

Research Article

Contextual Influences on English Language Identity Formation in Dynamic Environments

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of English language in constructing social identities, employing qualitative data and thematic analysis. It highlights the multifaceted and dynamic nature of English language identity, reflecting a complex interplay between individual experiences, sociocultural values, and socio-political factors. The study's population criteria included Iranian English language learners and users of varying ages (18–40), genders, and education levels (undergraduate to graduate). Participants were recruited from multiple regions, such as Tehran, Isfahan, and Tabriz, and engaged with English in diverse contexts, including educational, professional, and social settings. The study aimed for a broad representation of experiences, focusing on individuals with active English use while excluding those with no exposure to the language. Participants showcased diverse orientations towards English, influenced by factors such as language proficiency, cultural affiliation, and aspirations. The findings emphasize the importance of considering contextual factors, language attitudes, and identity negotiation for understanding English language identity. Participants demonstrated varied attitudes towards English, ranging from resistance to accommodation and appropriation, shaped by their unique experiences and aspirations. The study concludes that understanding English language identity requires a nuanced perspective, accounting for the interplay between personal, social, and contextual factors. This study contributes to the broader scholarship on language and identity by offering a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which language use is shaped by the complex interplay of individual agency and broader socio-cultural forces.



Introduction

In recent decades, the study of language and identity has gained significant attention across various disciplines, including sociolinguistics and social psychology. This burgeoning interest stems from the recognition that language not only serves as a primary tool for communication but also plays a pivotal role in the construction, negotiation, and expression of personal and social identities. As individuals navigate diverse linguistic landscapes and social contexts, they draw upon language as a powerful resource to define themselves and their place within their respective communities.

Within this broad field of inquiry, English language identity has emerged as a particularly salient topic, especially in contexts where English coexists with other languages and language varieties. Iran, with its rich linguistic and cultural diversity, provides a compelling backdrop for the study of English language identity, as Iranian speakers negotiate the complex interplay of local, national, and global influences in their daily lives.

Situated at the intersection of sociolinguistics and social psychology, this research sets out to explore the dynamics of English language identity in Iran, drawing upon both fields to shed light on the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. By integrating frameworks and methodologies from sociolinguistics and social psychology, this study aims to uncover the diverse ways in which Iranian speakers construct their social identities through English language use, as well as the various contextual factors that shape these linguistic identities. Specifically, this research seeks to address three key questions:

How do Iranian speakers construct their social identities through English language use?

What contextual factors influence the formation and negotiation of English language identity in Iran?

What theoretical insights can be gained from adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the study of English language identity?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of English language identity in Iran, with broader implications for the study of language and identity in other multilingual and multicultural contexts. In doing so, it highlights the critical role of language in shaping social identities and the importance of considering the complex interplay between individual agency, social contexts, and broader socio-cultural forces.

Review of Literature

The study of language identity in the case of English as a global language has been a significant focus in various disciplines, including sociolinguistics and social psychology. Several scholars have investigated the relationship between language use and identity construction, highlighting the importance of context in shaping language practices and ideologies.

In the field of sociolinguistics, researchers have examined language identity through the lens of language variation and change (Eckert, 2012; Labov, 1972). These studies emphasize the role of social factors, such as age, gender, and social class, in shaping language use and identity construction. In the context of multilingual societies, scholars have explored how speakers navigate competing linguistic identities and negotiate their place within diverse social networks (Blommaert, 2010; Rampton, 1990). Roozafzai (2024a) also investigates the efficacy of a socially-

contextualized pedagogy in enhancing the abilities of English language learners. The participants comprised 100 individuals from various linguistic backgrounds who were studying English as a second language. The results underscore the promise of socially-contextualized pedagogy in fostering empowerment among English language learners and elevating their academic achievements.

Social psychology has contributed to our understanding of language identity by focusing on the cognitive and affective aspects of language use. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) has been widely applied to examine the ways in which individuals use language to signal their membership in social groups and assert their distinctiveness from others. In addition, self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) has shed light on the dynamic nature of identity, emphasizing the role of context in shaping individuals' identification with particular social categories. Roozafzai (2024b) also explored the effects of translanguaging pedagogy on the social awareness of English language learners (ELLs) within a bilingual classroom environment.

In the Iranian context, studies on language identity have focused on the interplay between local, national, and global forces (Elahi, 2006; Yazan, 2019; Rezaei, 2014). Researchers have explored the tension between the desire to maintain local linguistic practices and the increasing dominance of English as a global language (Langinier & Ehrhart, 2020). In addition, studies have examined the role of language ideologies in shaping attitudes towards English and other languages in Iran (Abdollahzadeh & Baniasad, 2010).

