high GPA experienced productive change, most of them experienced profitable change and an increase in their self-confidence. The findings also show that a significant portion of students with high academic performance use the adaptive self system in their transition from their current selves to their possible selves; It shows that a significant portion of students with low academic performance are under the influence of the submissive self-system. The findings showed that students' identities should be addressed with a more serious understanding and that students' language learning experiences and future plans regarding the target language should be examined.

Finally, in the study conducted by Demir-Bektaş (2015), it was tried to determine how different identities interact in a classroom where English is taught as a foreign language and how these identities affect the language learning process of students. In the study, video recordings of an intermediate-advanced level class in the English preparatory class of a private university were analyzed using the conversation analysis approach. Two students whose identity formation and interaction differ from others are presented as focal cases. The results revealed that in the sequence of classroom conversation, the student's self-definition or positioning by others as "knowledgeable, participatory, indifferent, quiet, funny" shapes the individual's identity in the same direction over time, affects the expansion of interaction in the classroom and leads to results that determine participation opportunities.

1.2.3. Norton's Identity Approach

The most influential study establishing a strong relationship between identity and language learning belongs to Norton (1997). Norton (1997) argues that researchers studying second language acquisition have difficulty conceptualizing the link between language learning and the social world because a broad theory of social identity has not been developed. According to him, language researchers focus on individual or social variables in the language learning process, but do not pay enough attention to the integration of the two. For this reason, Norton (1997) drew on post-structuralist approaches to language learning and developed her own social identity theory by examining the language learning experiences of immigrant women in a six-month language course in Canada. Norton (1997) also argued that language learning theorists must recognize that learners have a dynamic and complex social identity due to larger, often non-uniform social structures that are reproduced in daily social interaction (p. 13).

Norton (1997) opposed basic and fixed personality labels of individuals such as 'introvert- extrovert or motivated-unmotivated' or 'integrative and instrumental motivation'; He argued that these concepts do not fully capture the relations of power, identity and language learning. According to Norton (1997), "when language learners speak, they not only exchange information with target language speakers, they are also constantly making sense of and reorganizing who they are and how they relate to the social world" (p. 18).

Another term that Norton (2001) introduced to the literature to help us understand the relationship between language learning and identity is 'imagined communities'. Imaginary communities refer to groups of people with whom only an imaginary connection is made, as distinct from the direct daily interaction that people have with many people in their communities, workplaces, schools, or religious communities. He adapted Wenger's (1998) definition of imagination as "self-improvement by transcending time and space, imagining the world and ourselves in new ways" (p. 176) to the language learning process. He then gives an example

with Kanno (2003) to explain this better: "When a Japanese teenager studying fashion design in Tokyo starts learning English, he can imagine himself as one of the most successful fashion designers in New York. In her imagination, she is a well-known member

of an international fashion community, and English is seen as one of the important means of gaining acceptance into this future imagined community (p. 242). Thus, this new term “imagined communities” and sociocultural ties between the two countries. Based on survey analysis, attitudes towards the increasing influence of Turkish in Turkey are explored. The dynamics of the Turkish element in the formation or rebirth of national identity are analyzed by considering various periods of Azerbaijan's independence. The article focuses on the language behavior and attitudes of graduates of Turkish schools or universities, in order to explain the possible influence (or ineffectiveness) of Turkish culture on new forms of identity. On the other hand, a reflection on the intergenerational dynamics of attitudes towards Turkey and Turkey Turkish is presented on the basis of comparing linguistic purism tendencies with new Turkification tendencies. Finally, some suggestions are put forward on how the factor of improved linguistic-cultural relations can contribute to a higher level of cooperation between Turkey and Azerbaijan, especially in professional and intellectual fields.

Luscombe (2014) investigated on the topic “Language and identity in a post-Soviet world: language of education and linguistic identity among Azerbaijani students.” The intricate history of Azerbaijan has deeply interconnected the linguistic, cultural, and national identity of Azerbaijanis throughout many centuries of political, social, and linguistic integration. In the post-Soviet era, the identity is undergoing a transformative phase influenced by local ethnic, religious, and socio-political establishments, as well as regional and international authorities.

This article examines the linguistic identification of Azerbaijani youth in three distinct types of schools: Azerbaijani-speaking, Russian-speaking, and English-speaking. The authors want to determine the impact of the language of teaching on linguistic identification in different types of schools, which subsequently has ramifications for national identity. This article is the first examination of the current body of work regarding the relationship between language and identity in the fields of second language acquisition and socio-educational linguistics.

Another research conducted by H. Eminli (2011) investigated “The Process of Foreign Language Acquisition in Azerbaijani Learners of Different Ages.” Scientific studies are focused on the process of foreign/second language acquisition in children and adults. The problem of acquiring a foreign or second language is an area of research not only in applied

linguistics but also in psychology, psycholinguistics and economic theory. The process of learning a foreign language by children and adults, the stages of this process, learning English and some problems in learning. In the article, Azerbaijani languages are examined as second languages. People can acquire a second or foreign language under various circumstances. We may have learned a second language when we went to primary school, secondary school or even university. Moving to a new country often means learning a new language, which we call a second language. In addition, people live in different communities, environments or families where more than one language is spoken, and they can speak two or even more languages at the same time. Undoubtedly, mastering a foreign language has its own historical background and dimensions. Contemporary theories of foreign or second language acquisition are based on decades of research in a variety of fields, including linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and psycholinguistics. The article touches upon one of the most important issues regarding the acquisition of a foreign or second language for both children and adults.

As it can be seen, a limited number of investigations have been addressed on this topic in Azerbaijan. Until now, although researchers have conducted certain studies related to learning a second foreign language, the influence of learning a second language on identity has not yet been addressed in the context of Azerbaijan.

CHAPTER II. METHODOLOGY

In the current study, utmost attention was dedicated to ensuring the reliability and validity of the research methodology, employing a systematic approach in participant selection, instrument preparation, and data analysis procedures. As outlined in Chapter One, the principal objective of this research endeavor was to explore the intricate interplay between the SLA experience and the reconstruction of identity among Azerbaijani learners of English.

To elucidate, the study delved into the effects of various factors within the SLA context on the learners' perception and construction of their identity. This included an examination of linguistic, cultural, and social influences on identity formation, particularly within the realm of language learning and interaction. Additionally, the study aimed to shed light on how these experiences contribute to the shaping and reshaping of the learners' sense of self and cultural identity. To ensure the comprehensiveness and coherence of the study, detailed descriptions of the procedures undertaken to ensure the representativeness and homogeneity of the participant pool will be provided. Subsequently, meticulous steps were taken to enhance the reliability and validity of the research instruments employed, fostering a robust framework for data collection and analysis.

Furthermore, the procedures section will delineate the methodological strategies employed during both the pilot and main study phases to elicit nuanced insights into the reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity within the context of SLA. These efforts were aimed at capturing the complexity and richness of the participants' experiences, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between language learning and identity reconstruction.

2.1. Participants

In the current study, a cohort of thirty learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) participated, all of whom were pursuing majors in English education and translation. These participants were specifically chosen from Khazar University in Azerbaijan, representing third and fourth-year students within the university. Their selection was intentional, as these

stages of academic progression typically indicate a significant level of proficiency and engagement with the English language curriculum. The participants' ages ranged between 19 and 21 years old, reflecting a relatively homogeneous age group within the sample population. Notably, their

cumulative English learning experience spanned from 5 to 15 years, highlighting a diverse range of exposure and engagement with the language over time.

While it was observed that some participants may not have had a clear understanding of the concept of "identity," the researcher endeavored to elucidate and contextualize this notion through probing questions and discussion during the interviews. This approach aimed to ensure a nuanced exploration of the participants' perceptions and experiences related to identity formation within the context of language learning.

The selection procedure employed in this study was convenience sampling, a pragmatic method frequently utilized in qualitative research contexts. Convenience sampling allows for the inclusion of participants who are readily available and accessible to the researcher (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Given the constraints of time and resources inherent in conducting qualitative research, convenience sampling facilitated the recruitment of participants from a specific academic setting with relative ease, thereby enhancing the feasibility and efficiency of data collection.

2.2. Instruments

The data for this study were elicited through the facilitation of focus-group interviews, a method chosen for its capacity to foster dynamic discussion and capture diverse perspectives on the multifaceted concept of identity. These interviews were thoughtfully structured around eight probing questions, meticulously designed to explore various dimensions of identity, ranging from its conceptualization and significance to its evolution through the process of foreign language acquisition. Each question was crafted to stimulate reflection and encourage participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences related to identity in a comprehensive manner. Specifically, participants were prompted to share their definitions of identity, reflect on its significance in their lives, and contemplate the influence of foreign language learning on their sense of self.

Moreover, the interviews delved into participants' attitudes toward the potential role of language learning in identity reconstruction, probing whether they perceived language acquisition as a transformative process that shapes or reshapes aspects of their identity. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on these topics during the interviews, providing rich and nuanced insights into their lived experiences. It is important to note that while the focus- group interviews were primarily conducted in English to ensure consistency and comparability across participants, accommodations were made for those who were not proficient in English. In such cases, interviews were conducted in Azerbaijani to facilitate comprehension and enable meaningful participation.

By employing this methodological approach, the study sought to capture a comprehensive range of perspectives on identity reconstruction among Azerbaijani learners of English, thereby enriching our understanding of the complex interplay between language learning and identity formation.

