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## APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Construction and re-construction of identities: A study of learners' personal and L2 identity

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**Abstract:** The indispensable role of identity in language learning has recently attracted considerable attention among SLA scholars. Consequently, the current mixed-methods classroom-based study investigated whether the implementation of intercultural movie clips could contribute to improving the personal identity, and have a positive impact on L2 identity of participants in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context of Iran. To this end, two intact classes were assigned to the control and experimental group, each containing thirty students. This quasi-experimental study was implemented on the pre-test post-test equivalent-group design. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative analysis, using two questionnaires and a semi-structured interview, the results indicate that positive changes took place in the personal and second language identity of the participants. More specifically, they moved from a closed community of practice in which self was seen from one horizon to an intercultural community of practice in which others were seen besides self. The changing community provided by movie clips had an impact on the participants' views and trends. Thus access to new social, cultural, and linguistic resources resulted in the adoption of new identities. Indeed, teachers and educators should know that language can be considered as a site for the construction of self-identification or group affiliation since language is a key element in identity formation and identity is a sense of self or sense of belonging.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Following Spencer-Oatey (2007), the term identity is defined as a person's self-image, consisting of multiple self-attributes, including negatively, neutrally, and positively evaluated characteristics. With this in mind, individuals' identity is shaped by their family life and upbringing, gender, the social groups to which we belong, and the cultural and ethnic groups of which we are a part. Pavlenko (2002) argues that second language learning is not only about the acquisition of a new language but is also a means of socialization and more importantly a process of identity construction. The current mixed-methods classroom-based study investigated whether the implementation of intercultural movie clips could contribute to improving the personal identity, and have a positive impact on L2 identity of participants in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context of Iran. The results revealed that positive changes took place in the personal and second language identity of the participants.

**Subjects: Classroom Practice; Educational Psychology; Language Teaching & Learning**

**Keywords: identity construction; personal identity; second language identity; virtual communities of practice; movie clips**

## 1. Introduction

For decades, identity construction in language classes has not been the focus of language teaching and research (Flowerdew, 2011). Rather, the focus has been directed toward analyzing and meeting students' linguistic and communicative needs. In recent years, however, in tandem with increasing attention to the sociocultural contexts of learning, language researchers and practitioners have begun to advocate bringing into focus learners' identities to further learners' needs-responsive practice (Belcher, 2012; Belcher & Lukkarila, 2011). The scope of needs analysis, as Belcher and Lukkarila (2011) argue, needs to be broadened to consider "not just what learners want to be able to do in a language but also who they want to become through language" (p. 89).

Social Identity Theory suggests that an individual's identity and self-image are driven based on their association and membership to a particular group or community. Groups provide individuals with a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). These social categories function as an orienting system for self-reference by providing an individual with a conceptualization of their place in society (Jenkins et al., 2019). The topic of identity has become one of the most researched in the last decades, not only in the area of social sciences but also in a variety of fields (Raia, 2018; Topolewska-Siedzik & Ciecuch, 2018).

Besides, in the environment of increased globalization and technological development, the concept of identity and identity construction has come into the focus of attention in foreign language education especially among adolescents. Adolescence is a time of dramatic physical, cognitive, and social changes and during this period the sense of "self" changes and so the major developmental task is the expansion of the self-concept which includes self-awareness and self-identity (Neinstein et al., 2016). Connections between identity and language have been considered, often in multilingual and multicultural contexts (Block, 2002, 2007a; Gao et al., 2005; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Norton, 1995, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). On the other hand over the past decade, there has been a global trend toward technology-mediated distance language learning (Collins & Halverson, 2009; Guichon, 2010; Inozu et al., 2010; Lai et al., 2015; Wang & Chen, 2009; White et al., 2016) and the learners' contributions (Arispe & Blake, 2012) in this expanded landscape based on their personal and pedagogical needs. The use of technology in the second language (L2) education for authentic communication and interaction extends L2 learning from the context of the physical classroom to mediated interaction in online Internet contexts with authentic recipients who are interested in learning each other's languages (Thorne, 2008; Thorne & Black, 2007; Tudini & Liddicoat, 2017).