Despite the growing body of research on language identity in Iran, there remains a need for studies that adopt an interdisciplinary

approach, drawing upon both sociolinguistics and social psychology to provide a comprehensive understanding of this complex phenomenon. Furthermore, there is a need for studies that examine the implications of English language identity for language teaching and learning in the Iranian context.

By addressing these gaps in the literature, this research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of English language identity in Iran and its implications for language education and policy.

Frameworks of the Study

The framework of this study on English language use and social identities in Iran is multifaceted and draws from various disciplines, including applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, and social psychology. Here's an overview of the key theoretical and methodological components that make up the study's framework:

Theoretical Framework

1. **Language and identity:** This study is grounded in the understanding that language and identity are intricately linked, drawing from research that highlights the role of language practices in constructing and negotiating social identities (Canagarajah, 2013; Norton, 2013).
2. **English as a global language:** The global spread of English and its implications for identity formation provide essential context for this study (Pennycook, 2010).
3. **Language attitudes and ideologies:** Theories on language attitudes and ideologies help frame participants' beliefs about English language use and its connections to social identities (Garrett, 2010; Cavanaugh, 2013).

Methodological Framework

Qualitative methods: Interviews and focus groups enable researchers to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes regarding English language use and their social identities in-depth (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

This comprehensive framework provides a strong foundation for investigating the complex relationship between English language use and social identities in Iran, considering the multifaceted nature of language practices and identity construction in a globalizing world.

Methodology

The methodology employed in this study follows an empirical approach, applying the thematic analysis method to explore English language identity in Iran. The research design allows for a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of language identity construction, while also considering the contextual factors influencing this process.

Participants

The study involves a diverse group of Iranian English language learners and users, varying in age, gender, education level, and geographical location.

Data Collection

Qualitative Data: In-depth interviews and focus group discussions are conducted to gain insights into participants' perceptions and experiences related to English language use, identity construction, and contextual factors. Additionally, participant observation may be utilized to capture participants' language practices in natural settings.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic analysis is used to identify key themes and patterns within the interview and observation data. This involves transcribing and coding the data,

followed by an iterative process of identifying and refining themes relevant to the research questions.

Data and Analysis

The qualitative data for this study was collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observations.

1. **In-depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a diverse group of Iranian English language learners and users. Participants were asked open-ended questions related to their language learning experiences, English language use, identity construction, and the influence of contextual factors. These interviews provided rich narrative accounts of participants' experiences and perspectives, offering valuable insights into the complexities of English language identity in Iran.

2. **Focus Group Discussions:** Participants were also engaged in focus group discussions to explore their collective views on English language use, identity, and contextual factors. These group discussions facilitated the exchange of ideas, experiences, and perceptions among participants, revealing shared understandings and practices related to English language identity.

3. **Participant Observations:** Observations were conducted in various settings where participants used English for communication, such as language classes, social gatherings, and online platforms. These observations offered an opportunity to examine participants' language practices and identity

performances in natural contexts, providing additional insights into the complex dynamics of English language identity in Iran.

The qualitative data from these sources were transcribed and coded for thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of key themes and patterns related to the

construction of English language identity in Iran. These themes were then used to develop a more nuanced understanding of the individual and socio-cultural factors influencing participants' language use and identity formation.

To represent the data collected from interviews, focus groups, and observations, the following tables can be used:

Table 1

Interview Data Summary

| Participant ID | Age | Gender | Education | Location | Key Themes |
|----------------|-----|--------|--------------------|----------|--|
| P1 | 25 | F | University student | Tehran | Language proficiency, cultural identity, social context |
| P2 | 32 | M | Graduate | Isfahan | Language attitudes, personal aspirations, contextual factors |
| Pn | 28 | F | Undergraduate | Tabriz | Language practices, identity construction, socio-cultural values |

Table 2

Focus Group Data Summary

| Focus Group ID | Age Range | Gender Ratio | Education Level | Location | Key Themes |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|-----------------|----------|---|
| FG1 | 25-35 | 4M, 6F | Mixed | Tehran | Language attitudes, identity negotiation, social networks |
| FG2 | 18-25 | 3M, 3F | Undergraduate | Isfahan | Language practices, contextual factors, cultural values |
| FGn | 30-40 | 5M, 5F | Graduate | Tabriz | Language practices, contextual factors, cultural values |