2.3. Procedure and Data Analysis

The present study adopts a qualitative research approach, aiming to delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of Azerbaijani learners in the context of second language acquisition (SLA). Data collection was carried out through the facilitation of focus group interviews, which offered a rich platform for participants to express their thoughts, experiences, and reflections on their language learning journey. These interviews were meticulously tape- recorded to ensure accuracy and fidelity to the participants' narratives. The recorded data were subsequently transcribed and subjected to thorough analysis. During the analysis process, a rigorous examination was conducted to identify recurring themes, patterns, and emergent categories embedded within the interview transcripts. This approach allowed for a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted aspects of the participants' experiences. It is noteworthy that the interviews were conducted in English, but some of them were conducted in Azerbaijani. The answers of the participants who answered in Azerbaijani have been translated from Azerbaijani to English, ensuring accessibility and comprehension for the broader academic community. This meticulous

process of data collection and analysis serves as the foundation for uncovering insights into the reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity within the realm of SLA experience.

CHAPTER III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The present study has collected and analyzed a large amount of data, resulting in valuable insights on how Azerbaijani learners recreate their identity when acquiring a second language. The age of the participants in the interview varies from 5 to 15 years (Table 4.1). This chapter presents and interprets the findings, which are crucial in understanding the complex relationship between language learning and identity construction among Azerbaijani learners of English. In this chapter, we will concentrate on combining the factual information obtained from the data analysis. We will highlight important patterns, trends, and connections that are relevant to the research hypotheses and overall goals. After the data are presented, there will be a thorough discussion where the significance of the findings will be carefully analyzed in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

The main objective of this chapter is two-fold: firstly, to give a thorough summary of the research results, explaining how the experiences of second language acquisition (SLA) affect the formation of identity among Azerbaijani learners; and secondly, to have a detailed discussion that clarifies the wider significance of these findings for theory, practice, and future research efforts. The analysis will thoroughly examine key topics, providing valuable insights into how language learning and identity creation connect among Azerbaijani learners. Furthermore, we will focus on examining different patterns and intricacies within the data, recognizing the wide range of elements that influence how individuals perceive and experience their identity in the context of second language acquisition.

This chapter seeks to enhance comprehension of the complex connection between second language acquisition (SLA) experiences and the reconstruction of one's identity by comparing study findings with current literature and theoretical viewpoints. Furthermore, it aims to offer useful perspectives that might guide educational practices, the creation of curricula, and language teaching methods specifically designed for Azerbaijani learners and beyond.

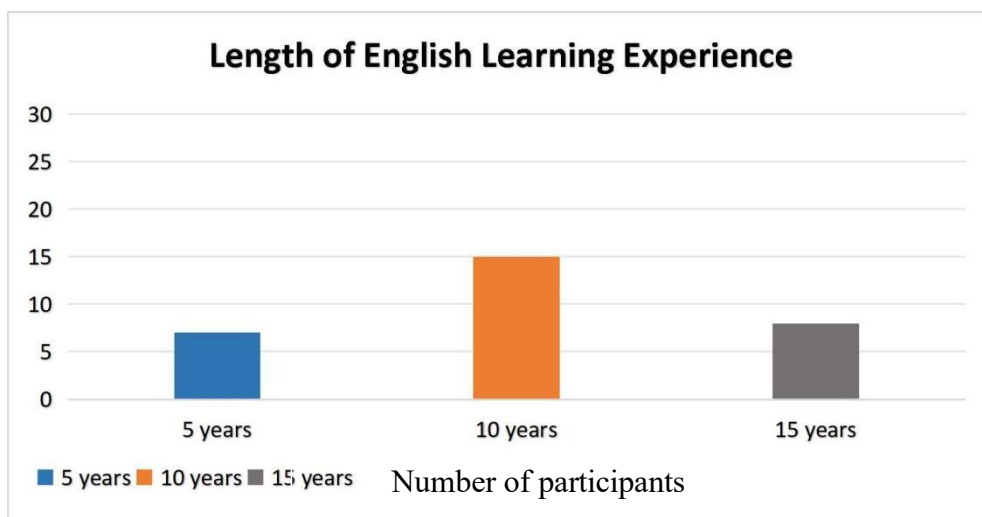


Table 3.1: Length of English Learning Experience

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the results and a thoughtful discussion of their significance in order to better understand the complex process of identity reconstruction in the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The ultimate goal is to encourage further investigation and exploration in this dynamic and ever-changing field of research.

3.1. Interview Questions

Interview questions are as follows:

- 1) Define identity in your own words.
- 2) Is it important for a person to have a specific identity (i.e., to be Iranian, American, English, African, etc.)? why or why not? Please explain.
- 3) In your opinion, has the learning of English affected your attitude toward your identity? If yes, then do you view this effect as positive or negative? Please elaborate.
- 4) What viewpoint did you hold toward your identity as Azerbaijani before you started to learn English? Has your identity changed since you started to learn English? If so, then in what way has your identity changed?
- 5) How do you feel now that English has or has not impacted on your identity? Do you feel positive or negative? Please explain.
- 6) What causes the English language to impact a learner's identity? Please elaborate.

- 7) In your viewpoint, is the impact of learning English, if any, on the learner's identity positive or negative? Why? Please explain.
- 8) Do your parents and friends view the impact of learning English, if any, on the learner's identity as positive or negative? Why? Please explain.

As I mentioned before, these interview questions were taken from the article "Foreign Language Learning and Identity Reconstruction: Learners' Understanding of the Intersections of the Self, the Other and Power" written by Seyyed Hatam Tamimi Sa'd (2017).

The study had three main objectives: to analyze how Azerbaijani learners of English define and perceive identity, to assess the participants' comprehension of the potential influence of learning English on their identity, and to evaluate their attitudes towards this impact and the primary factors that contribute to it.

3.2 Understanding of Identity

The initial question in the interviews focused on the participants' conceptualization of identity. Participants were instructed to provide their concept of 'identity' and describe what they believed constituted identity (Question #1).

Some definitions are as follows:

Interviewee 1. Identity in my opinion is your personality, your ethnic background, your family.

Interviewee 3. For me, identity is you character, who you are in your core and how do you present yourself to others, how do you show yourself to others and it's your sole more than your appearance I would say. And I believe that it's the most important thing about a person.

Interviewee 7. Identity is our ethnicity, our way of life, and our family. All these are identities in my opinion.

Interviewee 16. It's our thoughts, opinions and how we view the world.

Interviewee 22. Identity is the first thing you feel belonged to the world. You begin exploring with your own country and this is the base to compare things for yourself.

Interviewee 28: Identity is basically who you are - your personality, beliefs, experiences, and how you see yourself compared to others.

Interviewee 30: Identity, from my perspective as a translator, encompasses the unique combination of characteristics, experiences, and affiliations that define who I am both personally and professionally.

The participants' definitions of identity were analyzed, revealing the emergence of the following themes as the fundamental elements and components of identity:

Geographical borders refer to the specific locations of a person's birth, home, and job. Nationality encompasses the values, customs, rites, and ceremonies associated with a particular nation. Culture encompasses the cultural and social values, norms, and standards that shape a person's identity.

- Personality encompasses an individual's personal values, morals, manners, beliefs, and worldviews.
- Religion encompasses religious values, beliefs, rituals, and acts.
- Ethnicity, race, and ancestry refer to a person's ethnic origins, racial heritage, and ancestral customs.
- Sex: biological traits, qualities, and talents related to reproduction.
- Existence: the state of just being alive in the world
- Physical body: the tangible aspects and attributes of one's physical form
- Family and relations: individuals, interpersonal connections, and interactions
- Civilisation: historical context and setting

- Behaviour refers to the activities, manifestations, and patterns of an individual.

The aforementioned indicators of identity have a strikingly wide range, encompassing personal, social, individual, and biological characteristics. The definitions provided are particularly enlightening, clearly indicating that the interviewees consider identity as a product of both personal and social factors. In other words, identity should be defined from both an individual and societal perspective. This illustrates the markedly distinct, and occasionally contradictory, perspectives with which the participants have approached the task of defining and delineating the concept of identity.

These definitions are comprehensive and have been faithfully represented in the pertinent academic literature. Identity has been categorized into two distinct levels: personal and social (Edwards, 2009). The personal level pertains to the distinct characteristics, attributes, and qualities of an individual. Identity is transmitted through history and custom at the societal level. Roth (2010) provides a concise definition of identity as the essence of an individual's being. He suggests that identity encompasses a wide range of factors such as motivation, interests, attitudes, locus of control, aspirations, perceptions, and similar aspects. The definitions provided by the participants indicate that they perceive identity as a complex and multifaceted concept with multiple layers. This finding aligns with the academic literature that defines and situates identity in terms of ethnicity gender and sex (Johnstone, 2008), language background (Davies, 2007; Johnson & Johnson, 1999), family and relationships (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), religious values and rituals (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Saville-Troike, 2006), Johnstone (2008) argues that most research has focused on ethnicity, gender, nationality, and race as the primary factors associated with social identities. She elaborates that identity can be established based on one's performance, adopting a humanistic, rhetorical, and deterministic perspective. Johnstone argues that this perspective emphasizes the accountability for one's actions. Regarding the personal aspect of identity, Johnstone (2008) asserts that our understanding of social identity and its connection to communication is based on the notion that the selves we show to others may be altered, planned, and created together (p. 155). Thus, the individual is discovered to be enhanced by the collective.

The mutual interaction between these factors will mostly contribute to the variation in how learners define their identity. From a linguistic perspective, one's identity can also be conveyed through their accent in their native language, as mentioned by Tamimi Sa'd and Modirkhamene (2015).