These changes lead to self-expression as well as an increasing cultural emphasis on personal identity that involves opportunities for creating a coherent, stable, and meaningful sense of self. In terms of opportunities, social media gives young people greater control over presentations of self in interpersonal interactions and increased access to social information and large networks of others to receive feedback and reify self-concepts (Manago, 2015). There does seem to be a link between the EFL learners' identity construction and self-involvement in specific social and cultural settings and the proliferation of social media in the digital age. As a form of social and intercultural practice, films lead to several social actions for improvement, and it may also help refine participants' self-understanding as L2 learners. This needs instructional planning that provides the required time and space for awareness, understanding, reflection, and self-exploration. Consequently, the current study aims to address identity construction using a sample of EFL learners in Iran. All participants are from Persian L1 backgrounds who learned English as a foreign language at varying ages and with different amounts of EFL input. Quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted to clarify personal and L2 identities of English language learners in a virtual community of practice established by intercultural movie clips.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Identity in general: definitions and characteristics

Identity as a theoretic construct is not a new idea. It was originally developed within the field of psychology, where the major focus of researchers was the altering of an individual's state and condition over time through changes in their contexts (E. Erikson, 1968). Identity has been defined from several perspectives and approaches in different studies and various areas of research (Aliakbari & Amiri, 2018; Blackledge, 2002; Collins, 2006; Chen & Kent, 2020; Kubota, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997; Norton, 2000). It is commonly described as meanings attached to a person by self and others (Gecas, 1982). From this definition, identities link to self-concept because they contain meanings that form a self-meaning or the definition of an individual's self.

Identity has traditionally been defined as a stable constellation of attributes, beliefs, values, and experiences residing in the individual that defines the self (Erikson, 1951). Identity is our understanding of who we are and how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. It can be viewed in terms of the unique set of characteristics associated with a particular individual relative to the perceptions and characteristics of others (Gao et al., 2015). According to Spencer-Oatey (2005), the term "identity" is defined as a person's self-image, consisting of multiple self-attributes, including negatively, neutrally, and positively evaluated characteristics. Identity creates meaning and commitments, forms coherence and harmony between goals, beliefs, and values, and fosters a sense of personal control and the ability to recognize future possibilities. It is deeply embedded in a social-cultural context, the change of which potentially shapes identity and encourages people to reorganize their self-definition.

In the field of applied linguistics, identity has been gaining attention in the domain of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). SLA is not simply "the acquisition of a new set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological forms", but "a struggle of concrete socially constituted and always situated beings to participate in the symbolically mediated life world of another culture" (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000, p. 155). When language learners speak, they construct and reconstruct their identity and how they relate to the social world (McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997; Norton Pierce, 1995). This negotiation of their identities occurs in every social context because language learners generally try to gain access to social groups. It can be said that identity is constructed by language (Norton, 1997) and that people establish their identity by how they choose to use language (Freed, 1995) in interactions and experiences. As identity is not seen as a fixed construct (McNamara, 1997; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002) it is rather a complex, dynamic and at times even contradictory (Marx, 2002; Norton, 1997; Norton Pierce, 1995) and is continually changing depending on the social context or setting (Marx, 2002; Morita, 2004; Norton, 1997). Individuals' identity is shaped by their family life, gender, social groups to which they belong, and the cultural and ethnic groups of which they are a part (Chen & Kent, 2020).

### 2.2. Personal identity

In developmental and personality psychology, personal identity is seen as a cognitive self-structure which describes how people seek answers to the question "Who am I?" (see: Erikson, 1959; Marcia, 1980; McLean & Syed, 2015; Schwartz et al., 2011; Topolewska-Siedzik & Ciecuch, 2018). Personal identity refers to the people's sense of individuality and uniqueness in addition to their feelings about their distinctiveness from others (Hall, 2002). Personal identity theory is primarily a micro-sociological theory that attempts to define and clarify the role-related behaviors of individuals in terms of the relationships between self and society (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Therefore personal identity represents a social psychological model of self in that social factors are seen to define the self. The identity theory argues that personal identity is the lowest level of self-categorization (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) and thus a fundamental driving force for human behavior (Stets & Burke, 2000). Indeed, personal identity might even play a primary role in enforcing the influence of group identity. In an attempt to link personal identity to group identity, Deaux (1992) suggested that personal feelings and values of individuals can play great roles in shaping some features of their group identities. The development of personal

identity is not only linked to interpersonal relations and interactions that lie in the interpersonal plane of analysis but is also affected by the change of instructional settings that belong to the community plane of analysis. Giddens, a leading proponent of the discursive and constructionist approach to identity construction, argues that “self-identity is not a distinctive trait or even a collection of traits possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography” (Giddens, 1991, p. 53). Burke and Stets (2009) state that “the self is like a psychological construct which originates in the mind and characterizes as an individual’s consciousness of his or her being or identity” (p. 9).

