MULTIPLE LANGUAGE LEARNER IDENTITIES: "IF YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ME, HOW CAN YOU TEACH ME?"

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ABSTRACT

Learner identity, as multiple, varied and contradictory, is a comparatively new phenomenon in the process of language learning. Underlying this view of language learner identity is the post-structuralism of language learning, which treats language as the site of identity construction, development, and negotiation. An important topic of discussion in the literature on L2 learner identity revolves around its discursive aspects, thus how identity is reflected and constituted in spoken and written discourse. Adhering to this view of L2 learner identities, the study moves along with the presupposition that students present themselves differently in different contexts, and therefore, focuses on social media interactions to unveil the dynamics of identity construction. New media literacies combine texts with multimodal resources and the emergence of identity in these settings has opened up new venues for researching identity. This study, in a qualitative frame, draws upon narrative research, content analysis and discourse analysis to explore, analyze and interpret the dynamic interplay of multiple identities of English language learners. The study was carried out in the prep school of a state university in Istanbul with the voluntary participation of 35 (23 male, 12 female) language students who are going to study at social sciences and civil engineering departments after their prep school education. The researcher established a class group page in social media. For the analysis and interpretation of data, particular discursive constructs such as code-switching, terms of address, hedging and politeness strategies including face-saving and face-threatening acts and emoticons are used as a frame of reference to achieve a more comprehensive picture of how learner-learner and learner-teacher identities are negotiated, constructed and re-constructed in ongoing interaction. This study, in its limited scope, showed that teachers should view learners as individuals with multiple and changing identities, not just as individuals with only English language learning needs.

Key words: Learner identities, multiple identities, social media, foreign language education.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the notion of identity has attracted significant attention from applied linguistic researchers and has also gained momentum in the field of language education. Heightened interest on ESL/EFL identity is due to the transformation in today's postmodern world of hybridized identities marked by plurality, diversity and transnational movements. At the junction of the social changes stands the new image of language learners who are recognized as social agents. In this line of thought, in its broadest sense, identity is defined as one's way of relating the self to the world. In this vein, the rise of identity can be seen as a consequence of macro-dynamics of the society.

Different theoretical orientations and research traditions highlight the complexity of defining identity (Norton, 1997, 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Wodak et al., 2011; Edwards, 2009). There have been notable similarities and differences in conceptions of identity evolved in years. Literature on identity research heavily draws on three main approaches to identity: sociopsychological, social constructionist and poststructural approaches. In the past twenty years, there has been a shift in perspective from psychologically based concept of identity centering on the individual self as

stable to social constructionist views conceptualizing identity as a dynamic process grounded in interaction (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012). Social constructionist approaches can be placed at the opposite end of an essentialist view of identity as fixed. Such conceptualizations emphasize the socially situated nature of identity as well as the agentive characteristic of it. The recent research tradition can be termed as poststructural in essence. Poststructuralist theories of language achieved much prominence in the late twentieth century, and the terms 'poststructuralism', 'postmodernism', 'critical inquiry' are used as an umbrella for a variety of approaches adopted by different researchers (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Hall, 1997; Weedon, 1997) within this paradigm. The post-structuralist approaches emphasize its multifaceted nature and try to unveil how external influences such as organizations, institutions, relationships, etc. and power come to influence identity formation. Within this approach, identity is conceptualized in the context of diverse relations of power between people and in the broader social, political and economic processes. A key assumption underlying much of postsructural research is that people have multiple identities. In other words, there are a range of identities made available in different contexts and situations. We all possess a number of identities, as Edwards (2009, p. 2) puts it "the salience of which can be expected to wax and wane according to circumstance and context". One of the commonly referred taxonomy in the field is the one proposed by Tracy (2002). Tracy (2002, pp.18-19) differentiates identities into four categories with respect to "stable" (relatively unchanging) and "dynamic" (relatively changing) scale with close reference to the facets of identity as "person-hood" and the construction of identity via "social interaction". According to her, the features of *master identity* such as gender, ethnicity, age and nationality are fairly stable but they can also be contested. There are also *personal identities*, the kinds of identities that are attributed to people on the basis of their attitudes and behavior toward some issue. While *master and personal identities* are fairly stable, there are other aspects of identity that are more dynamic and situated in specific interactions. These are conceptualized as *interactional identity*, namely, roles that people take on in interaction with other people and as *relational identity*, the agency that one can exert in performing an identity, the kind of relationship s/he enacts. For this study, these types of identities are quite significant for analyzing the dynamic interplay among multiple identities students bring to classroom and their impact on the emerging identities in their social media interactions.