On the basis of the responses to the interview questions that were provided, many key issues about the idea of identity emerge:

Personality and Characteristics: Interviewees 1, 3, 28, and 30 all underline the importance of personality traits, characteristics, and core values as fundamental elements of identity. This shows that people's perceptions of their identities are based on the distinctive features they possess and the manner in which they portray themselves to other people.

Ethnicity and Cultural Background: Interviewees 1, 7, and 30 underline the significance of ethnic background and cultural affiliations as important parts of identity. It may be deduced from this that the cultural history and traditions of individuals have a significant influence in the formation of their sense of identification.

Family and Relationships: Interviewees 1, 7, and 30 all describe familial relationships as being an essential component of their identities. Family relationships are a significant factor in determining a person's sense of belonging as well as their values and opinions.

Beliefs and basic Values: Interviewees 3, 16, and 28 all make the point that their basic values, beliefs, and worldview are essential components of their identities. This says that people define themselves according to the ideals they adhere to and the opinions they hold on everything in life.

In terms of a sense of belonging and exploration, interviewees 22 and 30 talk about their identities. They discuss the concept of identity in terms of these two concepts. One example of this is the sensation of being linked to one's country or community, which can serve as a point of reference for gaining an understanding of oneself and the world.

Identity in the **Professional World** Interviewee 30 brings up the professional component of identity, underlining the ways in which one's occupation and experiences in their professional life contribute to their sense of who they are as a person.

These replies, taken as a whole, suggest that identity is a multidimensional term that encompasses a variety of aspects, including personality traits, cultural background, family relationships, fundamental values, beliefs, and experiences. In addition, it implies that one's identity can be formed by both the personal and professional parts of one's life, so stressing the complexity and uniqueness of the ways in which each individual perceives themselves.

3.3. Importance of Identity

Question #2 explored the importance of possessing and aligning oneself with a certain identity, as well as the reasons behind its significance or its absence. The data from the survey indicates that 16 out of the total number of interviews, accounting for 53%, expressed a strong belief in the need of aligning oneself with a distinct identity. Conversely, 14 interviewees, representing 47%, did not perceive this as particularly significant. Below are some of the quotes:

Interviewee 5. Actually, yes. Because every country has different values or ideas and we grow in a country that has different culture, tradition and it affects us.

Interviewee 9. I think, yes. Because it is important to differentiate people each other and you have special ethnical background which makes them really different. So, it is important.

Interviewee 15: Yes, it is very important. Because our identity affects us in the formation of a personality in life.

Interviewee 19: It is important. I think it is important for a person to be formed as an individual, to show himself as an individual in society.

Interviewee 22: Identity plays a pivotal role in shaping an individual's sense of belonging, self-perception, and interactions with society.

These replies offer further perspectives on the significance and relevance of identity.

Cultural Influence: Interviewees 5 and 9 highlight the significant role that cultural values, customs, and ethnic backgrounds play in shaping individuals. They propose that the cultural milieu in which an individual is raised shapes their identity and sets them apart from others.

Formation of Personality: Interviewees 15 and 19 emphasize the significance of identification in the development of one's personality. They propose that an individual's sense of self, values, and uniqueness are molded by their identity, which subsequently impacts their manner of navigating and engaging with society.

Interviewee 22 elaborates on the concept of identity, highlighting its influence on individuals' sense of belonging and self-perception. This implies that identity encompasses not just individual characteristics, but also the way individuals understand and position themselves in relation to the broader social environment.

Interviewees 9 and 19 emphasize the significance of identity in distinguishing individuals from one another and enabling them to manifest their distinct identities within society. This suggests that identity functions as a distinguishing characteristic of uniqueness and variety within a community or culture.

Collectively, these reactions emphasize the significance of identity in molding individuals' perception of themselves, their engagement with society, and their comprehension of their role in the world. They emphasize the interdependence of cultural, personal, and societal elements in the formation of identity.

Based on the quotes provided, it is evident that the participants defined identity not only based on the components indicated in Section 1 (such as nationality, race, ethnicity, behavior, etc.), but also considered these aspects as part of their whole identity. Identity is claimed to be essential just due to its composition. In essence, identity holds intrinsic significance. Nevertheless, a number of the participants considered identification to be insignificant. Examine the following quotations:

Interviewee 4. I believe, no. It's the sole for me, not the where you are from, where do you live, what is your background. It's not important.

Interviewee 11. It's not important because we all are humans. It doesn't matter where we are from.

Interviewee 13. No, it's not important. Because belonging to any identity doesn't change who we are.

Interviewee 17. Actually, it's not so important. Because person is person regardless identity.

Individuality Over Background: Interviewees 4 and 17 express the belief that personal attributes and characteristics are more important than factors such as nationality, ethnicity, or cultural background. They argue that identity is primarily about the individual and their unique qualities rather than external markers like geographical origin or cultural heritage.

Universal Human Identity: Interviewees 11 and 17 suggest that there is a universal human identity that transcends specific cultural or ethnic affiliations. They emphasize the common humanity shared by all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, and argue that factors such as nationality or ethnicity are not significant in defining who a person truly is.

Identity as Insignificant: Interviewees 13 and 17 assert that belonging to a particular identity group does not fundamentally alter an individual's essence or intrinsic qualities. They downplay the importance of identity labels, suggesting that they have little bearing on an individual's true nature or worth.

Overall, these responses challenge the notion that identity is inherently important or defining. Instead, they prioritize individuality, universality, and the intrinsic worth of each person irrespective of their background or identity markers. This perspective highlights a belief in the fundamental equality and humanity of all individuals, regardless of external

differences.

3.4. National Identity

Identity is intricately linked to an individual's nationality, national values, customs, and collectively held views within a nation (Edwards, 2009; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Saville-Troike, 2006). National borders delineate the parameters of identity and establish the methods by which it is formed and upheld. Given this matter, the subsequent interview question focused on the participants' perception of their Azerbaijani identity prior to undertaking the process of learning English (Question #4).

Some responses are as follows:

Interviewee 5: Before learning English as Azerbaijani person, we have some Azerbaijani ideas. We do not think the world as English people as a person who learns English, or who speaks English. Some things changed during the process; personality, the way I sometimes act, or maybe sometimes I show my emotions. I do as English people do it.

Interviewee 13: Present me is more open-minded and more tolerant rather than me ten years ago. And I believe learning English day by day expands my knowledge, my communication skills, the way I approach other people.

Interviewee 17: Since learning English, I've experienced a significant shift in my perspective. I now have the opportunity to watch movies in their original language, allowing me to better understand the nuances of the dialogue and immerse myself in the culture in its authentic form. This has enriched my experience and allowed me to see things from different perspectives. Additionally, in my research work, knowing English has provided me with access to a wide range of resources, inspiring me and enabling me to explore diverse ideas and viewpoints. Overall, learning English has profoundly impacted my identity as an Azerbaijani, opening up new avenues for cultural understanding, personal growth, and academic pursuits that I couldn't have imagined before.

Interviewee 20: Since I don't connect identity and learning languages together, I believe that it didn't change.

Interviewee 22: Since I began learning English, my identity has evolved in several ways. Firstly, it has opened up new opportunities for me to connect with people from different parts of the world. Engaging with English-language media, literature, and online communities has broadened my perspectives and enriched my understanding of global issues. However, while learning English has expanded my horizons and facilitated cross-cultural exchange, it hasn't diminished my pride in being Azerbaijani. If anything, it has reinforced my sense of identity as I navigate the complexities of linguistic and cultural diversity. I still cherish my Azerbaijani language, values, and traditions, and I remain committed to preserving and promoting them in an increasingly interconnected world.

These responses reflect a variety of perspectives on how learning English has influenced the identities of Azerbaijani individuals. Let's break down each response:

Interviewee 5 highlights a shift in behavior and emotions, indicating that learning English has influenced their personality and actions, sometimes causing them to behave more like English people.

Interviewee 13 emphasizes personal growth and increased tolerance over the past ten years, attributing these changes to the process of learning English. They believe that daily English learning has expanded their knowledge, communication skills, and approach to others.

Interviewee 17 focuses on the enrichment of experiences through access to English-language media and resources. They mention improved understanding of culture and access to diverse ideas and viewpoints, especially in their research work. Learning English has significantly impacted their identity as an Azerbaijani by opening up new avenues for cultural understanding, personal growth, and academic pursuits.

Interviewee 20 does not perceive a connection between language learning and identity changes, suggesting that their identity as an Azerbaijani remains unchanged by the process of learning English.

Interviewee 22 discusses how learning English has broadened their perspectives and facilitated connections with people from around the world. However, they emphasize that their pride in being Azerbaijani has not diminished; instead, it has been reinforced by navigating linguistic and cultural diversity.

Overall, these responses show a range of attitudes toward the impact of learning English on Azerbaijani identity, from significant changes in behavior and worldview to a sense of continuity with Azerbaijani culture despite linguistic and cultural diversification.

3.5. Reconstruction of Azerbaijani Learners' Identity through English

Next, the participants were asked to indicate if and how the acquisition of English and exposure to this language have influenced their identity (Question #3). In addition, they were obligated to indicate whether they perceived this impact as positive or negative. The findings were as follows: out of the total 30 participants, 18 expressed that learning English has influenced their perception of their identity. Out of the total number of participants, 20 considered this impact to be positive, 5 considered it to be negative, and 2 persons had mixed views, considering it to be both positive and negative. Conversely, 3 interviewees said that acquiring English language skills had no impact on their feeling of identity (Figure 3.5).