### **2.3. Second language identity**

Over the past decades, there has been an explosion of interest in identity and language learning. (McKinney & Norton, 2008; Morgan & Clarke, 2011; Norton, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Ricento, 2002; Wedin, 2020). Increasing research into the relationship between identity and language learning has led to a greater focus on identity in the field of second language education and it has now become a distinct and independent research area (Norton & Toohey, 2011). As Canagarajah (2004) argues, language learning is motivated by the construction of identities, so our interest should be in learners’ identities and how these shape and are shaped by language learning practices. In the broader field of language education and applied linguistics, identity construction has gained considerable momentum. There is work, for example, on identity and pragmatics (Lo & Reyes, 2004), identity and sociolinguistics (Edwards 2009; Joseph, 2004; Omoniyi & White, 2007); and identity and discourse (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Wodak et al., 2009; Young, 2009).

Identity started gaining considerable attention from Norton Pierce’s (1995) study of immigrant women in Canada. Subsequently, Norton (2000) proposed a comprehensive theory of language learner identity that incorporates language-learning context as an essential part of their identity formation. She introduced the concept of investment, a sociological construct that complements the psychological construct of motivation. The identity approach to SLA, which is associated with Norton’s (2013) post-structural view of identity as a dynamic and ever-changing construct, seeks to integrate the language learner in the larger social world, highlighting the multiple positions from which language learners can speak, and how opportunities to practice language are socially structured (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 73). Norton and Toohey (2011) state that previously in the 1970s and 1980s language learner identities were mainly considered as personalities having fixed learning styles and motivations. This view was gradually changed in recent times when poststructuralists redefined learner identity. The poststructuralist conceptualization of learner identity is rather dynamic, context-dependent, and context-producing. This can, therefore, be claimed that personalities, learning styles, and motivations of learners are not fixed, unitary, or decontextualized’. In continuation of the current debate on identity and second language learning, researchers and theorists (Block, 2007b; Darwin & Norton, 2015; Duff, 2002; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007) consider the constructs of investment, agency, and communities of practice as the potential key elements in the theorization and development of SLL and identity research. Identity studies have shown that the learners’ needs and desires are not obstacles, but are essential to language learning (Norton & McKinney, 2011). Furthermore, Block (2007a) states that for researchers who aim to study the relationship of identity and SLL, a poststructuralist approach is a choice because it helps them see the subtleties of the process of language learning beyond the mere acquisition of linguistic skills. Norton (2000) states that learning is an experience of identity because it transforms who we are and what we can do. When people learn a second language, they do so as individuals with their social histories. Especially for adult second language learners, who have already developed a robust sense of identity or self-image in their original cultures together with their habits of communication before entering a new linguistic and sociocultural environment (Shi, 2006, p. 6). Besides the relevance of personal, and cultural conditions, many current research studies in SLL have shown that language has played an important role in (re)constructing second language learners’ identities through communication (Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005). As Norton Pierce (1995, p. 13) writes, “it is through language that a person negotiates a sense of

self within and across different sites at different points in time”. In other words, people’s identities are shaped by and through their language use. Burr (2003) also suggests that a person’s identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to them, and which they draw upon in their communication with other people. When people come together in a communicative event, who they are, who they think others are, and who others think they are, mediate in important ways their individual using and evaluating their linguistic actions (Hall, 2002, p. 34).

#### **2.4. Technology-mediated language learning**

Over the previous decade the landscape and websites for technology-mediated distance language learning have continued to expand and evolve, and now contain numerous, different arenas which learners can enter, spend time in, move on from, and return to, according to their requirements (White et al., 2016). Such arenas include YouTube (with audience participation through comment features), blogs, Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, digital gaming, and other sites for language learning (such as Busuu, Duolingo, Livemocha, my language exchange, ScuttlePad). Technology and digitalization are ubiquitous, even in the field of education. The use of technology involves the use of non-shared spaces and contexts that are constructed as such, with their possibilities and challenges (Rusk & Pörn, 2019). Social media have changed the way people live, and communicate in various parts of modern life, including education (Carpenter et al., 2019). Mainly social media create new challenges and possibilities around the identities that users (re)construct online. Individuals can define and redefine themselves through the profiles, interactions, relationships, networks, and reputations they build (e.g., Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). Since social networks have been growing (Arendt, 2019) and they share lifestyles, experiences and feelings (Shumaker et al., 2017), new effects have been emerged in promoting ideals, raising awareness and self-acceptance of adolescents who tend to place greater attention and emotional intensity on their personal identities and selves (Manas-Viniegra et al., 2020). However, existing social norms, cultures, and social media platforms’ features can also affect and constrain how people show their identities and use the media (Kimmons & Veletsianos, 2014). Tirnaz and Haddad Narafshan (2020) found that using intercultural TV ads can contribute to improving learners’ intercultural sensitivity and can positively impact on classroom climate. As the tools, social media, mediums, systems, and structures for technology-mediated language learning have progressed, there has at the same time been an expanding research focus within the wider field of language learning. Significantly, this widening concentration has been extended from formal, more prescribed learning environments, to more private, informal, off-the-record learning experiences (White, 2005). The kinds of informal digital learning experiences that originally appeared escaped notice, but have now come to be seen as important sites for an inquiry into language learning. Technology-mediated environments for language learning shifted quickly from being more marginal, specialized places for language learning, depending on custom-made materials, to being more open spaces, closely linked to the everyday worlds and technologies of users (Manago, 2015; Wei et al., 2018). Parsloe and Holton (2018) found that using the same hashtag on Twitter helped individuals bond within their marginalized ingroup as well as a bridge between their marginalized ingroup and other marginalized ingroups. Bonding helps to create a collective identity that brings people together and invite them into collective action. Bridging, on the other hand, helps to sustain the network and allow the social movement to quickly spread and reach more people who would be interested in joining or supporting the collective action.