Poststructuralist approach to identity has become influential in social sciences and has been taken up by SLA researchers interested in exploring links between L2 learning and identity (Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004; Norton, 2006a; Norton, 2006b; Block, 2007; Hirst, 2007, Norton, 2008; Edwards, 2009; Huhtala and Lehti-Eklund, 2010). As Norton and Toohey (2011, p. 427) put it; this paradigm encourages researchers to reject grand theories and top-down approaches to research but understand the "particularity of the persons, environments and processes they wish to examine". Researchers (Block, 2007; Norton and Toohey, 2011) have argued that SLA needs to privilege contexts, discourse and interaction, and seek the learner complexity and particularity of context. This expansion in the field of SLA has allowed identity to take a centre stage as learning English is not only "the mastery of linguistic code but also entails learning about and understanding the world around oneself" (Flowerdew and Miller, 2008, p. 204; cited in Park, 2013). It appears that identity stays as a key construct in SLA research and has opened up multiple avenues for research on every aspect of the field.

An important topic of discussion in the literature on L2 learner identity revolves around its discursive aspects, thus how identity is reflected and constituted in spoken and written discourse. As for researchers interested in language and identity, writing in different genres has become one of the domains to see this discursive construction of identity. They have become interested not only in the conditions under which language learners speak, but in the extent to which identities structure their engagement with texts. There is growing recognition that when a learner engages in textual practices, the construction of the text is mediated by the learner's identity.

One should note that there is inherent difficulty in researching identity but by narrowing the scope of research to certain facets such as writing in different contexts, certain aspects of identity can be analyzed in depth. Besides non-virtual/formal environments, virtual environments are worthy areas to explore identity construction and re-construction through writing. As Merchant (2005, p. 301) puts it; "digital communication is intimately involved in the redefinition of who we are and how we relate to one another and is contributing to the development of new semiotic and discursive practices". The social nature of new technology is contributing to a re-evaluation of identity and interaction. New media literacies combine texts with multimodal resources and the emergence of identity in these settings has opened up new venues for researching identity. Thereby, in alignment with socio-constructionist and poststructural approach, this paper tries to analyze how identity is discursively constructed by describing the ways foreign language students choose to foreground or background their identities in social media environments. With due focus on the following research question, the study examines students' emerging identities in social media interaction:

- How do students "socialize" into a foreign language and enact their identities in different contexts, namely in the social media?

What Makes Social Media Different from L2 Classroom?

In understanding the identity constructions on social media, there are several key constructs that make social media interaction different from classroom writings in L2 settings. Social media interactions offer interesting environments in which to investigate L2 interaction, given that they combine the textuality of written communication with the real-time interactivity of face-to-face communication (Darhower, 2002). Text-based but speech-like interaction occurring via computers has generated a specific way of writing, which challenges the traditional means and conventions of traditional written norms for the purposes of economical, compressed and fast-paced message production. The unique linguistic and iconographic features of electronic writing comprise but are not limited to innovative abbreviation, emoticons, simplified syntax, capitalization and other characteristics. One can say that communication using new literacy technologies has also profound implications for the construction of identity; by its nature, electronic communication "offers the opportunity to develop and emphasize different aspects of identity with new sorts of writing" (Simpson, 2009, p.109).

One remarkable feature of social media is the pervasive use of multimodal resources that involve both verbal and visual semiotic modes. From a social semiotic perspective, multimodal resources are deployed to enable dialogic engagement with each other. Social media provide the multimodal communication channels where students can communicate both synchronously (instant picture and video upload) and asynchronously (comments and wall posts). Using Facebook, for instance, people can easily interact and share multiple formats of information, including texts, pictures, videos, etc., with each other via diverse digital devices (e.g., smartphone) without temporal or spatial constraints. As social media can present material in more than one modality; "it can provide learners with richer mental images, thus facilitating language learning" (Smith et al. 2003, p. 707).

With its multi-modal tools, the identities constructed on social media can sometimes be different from the identities constructed in formal classroom writing as social media encounters create a sense of freedom that encourages self-expression by allowing people to express their ideas with or without connection to their off-line life. The idea that individuals can create online identities that are in some ways different from the way they present themselves in their face-to-face encounters is increasingly taken for granted. First of all, at the very basic level, SNS users have more control over their self-presentational behaviors than they have in face-to-face

communications. They have the opportunity to think how their personalities will be presented and which photos and/or audio resources will best convey the images they want to create for themselves. Boyd & Ellison (2008, p. 219) mention that individuals construct a representation of self and this includes impression management and self presentation.