Table 3

Observation Data Summary

| Observation ID | Setting | Participants | Interaction Type | Key Themes |
|----------------|------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| O1 | Language class | 8 students, 1 teacher | Teacher-student, student-student | Language practices, identity performances, socio-cultural values |
| O2 | Social gathering | 12 participants | Peer-to-peer | Language attitudes, identity negotiation, contextual factors |
| O3 | Online platform | 15 users | User-to-user | Language proficiency, cultural identity, socio-political context |

These tables demonstrate the data collected from each qualitative data source, summarizing participant demographics, key themes, and relevant contextual information. They offer a structured representation of the diverse perspectives and experiences captured

in the study, for analysis and interpretation of English language identity in Iran.

To relate the themes from Table 1 to the interview results based on the interview questions, the responses provided by the participants in the context of these themes are analyzed as it follows:

Interview Question 1: Can you provide some background information on your experience with English language learning and use in Iran?

- **Language proficiency:** Participants' discussions of their experience with English language learning and use in Iran provide insights into their language proficiency and how it contributes to their social identities.

- **Cultural identity:** Interviewees' reflections on the role of English in their lives, particularly in relation to their Iranian cultural identity, highlight how they negotiate and construct their social identities in relation to language use.

Interview Question 2: How do you perceive the role of English in Iranian society, and how does this influence your personal, educational, or professional life?

- **Social context:** Participants' views on the role of English in Iranian society shed light on the social factors that shape their language practices and identity construction.

- **Language attitudes:** Interviewees' perceptions of the influence of English on their personal, educational, or professional lives reflect their attitudes towards the language and its impact on their social identities.

Interview Question 3: What challenges or opportunities have you experienced in using English within your social, educational, or professional contexts?

- **Contextual factors:** Interviewees' discussions of the challenges and opportunities they face in using English reveal the contextual factors that influence their language practices and identity construction.

- **Language practices:** Participants' descriptions of how they use English in their daily lives provide insights into their language practices and how these practices contribute to their social identities.

Interview Question 4: How do you see your identity as an English language user in Iran, and what role does English play in shaping your sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities?

- **Identity construction:** Interviewees' reflections on their sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities demonstrate the process of identity construction in relation to language use.

- **Socio-cultural values:** Participants' emphasis on balancing their English language use with their Iranian cultural identity highlights the importance of socio-cultural values in shaping their language practices and identity construction.

By examining these themes in the context of interview questions and results, the researcher developed a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that shape English language identity in Iran, including language proficiency, cultural identity, social context, language attitudes, personal aspirations, contextual factors, language practices, identity construction, and socio-cultural values.

To analyze the results and findings of the focus group discussion based on the themes the followings are presented:

Language attitudes: Participants expressed a range of attitudes towards the role of English in Iranian society. Some viewed English as an essential tool for education, professional opportunities, and international communication, while others acknowledged potential challenges such as limited access to resources and societal divisions between English speakers and non-speakers. This highlights the diverse attitudes towards English and its impact on social identities in Iran.

Personal aspirations: Participants shared their goals related to English language use, including improving proficiency and engaging

with global communities. These aspirations demonstrate the participants' motivation to develop their language skills and expand their horizons, ultimately shaping their language practices and identity construction.

Social context: The various settings in which participants use English, such as educational, professional, or personal contexts, reveal the social factors that shape their language practices and identity construction. The challenges and opportunities they encounter in these contexts also contribute to their experiences with English language use in Iran.

Language practices: Participants' descriptions of their English language use in daily life provide insights into their language practices and how these practices contribute to their social identities. Their reflections on their sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities further demonstrate the connection between language use and identity construction.

Socio-cultural values: Participants emphasized the importance of balancing their English language use with their Iranian cultural identity, highlighting the significance of socio-cultural values in shaping their language practices and identity construction. This suggests that individuals strive to maintain their cultural roots while adapting to the globalizing influence of English.

Contextual factors: Participants' discussions of the challenges and opportunities they face in using English in different contexts reveal the contextual factors that influence their language practices and identity construction. These factors may include access to resources, societal expectations, and the need to balance English with their own cultural identity.

So, the focus group discussion findings demonstrated a complex relationship between English language use, social identities, and

contextual factors in Iran. By examining these themes, the researcher gained a deeper understanding of how individuals navigate the challenges and opportunities associated with English language use and construct their social identities in a globalizing world.