These informal moments, these behind-the-scenes, off-the-record experiences, often initiated by learners, involve their identities and fuel their language learning in ways that we are only beginning to understand. Also, there are experiences that students choose to access and engage with, and, in many cases, become places students decide to contribute to and revisit, in the course of their daily lives (White et al., 2016). Other important shifts in perspective have arisen from this research: for example, while an early focus in technology-mediated language teaching was on the opportunities and limitations of different online environments, it was only much later that the contribution of learners and teachers to those affordances and constraints began to be recognized as an important and relevant field of inquiry.

Accordingly, the current study aims to focus on the development of learners' personal and L2 identities, both of which have been demonstrated to play a prominent role in learners' life span. Given our aim stated above, we pose the following research questions:

- 1) What effect do intercultural movie clips have on EFL learners' personal identity?
- 2) How can intercultural movie clips affect EFL learners' L2 identity?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Participants**

The research site, an English language institute in Kerman, serves students from all over the city. The language institute offers EFL courses each spring, summer, fall, and winter semester. To ensure that the participants of the study were at almost the same level of English proficiency, the researchers applied the Longman Placement Test (LPT) at the first session of the project. The sample included 60 upper-intermediate female participants aged between 13 and 19, who were homogeneous in terms of culture and ethnicity. Having regard to the state of knowledge on the issue of dynamic identity formation, data were collected in the way that the majority of respondents came from the same age range. The participants' educational backgrounds were similar: they had all studied English for at least four years at school and three years at an institute. None of them had traveled abroad or used English apart from at school. That is, their experience of using English was almost entirely related to their education. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the institute administrators. It was explained to the students that they could participate in the course even if they did not agree to be part of the research. During the project, students' participation was completely voluntarily and they received no remuneration. It had been made clear that the students could withdraw from the study at any stage with no consequences, that pseudonyms would be used to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, and that the data would not be shared with anyone including the institute administrators.

#### **3.2. Instruments**

The present study utilized a sequential explanatory mixed-method approach integrating both self-report questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to select and integrate the appropriate methods to gain a more thorough picture of the phenomenon. A combination of quantitative and qualitative data helped to assess the overall experiences of participating learners.

##### *3.2.1. Longman Placement Test (LPT)*

To choose almost homogenous participants in general terms of the English language, LPT, a criterion-referenced measure developed by Pearson Longman ELT was used. This test system contains 100 written multiple questions and places students as follows:

- 00–20 Below Elementary
- 21–35 Elementary
- 36–60 Pre-intermediate
- 61–85 Intermediate
- 86–100 Upper-Intermediate

##### *3.2.2. Personal identity questionnaire*

To investigate participants' personal identity, the researcher used a personal identity (PI) questionnaire designed by the authors of the current study based on the review of the literature and objectives of the study (Appendix A). The questionnaire consists of 12 statements which were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

##### *3.2.3. L2 identity questionnaire*

To provide an objective measure of participants' second language identity, a questionnaire was designed by the authors of the present study based on the review of the literature and objectives

of the study (Appendix B). Responses to 20 items on a 5 point Likert scale were anchored at one end by “strongly disagree” and at the other end by “strongly agree”.