Compared to formal educational settings, freedom in self expression in the social media helps individuals to disclose themselves more freely. The virtual space offers individuals the freedom to choose who they want to be, how they want to be and whom they want to impress in ways one could not before. Thus the Internet provides not only new social spaces, where identity can be renegotiated, but also new forms of social life, and spaces for learning and self-presentation. Therefore, for young people online identity becomes an opportunity to escape the constraints, norms and values of the formal settings. However, it should be kept in mind that being a member of a particular community may also limit an individual's self expression because the individual may feel constrained to follow the expectations of the community. It can limit one's attitudes and behaviors and even influence participation and identity construction in an online community.

It is taken for granted that "social relations are always also relations of power, and so the workings of status, prestige and hierarchy will shape how identity is constructed" (Ivanic, 2006, p. 6). Power relations embedded in different social contexts are the driving forces that shape what identity roles are accessible, what opportunities are available for negotiation, and what kind of learning takes place (Norton, 2000). The aspect of power is another issue which differs in the social media. Social media space provides a context to explore how students' identities are constructed and how students reposition themselves and negotiate their identities. Social media interaction can embody symmetry between the students and the teacher as the students are also active in shaping topics (Heritage, 2008, p. 237). Rather than a social order with a center of power, social media invites participants to finetune the relationships of power in multiple and complex ways (Wildner-Bassett, 2005). Social media offers the altered power and authority distribution in contrast to conventional educational settings. In social media students are able to be more engaged in the learning to become English users as active learners, team builders, collaborators, and discoverers. The voluntary virtual atmosphere can encourage students to become proactive learners, expressing ideas, and generating discussions on the topics they find interesting and relevant to their lives. Furthermore, students take central roles in negotiating topics and sharing concerns, while the instructors simply take a supporting role in facilitating and guiding the overall learning process (Rachtam and Kaewkitipong and Firpo, 2012). They learn through joint engagement with each other through interactions. Also, peer-centered communication gives opportunities to perform identities not traditionally associated with those of "student" in institutional contexts. In other words, students construct collaborative power relations within social media. It is indeed possible to discursively negotiate a more equal relationship in these kinds of social media interaction, but it should also be noted that students may also transfer the power relations of the classroom to the virtual environment to some extent as the teacher is still the teacher with whom they interact although the environment is different.

Given the above mentioned dynamics of social media interaction and inspired by these, one of the driving motives of this study is to explore how social media environment influences L2 learner identity development at the tertiary level of education.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

This paper is part of the doctoral dissertation research and qualitative in scope, the aspiration of this study is to provide a synoptic discussion of features relevant to emerging identity construction in social media sites. The present study does not concern with the notion of typicality or representativeness but as the scholars highlighted with the particularities and complexity together. As Kramp (2004, p. 105) notes; "context enables the researcher to meaning where previously there was no meaning". It is concerned with particularities as behaviors, events and actions gain meaning in context.

The Participants and the Setting

The context of the present study was the School of Foreign Languages at a state university, a highly competitive university pioneering in architectural and engineering education. This study was conducted with the participation of foreign language preparatory school students (n = 35, 23 male, 12 female) from social studies and civil engineering departments in the spring term in 2012. The students' age varied between 18 and 23. They had all graduated from a high school in Turkey. Ten of the participants were from Istanbul. The rest were from different towns in Turkey and had come to Istanbul to pursue their studies. Students who enter the degree programs are required to take a proficiency test in English. Depending on their performance in the exam, the students either attend preparatory English classes or continue with their programs at their departments where medium of 30 % or 100 % of instruction is English. Students who score a minimum of 60 out of 100 are considered exempt from the English preparatory school. Students who cannot pass the proficiency exam are obliged to attend the preparatory classes for a minimum duration of one semester or two where they are offered 32 week intensive course on English.

The researcher collected the data from two writing classes which she instructed for a term. When the researcher met the students at the beginning of the second term, most of them were at the pre-intermediate level and were expected to finish the term with intermediate level. The researcher met each class twice a week for writing and coursebook classes. Data was collected from the students' and instructor's posting messages and comments on the class group page in social media for a period of four months and field-notes and memos kept during the process of data collection and analysis. Triangulation of data by means of observation notes, diary entries and memos assisted the researcher in identifying the students' reasons for the choices they made in their social media interaction. Some steps were taken to ensure the ethical standards in the main study. At the beginning of the study, the researcher informed the participants about the research and their consent was taken to become participatory in this project. The written permission of the institution was also taken.