To provide a comprehensive interpretation and analysis of the findings from all observations, each theme was examined, and it is discussed how they relate to the observations:

Language practices: Observations revealed diverse language practices, including English use for specific purposes (e.g., discussing movies, work, travel), integrating English with Farsi, and using English slang or expressions. These practices demonstrate how Iranians adapt their language use to suit different social contexts.

Identity performances: Participants showcased their identities by using English to discuss global topics, connect with diverse people, or demonstrate their language proficiency. These performances highlight how language use can contribute to shaping and expressing social identities.

Socio-cultural values: Observations indicated that participants value both English language use and their Iranian cultural identity. Balancing these aspects reflects their commitment to maintaining cultural roots while adapting to the globalizing influence of English.

Language attitudes: Participants' attitudes toward English varied, with some viewing it as a valuable tool for education, professional opportunities, and international communication. Others acknowledged challenges like limited access to resources and potential societal divisions. These attitudes demonstrate the multifaceted nature of English's role in Iranian society.

Identity negotiation: Observations showed how participants negotiate their identities by balancing English language use with their Iranian cultural values. This process reflects their efforts to construct meaningful and authentic identities in a global context.

Contextual factors: Social, educational, and regional contexts influenced language practices and identity construction. These factors highlight the importance of considering the broader socio-cultural environment when examining the role of English in Iran.

Language proficiency: Differences in language proficiency were evident across participants, impacting their ability to engage in English-based conversations. This finding suggests that access to language learning resources and opportunities may affect individuals' experiences with English language use.

Cultural identity: Participants' efforts to maintain their Iranian cultural identity while using English demonstrate the centrality of cultural roots in shaping social identities.

Socio-political context: The societal importance of English in Iran, both for educational and professional purposes, reflects the broader socio-political context that values language proficiency.

These findings highlight the need to consider these factors when examining the role of English in Iran and its impact on individuals' social identities and experiences.

Discussion

This empirical study on English language use and social identities in Iran has revealed several key findings that contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between language practices and identity construction in a globalizing world. The triangulation of data from interviews, focus

groups, and observations has provided rich insights into the various factors that shape individuals' experiences with English language use in Iran.

Our findings align with previous research on the role of English as a global language and its influence on identity formation (Pennycook, 2010; Norton, 2013). Participants in our study demonstrated diverse language practices, reflecting their efforts to adapt to different social contexts and negotiate their social identities in relation to English language use (Canagarajah, 2013). This identity negotiation process underscores the agency of individuals in shaping their own identities amidst the globalizing influence of English (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004).

Moreover, our findings echo the importance of considering contextual factors, such as access to language learning resources and opportunities, in understanding individuals' experiences with English language use (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). This highlights the need to address potential disparities in language education and ensure equitable access to language learning resources in Iran and beyond.

Participants' emphasis on balancing English language use with their Iranian cultural identity aligns with previous research on the interplay between language and cultural values in identity construction (Cavanaugh, 2013; Ting-Toomey, 2005). This finding highlights the need to acknowledge and respect individuals' cultural roots while supporting their efforts to engage with the global community through English language use.

In conclusion, the current empirical study contributes to the growing body of research on English language use and social identities in diverse contexts (Iranmehr & Davari, 2018; Norton & McKinney, 2011). By examining the

complex interplay between language practices, identity negotiation, and socio-cultural values in Iran, valuable insights into how individuals construct their social identities in a globalizing world are provided. Future research could further explore the longitudinal impact of English language use on identity trajectories and the potential implications for language education and policy.

Conclusion

This empirical study on English language use and social identities in Iran has unveiled the multifaceted nature of the relationship between language practices and identity construction in a global context. It aimed to explore the complex relationship between English language use in public spaces and the construction of social identities in Iran. Drawing from data gathered through interviews, focus groups, and observations, this research revealed that English language use plays a significant role in shaping individuals' social identities in various ways.

Firstly, participants were found to use English to discuss global topics, showcase their language proficiency, and establish connections with diverse individuals. By doing so, they actively construct and express their social identities in a global context. Secondly, the interplay between English language use and Iranian cultural identity emerged as a key factor in identity negotiation, with participants employing strategies such as mixing English with Farsi or using English in specific contexts. This demonstrates the participants' agency in creating meaningful social identities that balance local and global influences.

Contextual factors, such as access to language learning resources and societal attitudes, were also found to significantly impact individuals' experiences with English

language use in public spaces. Participants with greater access to English language learning resources were more proficient and confident in using English, while societal attitudes towards English both supported and hindered its use in public spaces.