To develop a standard questionnaire which displays acceptable levels of reliability and validity, the researchers followed several steps. The first stage included a meticulous examination of the relevant literature on identity construction in general and personal and second language aspects of identity construction in particular. In this phase, it was found that there was no validated Likert-scale type instrument and questionnaire on personal and L2 identity. After a comprehensive literature review, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in the field as a Delphi technique to see whether the variables extracted from the literature could be confirmed by the interviewees, and to know whether the interviewees could mention other important variables which might relate to the newly designed questionnaire. These steps led to the construction of 30 items (L2 identity) and 20 items (personal identity) by the researchers. The items were submitted to several domain experts to judge their redundancy, face validity, content validity, and language clarity. Also, the experts were asked to comment on the content of the items and add appropriate items, if necessary. They were also pilot tested with a population similar to that in the study to test their validity and reliability. The feedback received led to revisions such as reformulations of some of the questions and clarity of instructions. Finally, the researchers ended up with a draft version of 20 items of L2 identity and a draft version of 12 items of personal identity. Cronbach’s alpha test was carried out to indicate each scale’s level of reliability. The overall Cronbach’s alpha for the PIQ was 0.85. It was 0.89 for the L2IQ which demonstrated good internal consistency of the questionnaires.

#### 3.2.4. *Semi- structured Interview*

Coupled with the quantitative data, a semi-structured interview was designed for the aim of qualitative data collection. Five open-ended questions were mainly focused on the participants’ overall experiences (Appendix C). The interviews, lasting between 15 and 20 min, were conducted in Persian at the end of each month by the researchers, recorded with a sonny voice recorder and manually transcribed. The responses were stored and coded to develop categories, themes, and areas of interest and to identify patterns and relationships. Data analysis was conducted by the researchers through examination, comparison, conceptualization, and categorization of data. The raw data were examined for similarities and differences, and initial conceptual categories were identified. In the next stage of data analysis for the current study, preliminary categories were identified by examining similarities in responses. The data was analyzed until the researchers agreed that no further themes and subthemes could be extracted. The interviews were analyzed in Persian, and the excerpts used to illustrate our results in the current paper were translated into English.

### 3.3. **Procedure**

Prior approval was sought from the institute principals according to the institute’s ethical guidelines. Data collection started with Longman Placement Test (LPT). It was administered to make sure that the participants were of the same level of English language background knowledge.

Two intact classes of upper-intermediate English language learners were chosen at a private English language institute located in Kerman, Iran. The design of the current mixed-method study was a sequential explanatory one. It means using qualitative data to enrich the quantitative data. One class acted as an untreated control group ( $n = 30$ ; C Group), and the other class received the treatment ( $n = 30$ ; E Group) over a 40-session period which lasted about six months. The use of the control group and a pretest (PIQ & L2IQ) facilitated the exploration of the size and direction of selection bias. The learners (C& E) were enrolled in a semester course of English conversation course for EFL learners. The main objective of the course was the improvement of the students’ proficiency in the four skills, and all the skills were treated in class. The researcher checked to see whether all learners in the experimental group had mobile phones or not. Some of them did not have mobile phones; therefore the researcher provided them with some sim-cards and made sure that there was at least one mobile phone in their families. Those learners

who did not have mobile phones were asked to insert the provided sim-cards in a mobile phone provided by the researcher to watch the clips according to a fixed time table. Three nights during the week (at a scheduled time) the teacher (one of the researchers) sent the participants (experimental group) different clips on a special topic via a group created in WhatsApp. The clips were chosen on the most common topics showing different forms of interaction in society (the interaction between mother and children, father and children, friends, strangers, couples, etc). Comprehensibility of the movie clips was piloted on a sample of 10 upper-intermediate English students similar to that of the main study. They were also checked by three English language teaching experts. The feedback guaranteed the clarity and comprehensibility of the clips. The clips were generated based on Oscar-nominated films and they were chosen based on the issue of accessibility: *Eight grade*, 2018; *Parasite*, 2019; *Prisoners*, 2013; *The tree of life*, 2011; *Wind river*, 2017; *A separation*, 2011; *Birdman*, 2014; *About time*, 2013; *Captain fantastic*, 2016; *Perfect strangers*, 2016; *About Elly*, 2009; *Asako I and II*, 2018; *Lady Vengeance*, 2005; *LaLa land*, 2016; *Revolutionary road*, 2008; *Midsommar*, 2019; *Big little lies* TV show, 2017; *Super dark times*, 2017; *Okja*, 2017; *Stand by me*, 1986; *The Florida project*, 2017; *Wonder*, 2017; *Shop-lifters*, 2018; *Columbus*, 2017; *Pulp fiction*, 1994; *First man*, 2018; *The salesman*, 2016, etc. The participants were thoroughly instructed in class on what must be done. After watching the clips, the students were asked to be online at a specific time for about 30 minutes to express their free reflections on the clips. Finally, after six months, progress was evaluated by comparing the personal identity and second language identity of the control and experimental group.

#### 4. Results

As stated above, the present study was conducted to investigate the extent to which EFL learner's personal and second language (L2) identities can be developed and negotiated in virtual communities of practice. Regarding the data analysis, the quantitative and qualitative phases were performed as stated in the following sections.