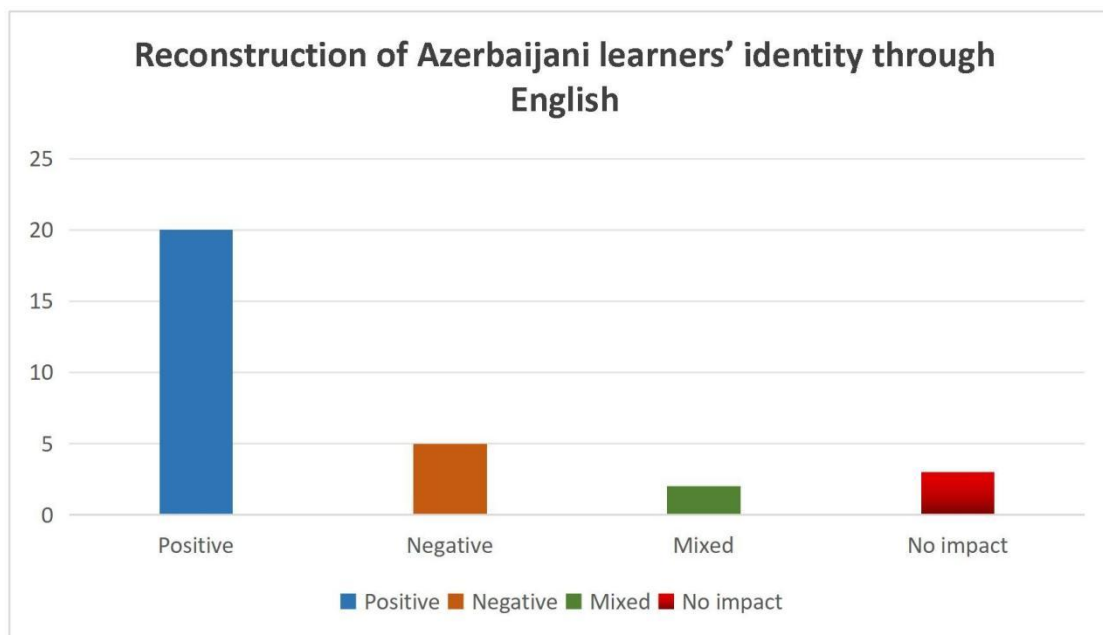


Table 3.5: Reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity through English

The subsequent quotations were expressed in response to the inquiry regarding the impact of acquiring English language skills on an individual's sense of self:

Interviewee 3: Yes, it affected a lot. Because in Azerbaijan we have some kind of ethnic ideas, thoughts about stuff that happened in the environment, in daily life, as English learner it affected my opinion about my whole life, my studies, even my future life.

Interviewee 11: Yes, and it is positive. Because when we learn an new language, we think as them. We share their ideas and it affects us.

Interviewee 15: English definitely affected my attitude, it's because expanded my view of world, and I learned about so many different cultures, I met so many new people. It really had a positive change on me.

Interviewee 21: Yes, it did in a positive way. In my opinion, learning English gives a person a world view. Of course, there are more information, movies, etc. in English.

Interviewee 24: It affected my knowledge, because there are more sources to get information in English.

These responses provide insight into how learning English has influenced the perspectives and attitudes of Azerbaijani individuals:

Interviewee 3 emphasizes the significant impact of learning English on their opinions about various aspects of life, including education and the future. It suggests a profound influence on their worldview and outlook on life due to exposure to different ideas and perspectives through English.

Interviewee 11 sees the influence of learning a new language as positive, suggesting that adopting the ideas and perspectives of the English-speaking world has a beneficial effect. They believe that learning English allows them to share in English-speaking cultures and ways of thinking.

Interviewee 15 highlights the positive impact of learning English on their attitude,

attributing it to the expanded worldview, exposure to different cultures, and meeting new people. It suggests that English learning has broadened their horizons and contributed to personal growth.

Interviewee 21 views the influence of learning English positively, associating it with gaining a broader worldview. They emphasize the abundance of information and cultural content available in English as a factor in shaping their perspective.

Interviewee 24: This individual focuses on the practical aspect of language learning, highlighting how it has increased their access to knowledge through additional sources available in English. It suggests a more utilitarian view of the impact of English learning on their intellectual development.

Overall, these responses illustrate various ways in which learning English or another language has affected the perspectives, attitudes, and knowledge of Azerbaijani individuals, with most emphasizing positive outcomes such as expanded worldview and access to information.

Following the participants' exposure to the experience of learning English, the fourth question was asked to them, which inquired about their beliefs regarding their current notions of identity in the L2 language. The following are some of the responses that were received in response to this question:

Interviewee 8: The process of learning English has redirected my attention from just depending on my own language to comprehending and valuing many linguistic forms. This experience has heightened my consciousness of the abundance of language and its influence on the formation of cultural identities.

Interviewee 14: The process of learning English has confronted and disprove my preexisting beliefs and biases regarding different cultures. It has fostered a greater sense of open-mindedness and acceptance towards cultural variety, leading me to recognize the value in learning from and appreciating various ways of life.

Interviewee 18: By acquiring knowledge of the English language, I have developed an understanding of the significant role played by global inter connectivity and the

necessity for effective cross-cultural communication. It has heightened my awareness of the interdependence of the globe and the importance of comprehending and valuing other viewpoints.

Interviewee 22: Acquiring proficiency in the English language has enhanced my ability to reflect on my own cultural identity. This has compelled me to contemplate the principles and customs that establish my identity and how they intersect with the wider global society **Interviewee 27:** The process of learning English has given me the ability to question and confront society conventions and traditions that may limit or be obsolete. It has imbued in me a feeling of empowerment and the conviction that I possess the ability to mold my own identity and future path.

Many of the participants have mentioned that studying English has helped them have a deeper comprehension of the variety of languages and the role that language plays in the formation of cultural identities. They demonstrate an increased knowledge of the various languages that exist and the ways in which these languages influence the construction of cultures. The participants have reported that the process of learning English has caused them to question their preconceived notions and prejudices regarding various cultures. Through going through this process, I have developed a stronger sense of open-mindedness, acceptance, and appreciation for the diversity of cultures. Having a better understanding of English has brought to light the relevance of global interconnections as well as the requirement for successful communication across cultural boundaries. The participants recognize the interconnection of the world and underline the significance of comprehending and appreciating the many points of view exhibited by others.

Reflection on Cultural Identity The participants' acquisition of English language skills has caused them to contemplate their own cultural identities. As they reflect on the values and traditions that constitute their identity, they also take into consideration the ways in which these elements intersect with the larger global community. Several of the participants have mentioned that the process of learning English has made them feel more self-determined. They have formed the idea that they have the power to construct their own identities and the courses that they will take in the future as a result of this ability, which has enabled them to challenge the conventions and traditions of society.

These responses, taken as a whole, demonstrate how learning English serves as more than just a linguistic skill; rather, it is also a catalyst for personal development, cultural understanding, and empowerment. They underline the significance of accepting linguistic diversity and developing cross-cultural understanding in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected.

Norton's Social Identity Theory (Norton, 1997, 2011) is an important concept to consider in this context.

The term "social identity" was first used by Norton in 1997 and described as "the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through institutions such as families, educational institutions, places of work, public services, and legal courts" (p. 420). Norton's theory investigates and questions the concept of power, with the goal of demonstrating how language learners can generate a substantial amount of opportunities for language acquisition by contesting the power relations that are prevalent in the society. On the other hand, in spite of the quotations presented above, there were some participants who rejected the process of identity reconstruction through the use of English by claiming that they would rather stick to their L1 identity:

Certainly, here are more responses reflecting a perspective that learning a language has not changed one's behavior, personality, or cultural identity:

Interviewee 16: Acquiring proficiency in the English language has not modified my fundamental principles or convictions. Although it has broadened my perspectives and granted me access to fresh insights, I still have a strong connection to my cultural background and customs. My sense of self is based on my inherent qualities, rather than the languages I am able to communicate in.

Interviewee 20: I am of the opinion that an individual's character and values are influenced by variables that go beyond the mere process of learning a language. Acquiring proficiency in the English language has served as a means of communication and obtaining knowledge, however, it has not fundamentally altered my identity or the manner in which I engage with the world.

Interviewee 26: My sense of self is deeply influenced by my cultural heritage and individual life encounters, rather than the languages I acquire. Although my English ability has enhanced my communication skills, it has not changed my core values or perspective on the world. I maintain my authenticity regardless of the languages I communicate in.

These replies collectively illustrate the enduring nature of personal identity in the face of the English learning process.

The participants demonstrated a firm attachment to their cultural heritage and traditions, suggesting that their sense of identity is firmly rooted in their intrinsic characteristics and principles. Although recognizing the advantages of gaining fluency in English, such as expanded outlooks and enhanced ability to communicate, the individuals assert that this experience has not fundamentally transformed their fundamental beliefs or perspective on the world. The significance of authenticity and individuality is highlighted, as they stress that their sense of self is shaped by genuine personal attributes and life experiences, rather than being influenced by the languages they speak.

In general, these responses indicate that personal identity is shaped by elements that extend beyond the process of acquiring language. Although acquiring proficiency in English can offer fresh perspectives and potential advantages, it does not supersede the intrinsic characteristics and cultural heritage that shape a person's identity.

Following that, when asked about their desire to learn English, these 'resisting' learners claimed that they were solely driven by instrumental reasons to acquire English and had no intention of assimilating into the target culture. The hypothesis suggests that integrative motivation leads learners to invest more in the target language, which, in turn, facilitates greater acculturation into the target culture and ultimately provides more learning chances for the language learner. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009) propose that inclinations towards the target culture are mostly influenced by integrative motivation. However, categorizing learners as either motivated or uninspired in a binary manner may overlook valuable insights into the concept of identity, especially when seen from a poststructuralist viewpoint (refer to Norton, 2014).