Data collection procedure

A group page was created in social media to encourage students' English language use outside school contexts. The participants joined the group page on voluntary basis and 15 out of 16 prep students in the class of Civil Engineering Department students and 16 out of 19 prep students in the class of the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences students joined the class group page in the social media. Other students did not have accounts in the social media and because of some technical difficulties, they chose not to join the group page but follow the announcements via their classmates. There was also the question of access to a computer. A number of students did not have

a computer at home or in their dormitories and had no internet connection. They joined the group page but could not become active users of it.

The initial aim was to create an informal and rather free context where students shared, pursued and jointly constructed themes. The researcher logged onto Facebook on a daily basis, proposed triggering questions and posted media messages and directly interacted with the students so the role of the researcher was that of a participant. Being a participant researcher allowed the researcher to capture some of the subtle details of critical interactions and discursive choices emerging in students' writings. This assisted her in interpreting data and locating a great number of humorous situations, conflicts and potential sources of (dis)/alignments. The wall was perhaps the most conventional communication feature of Facebook and group page and, in terms of the configuration of Facebook at the time of the study, constituted the main space where users could interact and communicate with each other. Class group page displayed posts with date and time. Posts were typically presented in reverse chronological order automatically (most recent first or the one lastly commented on). Class group page encouraged interaction among students and between the teacher and students. There were some limitations and problems in the phase of data collection. For instance; some students were reluctant to share posts or comment on the posts though they mentioned orally in the class that they followed the posts. That is, these students generally used Facebook for entertainment and keeping in touch with peers. As it was not a course requirement, some students were not willing to become a part of this community. Although the aim was to create an informal discussion environment, it did not turn out to be so. Some continued to ignore the questions in the coming days. Some students did not feel compelled to comment on or acknowledge instructor's contributions. The researcher decided not to further pursue those who, for whatever reason, had not responded to the postings. Prompts were utilized but students were not enforced to follow these themes.

Consequently, it was very rare for the participant researcher to get answers from the full group each time. Five participants were active almost all the time. There was enthusiastic participation in some phases of the term with some students posting photos and links. The topic being discussed also affected the extent to which learners engaged in negotiation. Some topics encouraged active engagement on the part of students and instructors alike. For instance; celebration posts for Women's day took most of the participants' attention. The comments for those humorous posts were intertwined with some aspects of identity such as friendship and solidarity. They used masculine and intimate forms of address, built on each other's comments. With the help of a software program (Jing) which helps to take screenshots of the screen pages, the researcher systematically archived exchanges between students from their various interactions on social media and stored data in files on computer on daily and weekly basis. Hard copies of the interactions were printed and kept for later analysis.

Data analysis

Grounded in the poststructural research orientation, the study seeks to understand identity construction as emerging in discourse and towards that end employs some key current qualitative research perspectives, analytic resources and tools available across the methodological spectrum. Not just content but also the salient aspects of discourse features helped the researcher to analyze how identities were constructed, negotiated and re-negotiated in the course of unfolding interaction. What is more, multimodal features such as pictures, videos and the interplay between visual, auditory and verbal modes were analyzed to understand the emergence of identity in a virtual environment. Jenkins (2008, p. 17) pinpoints that "there is something active about identity that cannot be ignored: it isn't 'just there', it's not a 'thing', it must *always* be established." Therefore, in this study, the analysis of data was not confined to certain pre-determined identity sensitive

categories in the initial stages of analysis such as age, ethnicity, nationality but when those categories were found to be relevant in unveiling emerging identity sensitive discussions, such as the influence of gender difference in social media interaction, they were given due focus for the analysis and discussion of the findings. Such a projection was required for this particular research where a great majority of students from civil engineering department were male.

As for the classification of content for social media interaction in this study, the first step of the analysis was the familiarization with the data. Following the advice of Silverman (2001) and other qualitative researchers, all of the online interactions were read through numerous times looking for patterns in discourse which would help the researcher trace identity-sensitive points. The researcher started from data in order to create categories, a procedure referred to as coding. The process is quite different from standard content analysis, where the analysis is the frequency of occurrence of predetermined categories. Choosing the posting as the unit of analysis meant some postings that were quite lengthy could be categorized at multiple levels. The researcher read the interactions and tried to understand what was being talked about. The data was read repeatedly to identify emerging themes. At this point, it should be mentioned that the personal and theoretical experiences which the researcher may bring to the task can serve as material for the generation of categories. Alvesson & Sköldberg (2009, p. 57) point out that the researcher does not approach reality as a tabula rasa. S/he must have a perspective that will help him/her see relevant data and abstract significant categories from his/her scrutiny of data. Likewise, Strauss (1987) highlights that when coding you usually have some codes in mind and are also looking for other ideas that seem to arise out of the data. Themes may come from reviewing literature or from the characteristics of the phenomena being studied. The researcher looked for transitional points in the data where the flow, and/or the topic of the talk or text were changed, continued, or terminated. In the decision stage for coding an item, one criterion was the recurrence of the items in the narrative data. The coding and analysis became cyclical; ongoing analysis mandated additional coding.