The findings corroborate previous research on the significance of contextual factors, language attitudes, and identity negotiation in understanding individuals' experiences with English language use. Additionally, participants' emphasis on balancing English language use with their Iranian cultural identity highlights the importance of considering cultural roots and values in the global spread of English.

The current study yields valuable insights into how Iranians navigate the complexities of English language use in public spaces while balancing their cultural values and identities. It highlights the importance of considering contextual factors, language attitudes, and identity negotiation in understanding the role of English in Iran and its impact on individuals' social identities. It contributes to the growing body of literature on English language use and social identities by providing a nuanced perspective on the Iranian context. Future research could explore the longitudinal impact of English language use on identity trajectories and investigate the implications of these findings for language education and policy in Iran and beyond. As English continues to play an essential role in globalization, understanding the dynamic interplay between language practices, identity, and socio-cultural values remains crucial for fostering meaningful and inclusive language learning experiences.

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Appendix 1

The following is the tested interview questions that were used to explore the construction of English language identity in Iran:

1. **Background Information**

- Can you tell me a little bit about your background, such as your age, education, and where you live?

- What languages do you speak or have you learned in the past?

2. **English Language Learning and Use**

- How did you learn English, and what motivated you to do so?

- In what contexts or situations do you use English in your daily life?

- How do you perceive the role of English in your personal, educational, or professional life?

3. **Identity Construction**

- How do you see your identity as an English language user in Iran?

- How does your use of English influence your sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities?

- Do you think your English language use has an impact on your cultural identity or values?

4. **Contextual Factors**

- How do you perceive the role of English in Iranian society and its relationship with local languages and cultural practices?

- Can you describe any challenges or opportunities you've experienced in using

English within your social, educational, or professional contexts?

- What do you think are the most important factors shaping English language identity in Iran?

5. **Language Attitudes and Practices**

- How do you think others perceive your English language use, and does this influence your language practices or identity construction?

- Are there any specific language attitudes or ideologies that you've encountered regarding English language use in Iran?

- Have your language attitudes or practices changed over time, and if so, what contributed to these changes?

6. **Personal Aspirations**

- How do you envision the role of English in your future personal, educational, or professional goals?

- Do you have any aspirations for improving your English language proficiency or becoming involved in English-speaking communities?

These questions explore the complex relationship between English language use, identity construction, and contextual factors in Iran, allowing participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives on this topic.

Appendix 2

A sample response from a participant to illustrate the interpretation and thematic analysis of interview results:

Interview Question: How do you see your identity as an English language user in Iran?

Participant's Response: "As an English language user in Iran, I feel like I'm part of a community that transcends geographical boundaries. It allows me to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and engage with global perspectives. However, I also recognize the importance of balancing this global outlook with my Iranian identity and cultural values."

Analysis: This response highlights several key themes related to English language identity in Iran, including:

1. **Belonging and community:** The participant feels a sense of belonging to a global community of English language users, which suggests that their English language use facilitates social connections and a broader perspective on the world.

2. **Cultural identity:** The participant mentions the importance of maintaining a balance between their English language use and Iranian cultural identity, indicating that they are aware of potential tensions between the two and strive to navigate them effectively.

3. **Language as a tool for engagement:** The participant views English as a means to engage with global perspectives, suggesting that they see the language as a resource for expanding their worldview and engaging with diverse ideas.

This sample analysis demonstrates how the researcher examined interview data to uncover key themes and meanings related to English language identity in Iran. By identifying patterns and connections across participant responses, the researcher developed a

comprehensive understanding of the complex factors shaping language use and identity construction in this context.

Table 1 serves as a structured representation of the qualitative data collected from interviews. They help organize the information gathered and provide a clear overview of the participant demographics, settings, and key themes discussed in each data source. The key themes mentioned in the tables provide an overview of the main topics and ideas that emerged across the different qualitative data sources. The interpretation of the interview results, as shown in the sample analysis, demonstrates how the researcher delved into specific responses and draw out more detailed themes or subthemes that connect to the broader themes listed in the tables.

For instance, the sample analysis identified themes like belonging, cultural identity, and language as a tool for engagement. These themes can be linked to the broader themes mentioned in the tables, such as:

1. **Language proficiency:** This theme relates to the participant's ability to use English and can be connected to their sense of belonging to a global community of English language users. Participants' discussions of their background in English language learning, as well as their experiences in using English in various contexts, provide insights into their language proficiency and how it impacts their social identities.