Moreover, recent studies indicate that throughout the process of reconstructing one's identity in a second language (L2), learners are motivated by both integrative and instrumental factors. It has been found that individuals who possess both types of motivation have a clear advantage over those who are just driven by instrumental motives (Tarhan & Balban, 2014)

3.6 Attitudes on the Process of Reconstructing Learners' Identity

Question #5 of the interview addressed the participants' opinions regarding the influence, if any, that English has had on their perception of identity. The findings indicated that 90% of the participants, a total of 27 individuals, expressed the idea that they experienced or anticipated experiencing a sense of satisfaction with the impact that learning English had or would have on their perception of identity. The following quotes illustrate this pleasure:

Interviewee 2: As someone who identifies as Azerbaijani and has learned English, I feel positively about the impact it has had on my identity. Learning English has broadened my horizons, allowing me to engage with diverse perspectives and cultures from around the world. It has empowered me to connect with people beyond my immediate community and share my Azerbaijani heritage with a global audience.

Interviewee 9: As an Azerbaijani, learning English has positively impacted my identity. It has broadened my access to a diverse range of resources through reading, watching, and conducting research, allowing me to explore various perspectives on topics of interest. Additionally, being able to communicate with people from foreign countries has provided me with the opportunity to immerse myself in different cultures and gain a deeper understanding of global diversity.

Interviewee 11: I view the impact of English on my identity as overwhelmingly positive, as it has enabled me to embrace the richness of global diversity while celebrating the uniqueness of my Azerbaijani heritage.

Interviewee 28: English learning has empowered me to embrace cultural diversity and appreciate the richness of different perspectives. It has sparked my curiosity about the world and motivated me to explore new ideas and experiences. I feel more confident and capable of navigating the complexities of our interconnected world

Interviewee 29: The process of learning English has had a profound impact on me, broadening my perspective and questioning my preconceived notions. It has motivated me to venture beyond my familiar territory and interact with individuals and concepts from various backgrounds. I am now more self-assured and empowered to actively pursue my objectives and ambitions, as I recognize that language is no longer an obstacle but rather a means to achieve enhanced comprehension and stronger connections.

Participants believe that acquiring English language skills has broadened their perspective by granting them access to a wide range of viewpoints and cultures from across the globe. They emphasize the sense of empowerment that comes from engaging with persons outside their local group and sharing their Azerbaijani heritage on a worldwide level.

The acquisition of English language skills has greatly enhanced the ability to obtain a diverse array of resources, such as literature, media, and research materials. This access has allowed individuals to investigate a wide range of subjects and interact with diverse perspectives, resulting in personal development and intellectual enhancement. Participants highlight the beneficial influence of English education on their capacity to appreciate cultural diversity while also commemorating their Azerbaijani history. They view language proficiency as a means to understand and value global variety while also preserving a deep connection to their cultural heritage.

The process of learning English has given participants the ability to go beyond their usual boundaries, question pre-existing ideas, and engage with people from all backgrounds. They have heightened confidence and drive to pursue their goals, acknowledging language proficiency as a pathway to get greater comprehension and stronger relationships.

Overall, these replies emphasize how the acquisition of English language skills has a profound impact on the self-perception of Azerbaijani individuals, instilling in them a feeling of empowerment, inquisitiveness, and admiration for worldwide variety, all the while preserving a deep attachment to their cultural legacy.

These answers also demonstrate the variable nature of motivation, encompassing both integrative and instrumental aspects concurrently. In summary, most of the interviewees perceived the acquisition of English as having a beneficial influence on their identities as reconstructed in the second language (L2). Nevertheless, as anticipated, certain dissenting opinions were expressed in the following manner:

Interviewee 4: I hold the belief that even while acquiring a new language, it is important for one's cultural identity to remain unchanged. Although there are advantages to acquiring English language skills, I am resolute in my dedication to safeguarding my cultural history and customs. My sense of self is deeply connected to my cultural heritage, and I view language primarily as a means of communication rather than a defining factor of one's identity.

Interviewee 12: Being proud of my cultural history, I consider language study as a chance to improve my communication abilities rather than alter my identity. Although having a strong command of the English language is advantageous, it should not diminish the significance of cultural values and customs. My cultural heritage, rather than the languages I speak, is what influences my identity.

Interviewee 22: Although I value the advantages that come with acquiring English language skills, I am careful not to allow it to overwhelm or diminish my cultural identity. I take great pride in my Azerbaijani background and make a conscious effort to uphold its values and customs. The process of acquiring a new language should enhance our existence while preserving our cultural heritage.

Interviewee 25: As a person deeply connected to my culture, I am conscious of the importance of maintaining my identity even when learning a new language. Although having a strong command of the English language can provide access to various opportunities, it should not undermine or weaken the core principles and convictions that shape my identity. I strongly identify with my cultural heritage and am dedicated to upholding and safeguarding it.

Interviewee 27: I contend that an individual's identity is influenced by factors beyond mere linguistic aptitude. Although acquiring English language skills is advantageous for effective communication, it should not overwhelm or diminish the importance of cultural values and beliefs. As a person who takes pride in my cultural heritage, I place great importance on maintaining my identity while engaging in language learning pursuits.

These replies together underscore a shared theme that emphasizes the significance of maintaining cultural identity while developing proficiency in the English language.

Participants demonstrate a resolute dedication to preserving their cultural heritage and traditions while also becoming proficient in English. They consider their cultural heritage to be essential to their identity and make it a priority to preserve its importance when learning a new language. Participants recognize the benefits of acquiring English skills for effective communication and accessing opportunities. However, they underline that language ability should not overwhelm or alter their cultural identity. They perceive language as a tool for communication rather than a factor that defines one's identity.

Participants exhibit a strong sense of pride in their Azerbaijani heritage and actively strive to maintain its values and traditions. They acknowledge the significance of cultural heritage in influencing their sense of self and are committed to safeguarding it while actively participating in language acquisition pursuits. There is recognition of the necessity to achieve a harmonious equilibrium between learning linguistic abilities and maintaining cultural heritage. Participants hold the belief that language acquisition should enrich their lives while also preserving the authenticity of their cultural heritage.

Collectively, these comments demonstrate a viewpoint that places great importance on cultural identity, even when it comes to developing fluency in the English language. They emphasize the significance of preserving a robust link to one's cultural heritage while participating in language acquisition endeavors.

The interviewees' focus on religion stems from the recognition that religion serves as a significant common social identity marker, which not only defines one's lifestyle but also characterizes their individuality (Downes, 2011).

3.7. Disadvantages of Identity Reconstruction

Continuing from the previous one, the following interview question investigated whether the influence of English on the language learner is beneficial or detrimental, regardless of its impact on the participants' opinion of their identity (Question #7). The data obtained from this question indicates that 20 respondents perceived this impact as positive, whereas 2 respondents perceived it as negative, and 7 respondents had mixed feelings. Ultimately, 1 participants reported no discernible impact from their English language instruction.

Interviewee 1: I feel positive and negative at the same time. It's so because as an English speaker when I am in the environment where there are Azerbaijani people, when I express myself, they find hard it to understand me. So, it's a bit challenging for me, but at the same time, I feel positive. There is a saying - the more language you know, more people you become.

Interviewee 9: Acquiring proficiency in the English language provides the capacity to expand our perspectives and cultivate a more profound comprehension of worldwide cultures. Embracing various languages can enhance our lives and foster intercultural discussion and understanding, despite the potential for it to challenge our preconceived notions and social norms.

Interviewee 22: The impact of learning English on a person's identity can be both positive and negative. On the positive side, learning English opens doors to new cultures, ideas, and opportunities for communication. It can help people feel more connected to the world and boost their confidence in social and professional settings. However, on the negative side, some may feel pressure to conform to English-speaking norms, leading to a sense of cultural loss or identity conflict. Additionally, the process of learning English can be challenging and stressful for some individuals. Overall, the impact of learning English on identity varies depending on personal experiences and cultural factors.

Interviewee 24: I haven't noticed any significant change in my identity as a result of learning English. While language learning has its benefits, such as improved communication skills, I believe that my cultural identity remains unchanged by the

languages I speak.

Interviewee 27: Learning English has introduced feelings of inadequacy and frustration at times. As a non-native speaker, I often struggle to express myself fluently and accurately, leading to a sense of self-doubt and anxiety. This negative impact on my confidence and self-esteem has made language learning a challenging and sometimes disheartening experience.

Interviewee 1 demonstrates ambivalence, acknowledging both advantageous and disadvantageous aspects of being an English speaker in an Azerbaijani setting. Although there is a feeling of optimism in improving one's communication skills, there is also a difficulty in being comprehended by individuals who do not possess fluency in the English language. Interviewee 9 emphasizes the beneficial influence of being proficient in English in expanding one's worldview and comprehending many global cultures. They recognize that adopting many languages can enhance lives and promote cross-cultural communication, despite certain obstacles to preconceived ideas and societal conventions. Interviewee 22 emphasizes that the influence of acquiring English language skills on one's sense of self can fluctuate between favorable and unfavorable features. Although it provides new opportunities and connections, there can also be demands to adhere to English-speaking standards, which may result in a feeling of cultural loss or identity conflict for certain individuals. Interviewee 24 underscores that while language acquisition has its advantages, their cultural identity stays unaltered. They hold the belief that the process of acquiring language does not fundamentally change their perception of themselves or their cultural heritage.