##### 4.1. Quantitative analysis

A basic quantitative research design was adopted to collect and analyze the data in the present study. To identify whether a significant change occurred in the personal identity of each group between the beginning and the end of the study, the researcher conducted the paired samples t-test and independent t-test. The result of paired sample T-Test analysis (Table 1) did not show a significant difference in the mean scores for the pre-test ( $M = 2.69, SD = .22$ ) and post-test ( $M = 2.67, SD = .18$ ) of the control group. But the result strongly supported a significant difference in the mean scores for the experimental group in pre-test ( $M = 2.67, SD = .33$ ) and post-test ( $M = 3.58, SD = .19$ ) (Table 2), and the effect size was  $ES = 3.5$  and  $r = 0.868$ .

The result of the independent T-Test analysis (Table 3) did not show a significant difference in the mean scores for the control ( $M = 2.69, SD = .22$ ) and experimental group ( $M = 2.67, SD = .33$ ) in the pre-test. But the result strongly supported a significant difference in the mean scores for the control ( $M = 2.67, SD = .18$ ) and experimental group ( $M = 3.58, SD = .19$ ) in the post- test (Table 4), and the effect size was  $ES = 4.92$  and  $r = 0.926$ .

The result of the paired sample t-test analysis of L2 identity (Table 5) did not show a significant difference in the mean scores for the pre-test ( $M = 2.68, SD = .17$ ) and post-test ( $M = 2.79, SD = .19$ ) of

**Table 1. Paired sample T-Test of personal identity (control group)**

Variable	Time	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Personal Identity	pre-test	30	2.69	.22	1	29	.3
	post-test	30	2.67	.18			



**Table 2. Paired sample T-Test of personal identity (experimental group)**

Variable	Time	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Personal Identity	pre-test	30	2.67	.33	-9.77	29	.000
	post-test	30	3.58	.19			

**Table 3. Independent T-Test of personal identity (pre-test)**

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Personal Identity	Control	30	2.69	.22	.22	58	.8
	Experimental	30	2.67	.33			

**Table 4. Independent of personal identity T-Test (post-test)**

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Personal Identity	Control	30	2.67	.18	-13.44	58	.000
	Experimental	30	3.58	.19			

the control group, and the effect size was  $ES = 0.61$  and  $r = 0.292$ . But the result strongly supported a significant difference in the mean scores for the experimental group in pre-test ( $M = 2.59, SD = .21$ ) and post-test ( $M = 3.98, SD = .25$ ) (Table 6), and the effect size was  $ES = 6.04$  and  $r = 0.949$ .

The result of the independent t-test analysis (Table 7) did not show a significant difference in the mean scores for the control ( $M = 2.68, SD = .17$ ) and experimental group ( $M = 2.59, SD = .21$ ) in the pre-test. But the result strongly supported a significant difference in the mean scores for control ( $M = 2.79, SD = .19$ ) and experimental group ( $M = 3.98, SD = .25$ ) in post- test (Table 8), and the effect size was  $ES = 5.41$  and  $r = 0.938$ .

**Table 5. Paired sample T-Test of l2 identity (control group)**

Variable	Time	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Second Language Identity	pre-test	30	2.68	.17	-4.30	29	.001
	post-test	30	2.79	.19			

**Table 6. Paired sample T-Test of l2 identity (experimental group)**

Variable	Time	N	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Second Language Identity	pre-test	30	2.59	.21	-31.61	29	.000
	post-test	30	3.98	.25			

**Table 7. Independent T-Test of L2 identity (pre-test)**

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Second Language Identity	Control	30	2.68	.17	1.29	58	.2
	Experimental	30	2.59	.21			

**Table 8. Independent T-Test of L2 identity (post-test)**

Variable	Group	n	Mean	SD	T-Test	df	P-Value of T-Test
Second Language Identity	Control	30	2.79	.19	-14.63	58	.000
	Experimental	30	3.98	.25			

#### 4.2. Qualitative analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data, supported with quotations from the participants of the present study, revealed two main themes with different sub-themes addressing changes in personal and L2 identities of the participants. The findings of the study are presented thematically based on the coding of the data and document analysis as follows:

##### 4.2.1. Personal identity

All participants of this study described the dynamic nature of their identities based on their exposure to intercultural movie clips. This part focuses on three themes of participants' personal perceptions in a hierarchical mode reflecting the stages of personal change.

**4.2.1.1. Self- challenge.** This category focuses on the initial stage of personal change. Watching clips opened new windows and let them see the self from different aspects some of which have been neglected for years.