After multiple readings, a number of common themes and topics such as attitudes to English, peer support, asking for help, teasing, language learner identity, resistance and solidarity became apparent. Most of the entries had between one and five codes attached to them. Next, the data were arranged according to the codes and read at least several times. It was found that one piece of interaction might fit into multiple categories. The patterns of overlapping codes were as important to the analysis as were the individual codes. After deciding on a code to constitute a category, it was time to cluster them. The next stage after clustering the codes was defining them in order to identify major categories and attain preliminary meanings from the emerging themes. After deciding on the categories, the next step was to try to find interrelationships between them; thus, links between topics were checked. It became apparent in these interactions that students established and built up multiple identities. These emergent identities were as learner identities, interactional identities, gender identities and relational identities. In search of clues for these emerging identities, certain discursive elements in the data were analyzed to see how identities are constructed and negotiated. For instance; to show their peer support, resistance or solidarity, the participants made use of many linguistic and pragmatic devices such as code-switching, terms of address, hedging, referents and politeness strategies. Based on reviewed literature, there have been studies linking code-switching and identity (Ellwood, 2008), hedging and identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), terms of address and identity (Fuller, 2007), the role of politeness and impoliteness in the construction of identity (Hatipoğlu, 2007; Graham, 2007). Therefore, it was thought to have these as sub-headings under the umbrella heading "tools for negotiating identities". In the end, some features were determined to help us understand how students' identities emerge in their interaction.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the reviewed literature, identity is complex and multidimensional and individuals negotiate multiple identities over time. Like a chess game, the statements made, the questions asked and the responses given, in other words, the identity we "present" and the one(s) we are "given" by others, have consequences in terms of the shared community experiences we build, solidarity we establish, multi-faceted identities we negotiate. As Swann, et. al. (2009, p. 82) put it "identity negotiation processes thus provide the ''interpersonal glue'' that bonds people to one another". In this negotiation process, identities are relatively nuanced; they offer people far more flexibility. For example, if someone receives feedback that is inconsistent with a particular identity, they may respond by substituting an alternative identity that is more compatible with the situational demands (Swann et al. 2009, p. 82). Individuals can selectively activate identities that are uniquely appropriate to the situation. The question is; how do the individuals bring forward, or move to the background, particular identity claims? In this section, we reflect on foregrounding and backgrounding of identity claims throughout the process of social media interaction. The study also seeks to find out the ways how the participants use social media interaction to appropriate and take on social identities.

As for the themes in social media, they are found to be more diverse and open. The possibility of initiating posts enabled the participants to create their own topics, which probably made the community more interesting to the participants. Also, some of the dialogues consisted of conversations, usually initiated by the teacher, in which she asked questions to the participants based on the posts. The following table offers an overall view of the shared posts in the social media:

Table: 1

Posts	Academic	Daily	Gender related	Cultural
Student-initiated	37	52	3	3
Teacher-initiated	35	29	2	5
Total	72	81	5	8

The number of student-initiated and teacher-initiated academic posts was almost the same. When compared to academic related posts, the social media environment enabled to share knowledge around daily topics. These can be evaluated to understand the capability of this technology in breaking down social barriers. Interestingly when the results were analyzed, it can easily be seen that the students initiated daily topics more than the teacher.

In the process of enacting their identities and negotiation, some discursive features are used and these features help us to see how the participants draw upon their social attachments with peers, their status in the classroom and beyond, and their understanding of the event in relation to broader social and cultural goals. Ways of negotiation and re-negotiation impact their communication with the researcher and their peers and helped them enact identities in a more effective way.