2. **Cultural identity:** This theme addresses the relationship between the participant's English language use and their Iranian cultural identity, reflecting the importance of balancing both aspects. Interviewees' reflections on the relationship between their English language use and Iranian cultural identity highlight the ways

in which they negotiate and construct their social identities in relation to language use.

3. Social context: The participant's view of English as a means to engage with global perspectives can be associated with the social context in which they use the language and how it influences their identity construction. Participants' descriptions of the various settings in which they use English, such as educational, professional, or personal contexts, shed light on the social factors that shape their language practices and identity construction.

4. Language attitudes: Interviewees' views on the role of English in Iranian society and its influence on their personal, educational, or professional lives reflect their attitudes towards the language and its impact on their social identities.

5. Personal aspirations: Participants' future goals related to English language use, such as improving their proficiency or engaging with global communities, demonstrate how their aspirations shape their language practices and identity construction.

6. Contextual factors: Interviewees' discussions of the challenges and opportunities they face in using English within their social, educational, or professional contexts reveal the contextual factors that

influence their language practices and identity construction.

7. Language practices: Participants' descriptions of how they use English in their daily lives provide insights into their language practices and how these practices contribute to their social identities.

8. Identity construction: Interviewees' reflections on their sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities and their perceptions of the role of English in their personal, educational, or professional lives demonstrate the process of identity construction in relation to language use.

9. Socio-cultural values: Participants' emphasis on appreciating and maintaining their own cultural values while engaging with English language and global perspectives highlights the importance of socio-cultural values in shaping their language practices and identity construction.

By connecting the themes identified in the interview analysis to the broader themes listed in the tables, researchers can better understand how the various aspects of English language identity in Iran intersect and interact, ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Appendix 3

Group discussions, also known as focus group discussions, involved a moderator facilitating a conversation with a group of participants to gather their views, experiences, and opinions on the specific topic. Here are the steps for designing and conducting group discussions on this study about English language identity in Iran:

Group Discussion Questions:

1. How do you perceive the role of English in Iranian society?
2. In what ways does English language use influence your sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities?
3. How do you navigate any potential tensions between your English language use and Iranian cultural identity?
4. What challenges or opportunities have you experienced in using English within your social, educational, or professional contexts?
5. How do you see the role of English in your future personal, educational, or professional goals?

Instructions for the Moderator:

1. Create a comfortable and open atmosphere for participants to share their thoughts and experiences.
2. Introduce the purpose of the discussion and ensure participants understand their role.
3. Ask open-ended questions and encourage participants to elaborate on their responses.
4. Ensure that all participants have an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
5. Be prepared to manage group dynamics, such as addressing dominant participants or encouraging quieter participants to share their thoughts.
6. Take notes or record the discussion for later analysis.

Process:

1. Recruit a diverse group of participants with varying backgrounds, ages, genders, education levels, and geographical locations.
2. Schedule the focus group discussions at a convenient time and location for participants.
3. Conduct the discussions, ensuring that they last approximately 1-2 hours each.
4. Transcribe and analyze the discussion data, identifying key themes, patterns, and variations in participants' perspectives and experiences.
5. Report the findings in conjunction with other qualitative and quantitative data sources to provide a comprehensive understanding of English language identity in Iran.

The participants for the focus group discussions represent a diverse group of Iranian English language learners and users. The participants vary in:

Age: The participants come from different age groups, ensuring a range of experiences and perspectives.

Gender: The participants include both men and women, allowing for insights into any potential gender-related differences in the construction of English language identity.

Education: The participants have different educational backgrounds, such as university, graduate, and undergraduate levels, providing a variety of experiences with English language learning and use.

Location: The participants are selected from various geographical locations in Iran, including Tehran, Isfahan, and Tabriz, among others. This enables the capture of regional differences in attitudes, experiences, and contextual factors related to English language identity.

The diverse composition of the focus group participants helps to ensure a broad

understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding English language identity in Iran and facilitates the exploration of a range of experiences, perspectives, and social contexts.

Appendix 4

Below is a detailed sample of a focus group discussion, illustrating the conversation and participant dynamics:

Participants:

- P1: Male, 28, Undergraduate, Tehran
- P2: Female, 32, Graduate, Isfahan
- P3: Male, 25, University, Tabriz
- P4: Female, 30, Graduate, Tehran
- P5: Male, 35, Undergraduate, Isfahan

Moderator: Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for participating in this focus group discussion on English language identity in Iran. We will discuss various aspects of English language use and its influence on social identity. Please feel free to share your thoughts and experiences.

Question 1: How do you perceive the role of English in Iranian society?