*All these years, I viewed myself as a weak fragile member of the women group. A powerless group with fixed manipulated identities. But now I feel the challenge. A change from a stereotyped one to a real one.*

*Watching clips made me doubtful about myself. I think that I just miss out the present by dwelling on the future. Instead of appreciating the clear present I just regretted the vague future. And now I feel being entrapped in the challenge of old and new values.*

**4.2.1.2. Self- exploration.** The following examples focus on the self-exploration category referring to the movie clips as a journey to the world of self and others.

*I need to think. I need to find my new self.*

*Movies helped me discover new things related to myself and my world.*

**4.2.1.3. Self-awareness.** Almost all learners believed that during this process they were able to understand their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in the face of expected and unexpected diversities and changes.

*During this program, my awareness toward my thoughts, emotions, and relationships has increased and now I can express myself better and easier.*

*I like the changes, I have started to accept my thoughts and feelings. It is a feeling of self-awareness.*

#### 4.2.2. Second language (L2) identity

Three themes of participants' language development in a hierarchical mode reflecting the stages of L2 identity change are discussed in this part.

4.2.2.1. *L2 motivation.* In the present research, the learners' high motivation level which contributed to their intended efforts toward learning the language and mastering the L2 is vivid in the majority of their responses. For instance:

*After watching clips, I feel a strong motivation to learn L2 professionally. It is not just a new language; it is new ways of life.*

*During this project, I was motivated to watch more clips and expand my vocabulary and grammar*

4.2.2.2. *Classroom engagement.* Several participants found the project beneficial for their engagement in the classroom while helping them feel more involved with their learning. They asserted that they were motivated to participate in the classroom tasks with a great amount of attention, interest, curiosity, and passion.

*After this period of intercultural exposure, I have a feeling of connection with others inside the classroom although we have different learning preferences.*

*Now, I enjoy participating in classroom discussions interacting with teachers and peers.*

4.2.2.3. *Higher language proficiency.* The majority of participants mentioned that clips provided brilliant contextual language exposure.

*Now, I see myself as a professional language user when I speak English.*

*I can feel and see the dramatic changes affecting both the linguistic and behavioral part of me.*

## 5. Discussion

The current study examined the effects of movie clips on the personal identity and L2 identity of EFL learners in Iran. The results showed a significant improvement in the L2 and personal identity for the experimental group but not for the control group. These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that language plays an important role in (re)constructing second language learners' identities through engagement in established communities (Miller, 2003; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Pellegrino Aveni, 2005). The study also confirmed that language is not simply a means of communicating or expressing ideas but rather a product that is constructed on how language learners define and redefine themselves, their social environment, and their possibilities for the future. The results revealed that the community established by intercultural movie clips provided individuals with a sense of belonging to the social world and had some impacts on their personal and linguistic views and trends. The results corroborated previous research (Pavlenko, 2002) that second language learning is not only about the acquisition of a new language but is also a means of socialization and more importantly a process of identity construction and self-growth. In an attempt to link personal identity to group identity, the current study in line with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) shows that an individual's identity and self-image are driven based on their association and membership to a particular group or community. In this way, personal identity is changed from a stable one-dimensional trait to a dynamic multidimensional one.

The results are also in line with previous research showing the critical role of linguistic, social, and cultural situations in construction of new identities and particularly in L2 and personal identity of language learners (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Moje & Luke, 2009). In general, watching clips helped the participants notice cross-cultural and linguistic differences which were a form of self-detachment causing a personal and linguistic evolution. The results of this study suggest that movie clips help the students see language structures from different horizons and help them make wise decisions to acquire needed linguistic skills in the classroom. Further, the results of our study confirmed B. Norton's (1995) identity theory in which the language learners, the language learning context, and social interaction are involved in the construction of learners' identity. Norton focuses on the role of the language as constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity. Indeed, language can be considered as a site for the construction of self-identification or group affiliation since language is a key element in identity formation and identity is a sense of self or sense of belonging.

Results from the qualitative analysis further supported our hypothesis that the development of personal and L2 identity is not only linked to interpersonal relations and interactions that lie in the interpersonal plane of analysis but is also affected by the change of instructional settings that belong to the community plane of analysis. In the current study, personal identity construction started with a challenging stage motivating participants to a self-exploration with a strong sense of self-awareness. And L2 identity construction started with a motivating stage stimulating language learners to engage in classroom tasks with higher language proficiency. These results are aligned with previous researchers (Norton & Toohey, 2011; Park, 2015; Vågan, 2011) taking a sociocultural approach to exploring identity formation within educational contexts highlighting the importance of communities and contexts practiced in language classrooms.