Obstacles and difficulties: Interviewee 27 discusses the adverse effects of acquiring English language skills, especially for individuals who are not native speakers. Individuals may encounter emotions of incompetence and irritation, resulting in uncertainty and unease, so complicating and demoralizing the process of acquiring a new language.

In summary, these responses indicate that the influence of acquiring English language skills on one's identity is complex and can differ greatly among individuals. Although there are advantages such as increased prospects and social networks, there are also difficulties

and possible clashes with cultural heritage and self-confidence.

3.8. Views of Peers and Parents

Roth (2010) defines identity at the interpersonal level as "who we perceive ourselves to be and how we relate to others" (p. 116).

Considering the influence of other individuals, such as learners' parents and group mates, on the process of language learning and identity reconstruction is highly justified, as both activities are inherently social in nature. Thus, in order to maintain a consistent flow of interview questions, the participants were instructed to express their opinions on the topic of foreign language acquisition and identity reconstruction. Specifically, they were asked to share their perspectives on how their peers and parents perceive identity reconstruction in the second language (Question #8). The results indicated that 24 participants were of the opinion that their parents and peers would be positive to identity reconstruction, while 3 participants anticipated that the beliefs of their peers and parents would be negative (Table 4.9). Two participants expressed that the viewpoints of their peers and parents might vary, ranging from contradictory to ambivalent, depending on the circumstances. Lastly, one participant had no knowledge regarding this matter. Parents' perspectives are significant due to their ability to shape their children's beliefs, maintain regular communication with them, and guide their children's educational and emotional development in terms of socioeconomics and emotions.

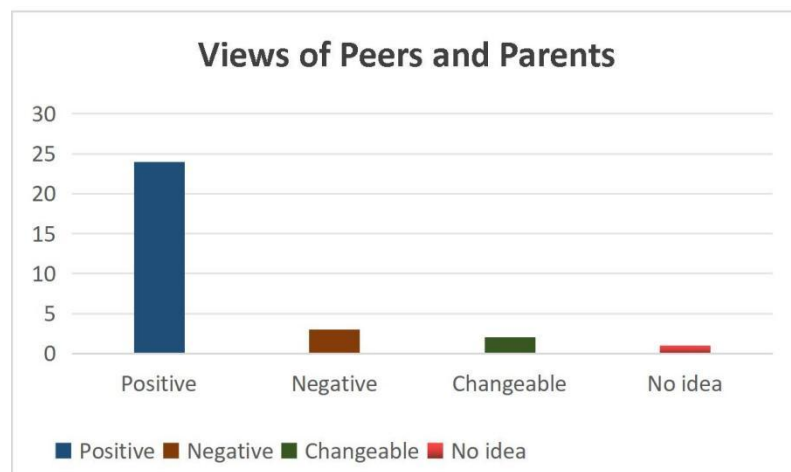


Table 3.8: Views of Peers and Parents

Here are some remarkable answers:

Interviewee 3: Yes, my parents and friends generally view the impact of learning English on a learner's identity as positive. They believe that learning English opens up opportunities for communication, education, and cultural exchange, which can enrich a person's understanding of the world and enhance their personal growth. They see proficiency in English as a valuable skill that can lead to greater career prospects and global connections. Additionally, they appreciate how learning English can broaden one's perspectives and facilitate interactions with people from diverse backgrounds. Overall, they perceive the impact of learning English as beneficial for shaping a more globally-minded and adaptable identity.

Interviewee 12: I have noticed the positive effect of learning English on my friends. They applied to study abroad by learning English. Thus, it had a positive effect on their career and circle of friends.

Interviewee 18: Actually my family is proud of me. And contacting with my friends in English is easy. It's positive.

Interviewee 20: My family definitely thinks that it's positive and it has a positive attitude on me. My friends also agrees to it. I believe learning a language especially English, because it's the most widespread language. Because learning languages can contribute so many things to you. It might be your personality, mental state, environment.

Participants highlight how learning English opens up opportunities for communication, education, and cultural exchange. They believe that proficiency in English enriches individuals' understanding of the world and facilitates personal growth. Learning English is seen as a valuable skill that can lead to greater career prospects and connections on a global scale. Participants note how their friends have applied to study abroad or expanded their circle of friends through English proficiency, resulting in positive effects on their careers and social networks. Family members are often proud of individuals for their English language skills, seeing it as a positive attribute. Additionally, contacting friends in English

is seen as easy and convenient, fostering positive interactions and relationships.

Participants believe that learning English, as the most widespread language, contributes to various aspects of personal development, including personality, mental state, and environment. They emphasize the value of language learning in shaping a more globally-minded and adaptable identity.

Overall, these responses highlight the perceived benefits of learning English in terms of career opportunities, social connections, and personal growth. Family and friends play a supportive role in encouraging language learning, recognizing its positive impact on individuals' identities and experiences.

However, one interviewee expressed the belief that his parents and friends disapprove of the potential influence of English on learners' identity and culture, considering it to be negative:

Interviewee 4: I think my parents think a little bit negative. Because they don't understand when I sometimes use the English words. It just happens, I can't control it.

This response highlights the complexities of language dynamics within families and the potential challenges that arise from differences in language use and understanding between generations. It underscores the importance of open communication and mutual respect in navigating such linguistic differences within familial relationships.

3.9 Influential Factors

Respondents were also asked about the factors that motivated them to change their identity when they began learning English (question no. 6). Participants' responses revealed two main influences: a) the media and press (e.g. the Internet, films, textbooks, games, etc.) and b) the cultural environment of English-speaking countries (e.g. interaction with native English speakers while traveling to English-speaking countries). This section contains quotes similar to those shown below:

Interviewer 7: Television programs and documentaries have had a great influence on my learning of English. By watching these programs, I was exposed to different accents, colloquialisms, and cultural references that greatly enriched my language skills and cultural

awareness.

Interviewee 22: I think that watching English TV series and listening to podcasts gives me authentic language input and helps me improve my listening skills. It also exposes me to different cultural contexts and social norms, promoting a more holistic understanding of the English language and its use.

In general, findings suggest that acquiring a second language affects on identity. Majority of the students can see these changes on themselves. Some of them have positive attitudes towards these changes while some of them have negative attitude.

CONCLUSION

The current study took the aim of investigating reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity in light of SLA experience. It also investigated whether these changes are positive or negative, whether identity is important to them, and other such issues. This study also reviewed previous research in this area and investigated this topic in the context of Azerbaijan. For the purposes of the research three questions were postulated. To do the current research thirty students studying English language teaching and Translation from Khazar University were selected. The purpose of selecting those students is that they have more exposure to the English language and have knowledge of what identity is. Although some students did not know exactly what identity was, they were asked additional questions to clarify. Students who could not express themselves fluently in English were interviewed in Azerbaijani. The results of the research showed that most of the students felt this change in themselves as a result of learning a second foreign language. Only a few of them did not feel these changes, which is due to the fact that they did not accept the culture of the country where they learned the language. Because in their answers, they said "Even if I learn this language, I am still an Azerbaijani and learning a new language does not change my personality." It is obvious that this change is more common in students who start learning a foreign language at an earlier age. Because issues such as identity and cultural attachment are not fully formed at an early age.

The results of this study made important and useful contributions to the topic of reconstruction of identity in light of SLA experience in the context of Azerbaijan. The results also indicate how learning a second foreign language reconstructs identity. It shows whether the formation is positively or negatively perceived by the learners, which learners are most affected by the changes and the attitude of their friends and families towards these changes.

One of the contributions of the study is that Azerbaijani learners of English understand learning English not only as acquiring language skills, but also as integrating into the culture of English-speaking countries. This integration leads to the reconstructing of their identities. Some of the learners even point out that they start to think like an English person and this leads to misunderstandings in their communication with other people in the society.

The interviewees' clear inclination to associate with and consequently assimilate into English culture can be construed as their perception of English as a tool for defining their identity. According to several scholars, the reason why English learners are more receptive to new ideas about their identity is because they begin learning English at an early age, before their cultural identities are fully formed (Yihong, Zhao, Ying, & Yan, 2007). This study revealed that those who started their English language acquisition at a younger age experienced a greater degree of identity reconstruction compared to others. Learners who started their learning journey at a younger age have a higher level of assimilation into the cultural aspects of the language they are acquiring. This is attributed to the incomplete development of their identities during early stages of life. Nevertheless, it is determined that individuals who began language acquisition at a later stage have lower levels of cultural assimilation in the languages they acquire, and their identities undergo less construction.

In addition, such an assumption applies here that Azerbaijani learners who have a positive view of learning English change their identity more than those who have a negative view. According to Scoon (1971), this can act as a powerful motivator and one of the key mediators of success in language learning. In practical terms, this might be viewed as a concealed opportunity for language teachers to fully utilize the potential of language education. Teachers must acknowledge and comprehend the diverse identities of learners in the classroom (refer to Norton, 1997). Hence, the aim of this study was to investigate the views of language learners' identities and the process of reconstructing their identities. Ushioda (2009) claims that educational methods that foster students' different identities and promote student autonomy are effective in achieving this goal. In his study, Ellis (2012) suggested that all perspectives on identity have a common belief that language and the broader social environment are closely connected, and that addressing prevailing power dynamics is crucial for fostering language acquisition.