P1: I think English is increasingly becoming a necessity for higher education and professional opportunities in Iran.

P2: Agreed. English has become an essential tool for communicating with the international community and accessing global resources.

P3: But we should also remember the importance of our own language and cultural identity. It's a delicate balance.

Question 2: In what ways does English language use influence your sense of belonging to certain social groups or communities?

P4: Being proficient in English allows me to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and engage in global conversations, which broadens my social circle.

P5: Yes, but it can also create divisions between those who speak English and those who don't. It's important to be mindful of these potential inequalities.

P2: I agree. Language can sometimes become a marker of social status and privilege, which may have negative consequences for societal cohesion.

Question 3: How do you navigate any potential tensions between your English language use and Iranian cultural identity?

P1: I think it's possible to embrace both. I see English as a tool for communication and personal growth, while maintaining my connection to my own culture and language.

P3: Absolutely. Being bicultural and bilingual can enrich our lives and perspectives. It's all about finding a balance and appreciating the value of both cultures.

Question 4: What challenges or opportunities have you experienced in using English within your social, educational, or professional contexts?

P5: Access to English language learning resources can be limited, especially in smaller cities. But when we do learn English, it opens many doors for us professionally.

P2: For me, it's about overcoming the fear of making mistakes and the pressure to speak English perfectly. We need to create more supportive environments for language learning and use.

Question 5: How do you see the role of English in your future personal, educational, or professional goals?

P4: I see English as an important asset for advancing my career and pursuing further

education, both within Iran and internationally.

PI: I agree. English will continue to play a significant role in our lives, and it's essential that we cultivate our language skills and take advantage of the opportunities that come with it.

Moderator: Thank you all for sharing your insights and experiences. This discussion has provided valuable perspectives on the role of English language use in constructing social identities in Iran. We appreciate your participation.

Appendix 5

The focus group discussion presented in appendix 4, as well as other similar discussions, can be connected to the themes outlined in Table 2. Here's how some of the key themes emerge in the discussion:

1. Language attitudes: Participants discuss their views on the role of English in Iranian society, highlighting its importance for education, professional opportunities, and international communication. They also mention societal challenges, such as limited access to resources and potential divisions between English speakers and non-speakers. These discussions reflect participants' attitudes towards the English language and its impact on their social identities.

2. Identity negotiation: Participants share their experiences with balancing their English language use and Iranian cultural identity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining connections to their own culture while embracing the benefits of bilingualism and biculturalism. These insights demonstrate how individuals navigate and negotiate their social identities in relation to language use.

3. Social networks: Participants mention how English language proficiency enables

them to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and engage in global conversations, broadening their social circles. This reflects the role of English in shaping individuals' social networks and connections.

4. Language practices: Participants discuss their use of English in various contexts, such as education, professional settings, and personal communication. They also share the challenges they face in using the language and emphasize the need for supportive environments for language learning and use. These discussions provide insights into the language practices of Iranian English language users.

5. Contextual factors: Participants highlight the social and regional contexts that influence their experiences with English language learning and use, including access to resources, societal expectations, and the importance of balancing English with their own cultural identity. These factors demonstrate the significant role of context in shaping individuals' language practices and social identities.

6. Cultural values: Participants emphasize the importance of appreciating and maintaining their own cultural values while engaging with English language and global perspectives. This shows how cultural values shape individuals' attitudes and practices related to language use and identity negotiation.

By examining these themes across multiple focus group discussions, the researcher gained a comprehensive understanding of the various factors that influence the construction of English language identity in Iran. This helps to illuminate the complex relationship between language use, social networks, contextual factors, and cultural values in shaping individuals' experiences and perspectives.

Appendix 6

Conducting observations to study the use of English in public spaces in Iran involved a systematic process of collecting and analyzing data. Here are the steps and instructions for this observation process:

Preparation:

1. Identify the public spaces where English language use is expected to be observed (e.g., cafes, universities, shopping malls).
2. Create an observation checklist or protocol, including aspects such as participants, types of English language use (written or spoken), contexts, and frequencies.
3. Obtain necessary permissions or approvals from relevant authorities to conduct observations in these spaces.

Data Collection:

1. Select specific times and days for observations to capture diverse samples of participants and contexts.
2. Conduct unobtrusive observations in the chosen public spaces, ensuring minimal disruption to the natural environment.
3. Record observations using the checklist or protocol, noting detailed descriptions of the English language use observed, the participants involved, and the contexts in which it occurs.
4. Take field notes or audio recordings (with permission) to supplement the structured observation data.