Certain discursive strategies such as face-saving maneuvers, hedging and politeness strategies were also analyzed in depth to reveal how individuals take up positions but also try to mitigate, downplay their positioning depending on power negotiation in the flow of ongoing discourse. These strategies help us to negotiate views and ideas and qualify claims at an appropriate level of

commitment. Likewise, hedging strategies play a role especially when students display resistance to the teacher. The data obtained from participants' interaction in social media indicate that students are aware of power asymmetries between themselves and the teacher. Their status as a learner in the community affected their choice of rhetorical strategies such as hedges. Cognitive verbs such as *think, believe* were used to hedge. Students were found to be using hedging strategies mostly when making projections for the future and giving opinions.

Moreover, a possibly expected feature to emerge from the learner-teacher interaction is the way students display resistance to the teacher or to her institutional identity. Constructing an identity is not a solitary endeavour. When we use language, we position ourselves interactionally with other people. Thus, through the relational aspect of situating ourselves in discourses and identities, we also position those with whom we interact. Likewise, when students construct their identities, they do so in part through positioning themselves in relation to other students and the teacher. According to Kramsch (1993, p. 23), in the give and take of classroom dialogue, students and teacher are constantly engaged in creating a new third kind of dimension. In this type of interaction, teacher and learners are interested not only in talking and listening to others' talk but also in exploring the intentions and reactions of the other participants in the classroom dialogue. It is not enough that we view ourselves as embodying a certain identity; others must recognize and accept our identity claims as well. Similarly, we can take up or resist the identities that are assigned to us by institutions. This takes place in everyday encounters in life. In school contexts, teachers and in general educational institutions often ascribe identities to students. Students are expected to take up the identities valued within their classrooms or risk being marginalized. As students negotiate identities, they take up, assert, and resist identity positions. This negotiation of identity happens continually in sustained relationships as well as in brief encounters (Reeves, 2009).

Analyzing alignment and disalignment in online interactions provides resources for interpreting how asymmetrical social relationships among the participants were and how they were negotiated during interaction. In this study, disalignment came to the fore especially in gender related issues, therefore a category was allocated to that theme. There were some posts where the students acted impolite. These impolite instances coincided with the instances when students' gender identities, especially male identities were foregrounded. It was the male member of the group with his two classmates, who on a number of occasions projected his male chauvinism. For instance, he reprimanded and disagreed with the student who expressed his wish for Women's Day. In the below interaction, the student assigned a role to himself and acted like the guard of the classroom. What is more, his discourse was heavily grounded on masculinity. By saying "instructors are presidents of this class, we are slaves, men dont need women" the student is challenging the female authority. Data shows that female students, few in number, were occasionally challenged by male students. The posting below triggered a series of negative comments from female students along with other male students who distanced themselves from such chauvinistic attitudes. Interestingly, all gender-sensitive identity negation is fulfilled in English. Thus, language learner identities are not exempt from master identities.

Extract 1.

Student 3: There is no such thing as women's rights, because they always are right :)
Instructor: Thanks :) Yes, good point :) women are always right :)))) I am joking :P There are HUMAN RIGHTS, we should all agree on that.
Student 2: Student 1, what did he say? What do you think about him?
Instructor: first give your opinion, then, ask Student 1 :)
Student 1: Student 3 and Student 4 ı don't want to see you again in my class find another one. ı want to cry my friend we are slaves in the class. Instructors are presidents of this class and finally men don't need women but women always need us sorry but it is truth :D hahahaah

During the analysis, as new themes emerged, the categorization of themes was re-arranged and they were included under the heading such as "negotiating teacher-learner identities" as they come to fore in social media interactions. In this study, the symmetrical relationship between the instructor and the learners contributed to the emergence of a community. The instructor as a participatory researcher tried to put herself as an equal member so that a more parallel power relationship can be established. As can be seen in Extract 2, It is evident that the learners did not always align with the instructor's opinions. They sometimes questioned them or even ignored them.

Extract 2.

Student 5: Dear lecturer why we don't use our group more effective? We need a lot of
        conversation, don't we? :)
Instructor: Right, I agree with you, but some of your friends are reluctant. Really, I am doing my
        best. We can use the group page more effectively. What is your suggestion for that? I will
        be happy to hear it. Is there any specific topic we can have conversation about?
Student 5: Firstly, i think you use this group more than to encourage friends, secondly we
        use spesific topics and may be interviewing once a week is interested:) first of all student 1
        and me do it, after that we can change it series, do you agree ((:
Student 1: I agree with Student 5
Instructor: You mean interviewing each other, two of you are then volunteers, you will ask each
        other questions like a job interview, am I correct? Then, you may try, we will see the
        results and talk about it, then. :)
Student 5: Okay :) we will do it, but you talk about :) do you promise :P