Pedagogical Implications

This research has several implications for critical pedagogy. Firstly, It is important for language teachers to acknowledge that students have various identities that are constantly changing beyond their role as language learners. This comprehension can be used to

contribute to the development of instructional strategies that respect and accommodate the varied

experiences and backgrounds of learners. Moreover, it is argued that a learner's identity is constructed or reconstructed in communication with other people. It doesn't happen in isolation, without communication or interaction (Blackburn, 2000). Azerbaijani EFL learners who have a positive attitudes towards reconstruction of identity in learning a second language can be seen as an opportunity to second language acquisition experience. Teachers' roles are significant here. Because teachers are expected to capitalise on the learners' positive attitudes as resources to cultivate the ability to adapt to a new culture and enhance the capacity to acquire knowledge and skills for future interactions among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners.

Another pedagogical implication is that when teaching English, teachers should balance learners' existing identities with their integration into the language they are learning. Because direct integration into a new foreign language without taking into account the existing identity can be unexpected for learners, which can lead to failure in the language learning process. However, by conducting this teaching process in parallel, both taking into account the existing identity and integrating the new language, learners can be more motivated, and this will lead to successful results in the language learning process.

Suggestions for Further Research

A further suggestion arising from this research is to select more participants when conducting the survey. The participation of more respondents in the survey will lead to a more accurate and detailed result of the survey.

Although various research topics related to second language acquisition have been worked in Azerbaijan, the topic of second language acquisition and its effects on the identity of learners has not been addressed. Also, future researchers can investigate the theme of identity reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners in light of SLA experience from the perspective of gender. With this research, they can comparatively determine how Azerbaijani men's and women's identities are reconstructed while acquiring a second language language

REFERENCES

1. Atay, D. et al., (2009). Multiple identities as reflected in English-language education: The Turkish perspective. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 8(1), 21-34.
2. Aydemir, A. B. (2013). *The relationship between cultural identity and accent*. Bilkent Üniversitesi, Ankara.
3. Babayiğit, M. V. (2020). Expressions of Determination, Success, Diligence, Stability and Laziness in Kurdish, Turkish and English Proverbs. *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 6 (2), 244 – 257, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21600/ijoks.760441>.
4. Babayiğit, M. V. (2021). Semantic and Modal Analysis of Some Verbs in Kurdish, Turkish and English. *International Journal of Kurdish Studies* 7 (1), 123-139.
5. Benati, G.A. et al., (2016). *Second Language Acquisition: A Theoretical Introduction To Real World*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.
6. Bhabha, H.K. (1994): *The location of culture*. London&New York: Routledge.
7. Block, D. (2007). Identity in applied linguistics. *The sociolinguistics of identity*, 34-49.
8. Bourdieu, P. (1977). The economics of Linguistic exchanges. *Social Science Information*, 16, 645-668.
9. Butler, J. (1997). *Excitable speech. A politics of the performative*. Routledge.
10. Byram, M. et al., (2005). “Intercultural Competence and Foreign Language Learning in the Primary School”. *Teaching Modern Languages in the Primary School* (155-168).
11. Byram, M. et al., (1998). *Language Learning in Intercultural Perspective* (3-12). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
12. Cameron, L. et al., (2007). Complex systems and applied linguistics. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 17(2), 226-239.
13. Cervatiuc, A. (2009) Identity, good language learning, and adult immigrants in Canada, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 8(4), 254-271.
14. Damasio, A. (1994). *Descartes’ error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. Putman Books.
15. Damasio, A. (2010). *Self comes to mind: Constructing the conscious brain*. Pantheon Books.
16. De Fina, A. et al., (2012). *Analyzing narrative, discourse and sociolinguistic perspectives*. Cambridge University Press.

17. Doughty, C. et al., (1998). *The Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
18. Duff, P. (2002). The discursive co-construction of knowledge, identity, and difference: An ethnography of communication in the high school mainstream. *Applied Linguistics* 23, 289– 322
19. Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
20. Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition (Vol. 2)*. New York: Oxford University Press.
21. Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition (2nd Ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
22. Ellis, R. (2008). *The Study of Second Language Acquisition (2nd Ed.)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
23. Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis (No. 7)*. WW Norton & Company.
24. Ersin, P. (2014). A case study of a Turkish English learner in an EFL setting: Investment, imagined community and identity. *Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, İstanbul*.
25. Fekete, A. (2019). Exploring advanced English learners' multilingual identity construction from multiple perspectives.
26. Fekete, A. (2020). Desire, freedom, and pain in English learners' emotional responses to SLA: A holistic look at English learners' multilingual identity construction. *ERL Journal*, 2(4), 84-99.
27. Fekete, A. (2021). Examining teachers' well-being during the pandemic: A mixed methods study on teachers' psychological, emotional and identity responses to online education. *ERL Journal* 2(6), 46-65.
28. Giampapa, F. (2001). Hyphenated identities: Italian-Canadian youth and the negotiation of ethnic identities in Toronto. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 5(3), 279-315.
29. Giddens (1991). *Modernity and Self-Identity*.
30. H. Eminli (2011). *The Process of Foreign Language Acquisition in Azerbaijani Learners of Different Ages*.
31. Hall, S. (2000). Who needs identities. In P. du Gay, J. Evans & P., & Redman (eds.). *Identity: A reader (pp.15-30)*. Sage Publications.
32. J, Garibova. (2018) *Formation of the Language-Identity Relationship in Azerbaijan*

and the Role of Turkish.

33. K, Risager (2005), Languaculture as a key concept in language and culture teaching.
34. Kanno, Y. et al., (2003). Imagined communities and educational possibilities, *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* 2.4 (special issue)
35. Kasper, G. (1992). Pragmatic transfer. *Interlanguage Studies Bulletin (Utrecht)*, 8(3), 203–231.
36. Kramersch (2014). The Challenge of Globalization for the Teaching of Foreign Languages and Cultures 249–254.
37. Kramersch, C. (1993). Context and culture in language teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
38. Kramersch, C. (1998). Language and culture. Oxford University Press.
39. Kramersch, C. (2009). The multilingual subject. What language learners say about their experience and why it matters. Oxford University Press.
40. Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
41. Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.
42. L,D, Luscombe. (2014). “Language and identity in a post-Soviet world: language of education and linguistic identity among Azerbaijani students.
43. Larsen-Freeman, D. et al., (2014). *An Introduction to Second Language Acquisition Research*. London: Routledge.
44. Lightbown, M.P. et al., (1999). *How Languages Are Learned (2nd Ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press. Press.
45. Lightbown, P. M. et al., (2006). *How languages are learned (3rd ed.)*. Oxford, U.K., Oxford University Press.
46. Littlewood, W. (2007). Second language learning. In A. Davies & C. Elder (Eds.) *The handbook of Applied Linguistics (503-524)*. Oxford: Blackwell.
47. Loewen, S. et al., (2011). *Key Concepts in Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Palgrave Mac Millan.
48. Marian, V. et al., (2012). The cognitive benefits of being bilingual. In *Cerebrum: the Dana forum on brain science (Vol. 2012)*. Dana Foundation.
49. McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of Second Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
50. Miller, J. M. (2000). *Language use, identity, and social interaction: Migrant*

- students in Australia. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 33(1), 69-100.
51. Miller, J. M. (2000). Language use, identity, and social interaction: Migrant students in Australia. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 33(1), 69-100.
 52. Mitchell, R. et al., *Second Language Learning Theories* (2nd Ed.). London: Arnold.
 53. Mitchell, R. et al., (2004). *Second Language Learning Theories* (2nd Ed.). London: Arnold.
 54. Modirkhamene, S. (2015). Examining Acculturation Model in an EFL context: Learners' attitudes towards target language accent vs. L1 accent. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 15(1), 25–38.
 55. Moje, Dillon. et al., (2000), *Sustaining Effective Literacy Practices Over Time in Secondary Schools: School Organisational and Change Issues*, 167.
 56. Nicholas, H. et al., (2008). Defining child second language acquisition, defining roles for L2 instruction. In J. Philp, R. Oliver & A. Mackey (Eds.) *Child's Play: Second Language Acquisition and The Younger Learner* (27-51). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
 57. Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL quarterly*, 31(3), 409-429.
 58. Norton, B. (2000). Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity and educational change. *Editorial Dunken*.
 59. Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities, and the language classroom. *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research*. London: Pearson Education Limited, 159–171.
 60. Ochs, E. et al., (2008). Language socialization: An historical overview. *Encyclopedia of language and education*, 8, 3-15.
 61. Ortaçtepe, D. (2013). This is called “free-falling theory not culture shock!”: A narrative inquiry on second language socialization, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 12(4), 215-229.
 62. Ortega, L. (2009). *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. London: Hodder. Arnold.
 63. Ótott, Zs. (2023). Changing lives via language learning: A case study of language majors' linguistic identity construction.
 64. Pavlenko, A. et al., (2000). Second language learning as participation and the (re) construction of selves. *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*, 155, 177.
 65. Polat, N. et al., (2010). Gender differences in identity and acculturation patterns

- and L2 accent attainment, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 9(1), 17-35.
66. Pullen, E. (2011). The relationship between cultural identity and pronunciation of non-native speakers of English in an EFL setting . *Bilkent Üniversitesi, Ankara*.
 67. Ringbom, H. (1987). *The Role of the First Language in Foreign Language Learning*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
 68. Sa'd, S. H. T. (2017). Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction: learners' understanding of the Intersections of the self, the other and power. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 7(4), 13-36.
 69. Saville-Troike, M. (2012). *Introducing Second Language Acquisition (2nd Ed.)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 70. Tarhan, H. (2015). Social identity change among English language learners: A case study. *Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara*.
 71. Tharp, R. G. et al., (1988) *Rousing Minds to Life : Teaching, Learning, and Schooling in Social Context*.
 72. Vanpatten, B. et al., (2015). *Key Terms in Second Language Acquisition (2nd Ed.)*. London: Bloomsbury.
 73. Vanpattern B. et al., (2007). *Theories in Second Language Acquisition; An Introduction*. London: LeA.
 74. Walsh, S. P. et al., (2007). Me, my mobile, and I: The role of self-and prototypical identity influences in the prediction of mobile phone behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37(10), 2405-2434.
 75. Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 76. Wenger, E. (2000). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 77. Williams, T. A. (2020). On the border bus: Narrative and identity construction in an English major from Vajdaság/Vojvodina. In A. Fekete, M. Lehmann, & K. Simon (Eds.). *UPRT 2019: Empirical studies in English applied linguistics (pp. 331-347)*. *Lingua Franca* .
 78. Aşkın, M. (2007). Kimlik ve giydirilmiş kimlikler. *Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 10(2), 213-220.
 79. Demir-Bektaş, M. (2015). İngilizce'nin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği bir sınıfta

etkileşimsel kimliklerin karşılıklı oluşturulması üzerine bir vaka çalışması. Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara.