Data Analysis:

1. Transcribe the field notes and observation records into a structured format for analysis.
2. Categorize and code the data according to relevant themes or patterns (e.g., types of English language use, participants' characteristics, contexts, and frequencies).

3. Analyze the coded data to identify trends, relationships, and variations in English language use across the observed public spaces.

Reporting Findings:

1. Write up the observation results, including descriptions of the data collection process, analytical methods, and key findings related to English language use in public spaces in Iran.
2. Discuss the implications of these findings for understanding the role of English in Iranian society and its influence on social identities.

To connect the observation sample to Table 3 themes, it was needed to focus more specifically on the following aspects during the observation process:

Language attitudes: Note participants' views on the role of English in Iranian society, their motivation for using English, and their perceptions of its influence on social identities.

Social networks: Examine how English language use enables participants to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and engage in global conversations.

Cultural values: Observe instances where participants discuss or demonstrate the importance of balancing their English language use with their Iranian cultural identity and values.

Contextual factors: Document the social and regional contexts that shape participants' experiences with English language learning and use, such as access to resources, societal expectations, or regional differences.

Language practices: Describe participants' use of English in various contexts, including the types of English language use, participants' proficiency, and the challenges they face in using the language.

By incorporating these themes into the observation process, you can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how English language use in public spaces relates to the complex relationship between language, culture, and social identities in Iran, as outlined in Table 3.

Throughout the observation process, it was essential to ensure ethical practices, such as maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of participants, obtaining informed consent when necessary, and adhering to research protocols. By systematically observing and analyzing English language use in public spaces, the researcher can contribute valuable insights into the social dynamics and contextual factors shaping language practices and identities in Iran.

Appendix 7

Here's a sample observation of English language use in a café located in a busy neighborhood in Tehran:

Date and Time: Friday, April 28, 2023,
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Observer: [Name]

Location: [Cafe Name], Tehran, Iran

Participants:

- Group 1: Four university students (two males and two females)
- Group 2: Three young professionals (two males and one female)
- Group 3: Two couples (mid-30s)

Context: Casual conversations among friends and acquaintances in a relaxed atmosphere

Language Use:

1. Group 1 (University students):

- All four students use English intermittently during their conversation, switching between English and Farsi.

- They discuss a recent movie they watched in English, using specific terms like "plot twist," "character development," and "cinematography."

- They also use English expressions like "Oh my God," "Seriously?!" and "Whatever," demonstrating a familiarity with English slang and conversational style.

2. Group 2 (Young professionals):

- The group members use English more consistently during their conversation, occasionally mixing in Farsi words.

- Their discussion revolves around work-related topics, using English terms like "deadline," "presentation," and "brainstorming."

- They also talk about an upcoming international conference, discussing visa requirements, flight bookings, and accommodation, predominantly in English.

3. Group 3 (Couples):

- The two couples primarily converse in Farsi but use English when discussing their travel experiences abroad.

- They mention specific destinations, such as "London," "New York," and "Paris," and use English words like "sightseeing," "museum," and "cuisine" when describing their trips.

- They also occasionally use English phrases like "You're right," "Absolutely," and "That's true" during their conversation.

Reflection: In this café setting, English is used in varying degrees by different groups of people, often integrated with Farsi. While some use English primarily to discuss specific topics like movies or work-related matters, others incorporate English terms and expressions into their conversations more fluidly. This observation highlights how Iranians from different backgrounds use

English in public spaces to engage in various types of social interactions and to connect with global cultures and experiences.

In the provided sample observation, a preliminary form of thematic coding was applied to analyze and organize the data. Thematic coding is a method of qualitative data analysis that involves identifying and categorizing patterns or themes within the data.

Here's an overview of the coding used in the sample observation:

1. **Participant Groups:** Participants were categorized into distinct groups based on their apparent age and social context:

- Group 1: University students
- Group 2: Young professionals
- Group 3: Couples

2. **Types of Language Use:** English language use was categorized based on the purpose or context of its usage:

- Discussing movies (Group 1)
- Work-related topics (Group 2)
- Travel experiences (Group 3)
- Everyday expressions (all groups)

3. **Language Mixing:** Observations were coded to capture instances of mixing English and Farsi in conversations:

- Consistent use of English with occasional Farsi words (Group 2)
- Intermittent use of English and Farsi (Group 1)

While this sample observation demonstrates a basic form of coding, the coding process can be adapted and expanded based on the research objectives and the specific themes or patterns that emerge during data collection and analysis.