Apart from written interaction on social media, multi-modal resources such as visuals, photos and videos were analyzed to see how identity construction is taking place in a broader semiotic landscape. Krippendorff (2004, p. 19) explained that "...works of art, images, maps, sounds, signs, symbols, and even numerical records may be included as data—that is, they may be considered as texts...". In this study, content analyses of images and videos were also conducted to address the multimodality of social media interaction. Historically, content analysis has been used to analyze and draw inferences from images and text, but it can be extended to other forms of media, including video. The analysis and interpretation of language use is contextualized in conjunction with other semiotic resources which are simultaneously used for the construction of meaning. Multimodal analysis takes into account functions and meaning of the visual images together with the meaning arising from the integrated use of the other semiotic resources (O' Halloran, 2004). In this study, social media promoted creativity with language through multiple communication modes. This resourcefulness can be seen in the videos and photos shared online. It made the group page more enjoyable with pictures or sounds, allowing multi-modal resources for identity negotiation and construction. Students sometimes posted cartoons, songs without writing any comment. Multi-modal tools such as pictures, videos gave the participants opportunities to express themselves. For example, they used humor effectively. It brought opportunities for them to show their possible selves and express their beliefs. In a creative manner, they could show whether they liked or disliked something or displayed resistance to certain issues.

Some identity claims were visual, involving the display of photos and pictures uploaded by the participants themselves. For instance; one of the students shared a cartoon without writing anything and in that cartoon, a student was depicted like the game character "Angry birds" and he was throwing a teacher out of the school. Two of his friends 'liked' the post shared by their friends. Based on class observation, those students had low marks from the exams and always shared their concerns related to learning English in the class. They also failed in the proficiency exam. Multi-

modal feature of the social media environment helped them to share their frustrations and anger. By using cartoons, pictures, etc., the participants sought to make certain identity claims.

Participants in social media also used profile photos building up one or more aspects of their identity. Profile pictures enabled the participants to re-establish their identities by producing them in a highly visible online space. Selecting a profile picture confirms what people value and how they want to be perceived. The participants remained conscientious about the visual images representing their online identities. They were extremely mindful of the image they projected on Facebook, and were careful in their selection of photos. The participants in the study displayed the following two behaviors: (1) placing a great emphasis on profile pictures, with a quest to differentiate themselves and (2) symbolically changing photos to coincide with internal and external shifts in their lives. Photos helped users differentiate themselves, often by picturing their personal interests and tastes. Some students appeared in photographs with others, depicting themselves in the context of their friends mostly smiling, having fun. Some students used cartoon characters. Some students changed their profile photos as a reaction to the events or as a signal of their moods. These images often changed when new events happened or a shift took place in users' lives. A Facebook profile picture is not just a picture, but an image telling a story. For instance, just before the proficiency exam, a student changed his profile photo to a road sign on which the word "HOPE" was written in capital letters. For confidentiality, profile pictures of participants are not displayed but other representative images are included in the analysis and discussion of findings.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The overall framework of the analysis draws upon discursive strategies that are employed to construct identity. From this point of view, the study tries to show how people use language to construct versions of the world. It is a construction in the sense that a variety of linguistic resources are employed, active selection occurs, and the consequential nature of accounts is emphasized. Analyzing and interpreting what the participants wrote is an attempt to understand how they construct their understanding of themselves as learners and how they relate themselves to the world.

On the whole, the following conclusions can be drawn from the findings of the present study:
- A central feature in students' social media interaction is the process of negotiation where multiple identities are at sake and there is always scope for emerging identities.
- A wide range of discursive tools such as code-switching, terms of address, hedging and politeness strategies, and multimodal resources such as emoticons are found to be effective in the construction and negotiation of identities.
- Social media can be seen more flexible in generating discussions on various topics and offers further opportunity to use the target language interactively. Because of the multimodal and user-controlled nature of presentation and communication on the site, students are given freedom to personalize the learning experiences and use target language in expressing views on self-selected topics. Nevertheless, the participants refrained from directly revealing their political inclinations in their social media interactions.
- Learning a new language reflected the desire of learners to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds through imagined communities. The data reveal that they are constructing multiple learner identities and imagined communities that they can orient towards the future and see themselves as members of a certain group in days to come. Therefore, attitudes to English language learning and going abroad as an ideal way for success are recurrent themes emerging in social media interactions.
- Language learner identity is not exempt from master identities. One particular identity emerging along with L2 language learner identity is found to be gender identity. It was

intertwined with other aspects of identity such as friendship and solidarity. The study revealed how social-community building has been established through jokes, sarcasm and sharing by utilizing both verbal and non-verbal modalities in the semiotic landscape.