## 6. Conclusion

Using a quasi-experimental research design with two groups of upper-intermediate learners in Iran, a significant improvement was found in the personal and L2 identity for the experimental group but not for the control group. Teachers and educators should know that language can be considered as a site for the construction of self-identification or group affiliation since language is a key element in identity formation and identity is a sense of self or sense of belonging. In brief, access to new linguistic resources resulted in the adoption of new identities which included features such as fewer psychological barriers to understanding others, increasing courage to accept new norms, and feelings of unity and equity. At the same time, a new community of practice gave way to a sense of growing proficiency and confidence related to the English language, which suggests that intercultural contexts may be conducive to developing self-awareness as a foreign language user, and particularly different from experiences in formal school or institute contexts. Indeed, the process of language learning has a fundamental role to play in identity formation by changing who we are, our practices, and our communities. The process and practice of language learning in the classroom are therefore likely to impact on a learner's identity, as noted by Kramsch (2006), for people who are seeking to define their linguistic identity and their position in the world, the language classroom is often the place they are consciously and explicitly confronted with the relationship between their language, their thoughts, and their wants. Engaging with a different language sensitizes them to the significance of their own first language and of language in general.

However, drawing wide-ranging conclusions based on 30 participants is, of course, difficult, and we recognize the need for much more research on EFL learners' identities. The second limitation is that the study was administered in the Iranian context so it might not be generalizable around the world due to the cultural differences. However, despite its limited scope, we hope that this study has managed to provide insights into the complex ways in which language, as well as being a matter of communication, is to a great extent also a matter of identification.

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### Appendix A. PIQ

Please indicate your opinion on the following statements by choosing the number that corresponds to how strongly you agree or disagree:

Strongly agree a	agree b	neutral c	disagree d	strongly disagree e
1. I like the way that I look.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
2. I am very happy being the person I am.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
3. I feel that I am a person of worth since I have a number of good qualities.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
4. I can trust my inner voice because it usually leads me in the right direction.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
5. I certainly feel useless at times.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
6. The ways in which other people react to what I say and do plays great roles in my life.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
7. I pay attention to what others feel about me.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
8. I care for the amount of my attractiveness and reputation to other people.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
9. My social behaviour and the impression I make on others is of great importance.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
10. I think that I can follow my dreams and imaginations in future.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
11. Most of the time I imagine a bright future in my personal and professional life.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree
12. It is of great concern for me to pursue my ideal future.				
a) Strongly agree	b) agree	c) neutral	d) disagree	e) strongly disagree



### Appendix B. L2IQ

Please indicate your opinion on the following statements by choosing the number that corresponds to how strongly you agree or disagree:

Strongly agree a	agree b	neutral c	disagree d	strongly disagree e
1. It is very important for me to become a fluent English speaker.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
2. Becoming a qualified language speaker is a great concern for me.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
3. If I could change my choice of becoming an EFL learner, I would do it.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
4. I feel great at this moment in time as a future competent speaker of English language.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
5. Thinking of myself as a learner of a new language helps me to understand who I am.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
6. I read books and/or articles written in English.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
7. I am looking forward to using English effectively and confidently for communicating with the native and native like speakers of English.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
8. I think that choosing a different major would make my life more interesting.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
9. I seek information about the different job options that a degree in English language may offer.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
10. Thinking of myself as a language student makes me feel secure in my life.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
11. I am proud of speaking English fluently to express my own feelings and thoughts.				
a) <i>Strongly agree</i> b) <i>agree</i> c) <i>neutral</i> d) <i>disagree</i> e) <i>strongly disagree</i>				
12. I think that it would be better to prepare myself for another major.				

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

13. I seek information about the regulations of the language practice (deontological code, requirements for practicing this major in your country, etc.)

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

14. Thinking of myself as a foreign language learner makes me feel self-confident.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

15. I never think about the advantages and disadvantages associated with knowing different languages.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

16. I am considering the possibility of changing my University major in order to be able to practice another profession in the future.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

17. I pay attention to what other people think or say about my major.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

18. Thinking of myself as a fluent English speaker makes me feel confident about the future.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

19. I am not sure if learning a foreign language is the most suitable for me.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

20. I participate in meetings and/or conferences where professional English learners speak.

a) *Strongly agree*   b) *agree*   c) *neutral*   d) *disagree*   e) *strongly disagree*

### **Appendix C. Interview questions**

1. How did you find your experience in this course?
2. In what ways do you think the program influenced your academic life and why?
3. What is your opinion about the effect of this intercultural exposure on your daily life?
4. How does this program influence your present and future life?
5. What do you think about the potential changes after this experience?



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