80. Ergenç, İ. (1983). Yabancı dil öğretimi ve olumsuz aktarım. Türk Dili Dergisi, 379-380, 195- 206.
81. Ergin, M. (1982). Türk Dil Bilgisi. Bayrak Yayınları, İstanbul.
82. Karacan, H. et al., (2017). Türk ve Kürt Dillerinin Sentaks (Sözdizimsel) Karşılaştırması. Tiydem Yayıncılık, Editör: Hasan KARACAN, Basım sayısı, 3, 7-31.
83. Karadüz, A. (2010). Dil becerileri ve eleştirel düşünme. Turkish Studies, 5(3), 1566-1593.
84. Yolcu, M. (2002). Yabancı dil öğrenimi. Dilbilimleri Akademik Araştırma Dergisi, 2(2), 1974

APPENDICES

Focus group

interview

Demographic

Information

Age: Mother tongue: Ethnic background: Sex: Male /

Female How long have you been learning English at language

institute(s): ...Years Interview Questions

1. Define identity in your own words.
2. Is it important for a person to have a specific identity (i.e., to be Iranian, American, English, African, etc.)? why or why not? Please explain.
3. In your opinion, has the learning of English affected your attitude toward your identity? If yes, then do you view this effect as positive or negative? Please elaborate.
4. What viewpoint did you hold toward your identity as Azerbaijani before you started to learn English? Has your identity changed since you started to learn English? If so, then in what way has your identity changed?
5. How do you feel now that English has or has not impacted on your identity? Do you feel positive or negative? Please explain.
6. What causes the English language to impact a learner's identity? Please elaborate.
7. In your viewpoint, is the impact of learning English, if any, on the learner's identity positive or negative? Why? Please explain.
8. Do your parents and friends view the impact of learning English, if any, on the learner's identity as positive or negative? Why? Please explain.

Note: This interview questions were taken from the article."Foreign Language Learning and Identity Reconstruction: Learners' Understanding of the Intersections of the Self, the Other and Power" by Tamimi Sa'd, S. H (2017).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have a sincere debt of gratitude to all who helped complete my theory. A theory takes a lot of work, concentration, and time to complete, so I consider myself fortunate to have had an amazing group that significantly contributed to my achievement.

I extend my sincere thanks to Dr. Davoud Kuhi, who was my supervisor throughout this research journey. His valuable guidance and continual support have been a great inspiration and motivation for me. He provided me with insightful perspectives and tools, which helped me to gain a deep understanding of the research topic and navigate through the challenges of the research process.

I like to acknowledge the contribution of Dr. Milana who helped me survey this research. Her contribution was vital in ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the data obtained from the survey.

I am thankful to Prof. Huseynagha, my teacher, whose insightful lectures and discussions enriched my academic experience and inspired me to pursue my research interests. I am especially grateful for his contributions in answering my questions and providing throughout the process conduct my research.

I am thankful to Dr. Ilham, my teacher, whose insightful lectures and discussions enriched my academic experience and inspired me to pursue my research interests. I am especially grateful for his contribution in answering my questions and providing throughout the process conduct my research.

I express my heartfelt gratitude to my coworkers, whose support and assistance played a vital role in the completion of this theory. Their collaboration and feedback were instrumental in refining my research work and helping me to develop new ideas.

Lastly, I want to convey my deepest and sincerest appreciation to my beloved family members. Their constant love, support, and encouragement have been the foundation of my academic journey. Without their unwavering sacrifices and support, I would not been able to reach this important milestone in my life.

ABSTRACT

Identity reconstruction is a complex process through which people develop their sense of themselves and their environment. There are many factors that influence this process and influence its development; including language learning. The effects of combining language learning and identity "reconstruction" are evident in most learning environments. Recently, second foreign language acquisition and reconstruction of identity is one of the most frequently addressed topics in linguistics. The qualitative research conducted aimed to investigate how Azerbaijani language learners of English perceive the relationship between English language acquisition and the reconstruction of their identities. Data was gathered through focus-group interviews involving thirty students of Khazar University. The participants were 3rd and 4th year students studying English language teaching and translation. Participants discussed various aspects of identity, including personal and social traits, ethnic backgrounds, locations, religious beliefs, national customs, and moral values. Most learners acknowledged that learning English significantly influenced their self-perception, with the majority viewing this impact as positive and advantageous for their language learning journey. Many participants expressed a strong desire to assimilate and identify with English language and culture. However, some learners resisted linking language acquisition to identity reconstruction, citing a utilitarian rather than integrative approach to learning English. The study underscores the importance of motivation, English as a global language, and discursive practices in shaping and reshaping identity during second language (L2) acquisition.

The results of this study made important and useful contributions to the topic of reconstruction of identity in light of SLA experience in the context of Azerbaijan. The results indicate how learning a second foreign language reconstructs identity. It shows whether the formation is positively or negatively perceived by the learners, which learners are most affected by the changes and the attitude of their friends and families towards these changes. The study offers useful recommendations for language teachers to take into account while teaching.

Key Words: Reconstruction, Azerbaijani learners, Identity, Second language acquisition, Linguistic identity, Experience

REFERAT

Kimliyin yenidən formalaşması insanların özləri və ətrafları haqqında fikirlərini inkişaf etdirdikləri mürəkkəb bir prosesdir. Dil öyrənilməsi və kimliyin "yenidən formalaşması"nın effektləri əksər öyrənmə mühitlərində özünü göstərir. Son zamanlar ikinci xarici dilin mənimsənilməsi və kimliyin yenidən qurulması dilçilikdə ən çox müraciət edilən mövzulardan biridir. Aparılan keyfiyyətli tədqiqatın məqsədi Azərbaycanlı ingilis dili öyrənənlərin ingilis dilinin mənimsənilməsi zamanı öz şəxsiyyətlərinin yenidən qurulması arasındakı əlaqəni necə qavradıqlarını araşdırmaq olub. Məlumatlar Xəzər Universitetinin otuz tələbəsinin iştirak etdiyi fokus-qrup müsahibələri vasitəsilə toplanmışdır. İştirakçılar "ingilis dili müəllimliyi" və "tərcüməçilik" ixtisası üzrə təhsil alan 3-cü və 4-cü kurs tələbələri idi. İştirakçılar kimliyin müxtəlif aspektlərini, o cümlədən şəxsi və sosial xüsusiyyətlər, etnik mənsubiyyətlər, məkanlar, dini inanclar, milli adətlər və mənəvi dəyərləri müzakirə ediblər. Tələbələrin əksəriyyəti ingilis dilinin öyrənilməsinin onların özünü qavrayışına əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə təsir etdiyini qeyd etdi, əksəriyyəti bu təsiri müsbət və dil öyrənmək üçün uyğun gördü. Əksər iştirakçılar ingilis dilini və mədəniyyətini mənimsəmək və eyniləşdirmək istəyini ifadə etdi. Bununla belə, bəzi öyrənənlər ingilis dilini öyrənmək üçün integrativ yanaşmadan daha çox utilitar yanaşmaya istinad edərək, dil mənimsənilməsini kimliyin yenidən formalaşması ilə əlaqələndirilməsi fikrinə qarşı çıxdılar. Tədqiqat motivasiyanın, qlobal dil kimi ingilis dilinin və ikinci dilin mənimsənilməsi zamanı kimliyin formalaşdırılması və yenidən formalaşdırılmasında diskursiv təcrübələrin əhəmiyyətini vurğulayır.

Bu tədqiqatın nəticələri Azərbaycan kontekstində ikinci xarici dilin mənimsənilməsi zamanı kimliyin yenidən qurulması mövzusunda mühüm və faydalı töhfələr verdi. Nəticələr ikinci xarici dilin öyrənilməsinin kimliyi necə yenidən formalaşdırdığını göstərir. Bu, formalaşmanın öyrənənlər tərəfindən müsbət və ya mənfi qəbul edildiyini, hansı öyrənənlərin dəyişikliklərdən daha çox təsirləndiyini, dostlarının və ailələrinin bu dəyişikliklərə münasibətini göstərir. Tədqiqat dil müəllimlərinin tədris zamanı nəzərə almaları üçün faydalı tövsiyələr təklif edir.

Açar sözlər: Yenidənqurma, Azərbaycanlı Öyrənənlər, Kimlik, İkinci Dilin Mənimsənilməsi, Dil Kimliyi, Təcrübə

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Length of English Learning Experience

Table 3.5 Reconstruction of Azerbaijani learners' identity through English

Table 3.8 Views of Peers and Parents