- In social media, the participants were more prone to emphasize particular aspects of their identity. In other words, they tried to define themselves in alternative ways by distancing themselves from labels such as students, L2 users.

- Macro-dynamics of the educational context were effective in their interactions. In the research context where prep school is compulsory and attendance is taken on a daily basis, learning English brought some changes and re-construction of their identities. Some of them are genuinely motivated for learning English but there are also others whose only reason for being in the prep school is because it is compulsory. These students move in and out of language learner identity and show resistance to this identity attributed to them.

- In this study, in a particular social media context, the symmetrical relationship between the instructor and the learners contributed to the emergence of a community. The instructor as a participatory researcher tried to put herself as an equal member so that a more parallel power relationship can be established. It is evident that the learners did not always align with the instructor's opinions. They sometimes questioned them or even ignored them.

- In conversations between teachers and learners in the classroom it is often assumed that learners portray polite behaviors as an expression of their respect for the teacher, but in the social media context, it appears that some students preferred a more forceful and casual style when interacting with his teacher. These claimed relational identities may be indicative of their unwillingness to take on the more traditional place of the learner as someone who passively accepts the positioning attributed by the teacher. It may also be a reflection of their claim to a personal identity as a resistant student. It is also an instance of refusing institutional identity of the teacher.

- The data also revealed that as both the participant researcher and the teacher, the researcher sometimes foregrounded her teacher identity and backgrounded her researcher identity and vice-versa. Further research exploring this sort of dynamic construction of his/her identity in the research context in terms of the researcher would be illuminating.

- The data have illustrated that learning a language involves constructing new identities with various dimensions and complexities. It is, therefore, important that teachers view learners as individuals with multiple and changing identities, not just as individuals with English language learning needs.

Qualitative in scope, the study does not claim any generalizability, but aims to offer insight to individual voices and unique experiences in defining multi-faceted identities of English language learners in a foreign language education context. Therefore, the use of a specific intact population of participants in a specific context makes it difficult to make generalizations about L2 learner identity research. However, this cannot be considered as a 'limitation' considering the nature of qualitative-based identity research which concerns itself with unique experiences and individual cases with a heightened interest on deeper meanings. Identities were searched in emerging discourse via certain observable negotiation tools. However, this does not, on any account, come to mean a preference for the static view of identities attached to certain pre-set categories; on the contrary the study adheres to emerging identities in the dynamism of continuing interaction. Also, it cannot be claimed that these are the only identities, just that the analysis made these particular identities visible. A person may regularly use some words, patterns but we cannot be sure that this is definitely a reflection of one type of identity. Collecting more data across time would provide an even more nuanced perspective.

Another hardship is that social bonding and intimacy through computer-mediated communication requires time to mature. This process necessitates researchers to engage in longitudinal studies

about the use of SNSs in order to acquire insights into this phenomenon. Care must be taken to ensure a continuously friendly group environment that fosters learning. One may think that the more open and friendly the instructors are with the students, the more friendly and responsive they are likely to be in terms of the community atmosphere and system usage, but this correlation is not always the case. The students were informed that the researcher would use their writing and social media interaction as her data sources and this might have had a negative influence on their degree of involvement and participation in the project. Nevertheless, from the researcher's point of view, the students interacted with each other with the understanding that the interactions were intended not to "please" the teacher but to continue their class community outside the class.

There were also technical problems in the process of research implementation. Facebook did not provide some features, such as the ability to upload documents or slides, which could have been helpful for knowledge sharing via an online learning platform. Uploading feature was added to Facebook in the last two weeks of the semester. Another limitation of the study is the lack of evidence from the students' perspectives. Interviews of the students would have convincingly demonstrated the motives and functions of their choices. This deficiency is due to the nature of the research context. As the participants start the summer holiday after the proficiency exam, it is difficult to reach students and ask them to recall their motives. What is more, it is difficult to ask the participants for their preferences as far as the research issue of this study is concerned. They may not be aware of their choices in identity construction. It is hard to expect them to be aware of multiple identities they had enacted and gather their opinions, beliefs and attitudes.

Further studies investigating co-construction of teacher-student, student-student identities in different contexts could be very useful in exploring L2 language learning as an identity work. The study can be exploited to investigate similar research questions with different target groups at their different stages of education. Also, data regarding the construction of identities in different age groups could provide very important data for ELT. These areas are awaiting further research in diverse settings.

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