

## **Personality Development by Means of Investment in L2 and its Impact on EFL Proficiency: A Survey of Iranian MA EFL Students**

A. H. Samadi Bahrami  
Assistant Professor, TEFL  
School of International Relations  
email: samadi\_amir@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

Norton's (1995) Investment Hypothesis in L2 learning, that L2 learners who cherish and foresee a richer personality for themselves in their L2 context would thrive more diligently and consequently would both enrich their personality and achieve a higher proficiency in their new language, was investigated in this study in the community of Iranian EFL students. The integration and mutual role between language and culture and their subsequent influence on the personality and EFL proficiency of 72 Iranian MA EFL students at Allameh Tabataba'i University were investigated. Personality features, confined to Multicultural Personality Traits (cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility), were measured by using Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) and an actual TOEFL was used to measure the participants' EFL proficiency. Then the relationships between their MPTs and EFL proficiency were analyzed. It was found that when all participants were taken as EFL students, the correlation between their MPTs and EFL proficiency was not a high correlation, but when they were relatively classified into high, mid and low-proficiency groups, strong positive correlation between high-proficiency EFL students' MPTs and their EFL proficiency was witnessed ( $r = .62$ ), whereas the low-proficiency EFL students' data indicated a very low correlation. The findings of this study confirmed the hypothesis that EFL students with a greater investment in their L2 as a means to develop an enriched personality had also achieved higher EFL proficiency.

**Keywords:** identity reconstruction, investment, language and identity, multicultural personality traits

### 1. Introduction

There is no doubt that language and culture are intertwined and neither one's supremacy can be established over the other. It is almost impossible to understand all the subtleties of a foreign culture without mastering its language. On the other hand, mastering a foreign language without a perfect understanding of its culture is also next to impossible because language expresses, embodies, and "symbolizes cultural reality" (Kramsch, 2005). Studies on L2 learning also support the idea that language learning is concomitant with cultural acquisition (Norton, 2010). Language, culture, and identity are three sides of a triangle within which individuals exercise their social beings. Identities cannot be materialized in isolation from contextual elements and negotiations (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004). Therefore, L2 learning brings about an opportunity for L2 learners to enrich their personality by investing in their L2 learning (Norton, 1995). L2 learning is accompanied by some degree of cultural absorption that can alter L2 learners' personality and the intentional and purposeful personality development by means of learning a new language can be a strong impetus propelling successful L2 learning (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2002).

Investment in identity construction in L2 learning will result in an enriched bicultural capability and since culture constitutes the main component of sociopragmatic aspect of language use, i.e. intercultural competence; it can provide the logical ground for a higher L2 pragmatic and intercultural competence. This aspect of identity in L2 learning is referred to as "construct of investment" within which "agency and investment" are attributed with a powerful influential role in L2 learning (Norton, 2000). "When learners interact in their L2, they are continually negotiating their own social identity. Therefore, investing in learning a new language also involves investing in one's own constantly changing social identity" (Siegel, 2005, p. 191). Based on these ideas, the possibility of a meaningful correlation existing between identity construction within an L2 learning context and L2 proficiency achievement has formed the very foundation of this study.

### 2. Theoretical Base of Identity Construction in L2

Theories of second Language Learning have tried to identify, describe and explain various factors influencing L2 learning process and achievements. Psychologically-founded behaviorist theory with its intensive emphasis on the linguistic constituents dominated the early years of language learning in 1950s and 1960s, but failing to provide an acceptable and comprehensive account gave way to mentalist/nativist/innatist views of L2 learning that shifted the attention from input to the internal processes going on inside the

mind and attributed a great deal of credit to innate and cognitive abilities, and Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Then the computational model called the attention to the intake that would find its way to be stored as the L2 knowledge in the long-term memory of the learners. These approaches to L2 learning were followed by the recognition of the social aspects of language learning that is the most crucial element in language learning. Within the social sphere of L2 learning, several approaches can be identified, stylistic approach of Tarone (1988, in Mitchell & Myles 2004), accommodation theory of Giles (1982, in Mitchell & Myles 2004), Acculturation Model of Schumann (1990, in Mitchell & Myles 2004), Norton's (1995) Socio-Cultural Perspective on L2 learning, and Long's interactional hypothesis (Ellis, 2003; Mitchell & Myles 2004; Van Patten & Williams, 2007).

Every one of these L2 learning hypotheses has concentrated on one aspect of L2 leaning. Input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) is centered on the very initial phase of the language-wise interaction, i.e. *the input*. Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis also revolved around *the input*. Noticing hypothesis of Schmidt (1990, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) and comprehensible input of Krashen (1988, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) addressed themselves to *the intake* phase. Processing Hypothesis of Towell, Hawkins and Pienemann (1994, in Mitchell & Myles 2004), McLaughlin's (1987, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) Information Processing Model of short-term and long-term memories, Anderson's (1985, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) Active Control of Thought (ACT) with its declarative and procedural knowledge plus the cognitive, associative and autonomous stages furthered the L2 learning hypotheses up into *the processing* activities conducted in the mind. Swain's (1985, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) Comprehensible Output Model concentrated on the end result, i.e. *the output*. Hatch's (1978, in Mitchell & Myles 2004) model of Collaborative Efforts of L2 learners (scaffolding) was centered on the cognitive aspect of language learning than its social. Giles's (1982, cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004) Accommodation Theory investigated the processes of convergence and divergence in verbal social interactions with the interest more on convergence. Schumann's (1990) Acculturation Model concentrated on the social and psychological distances existing between L1 and L2 and how much these can be influential in language learners' achievements. Finally, it was Long's Interaction Hypothesis that was inclusive of all the learning stages, i.e. *input*, *processing*, and *output*. However, Long's Interactional Hypothesis lacks being aim-oriented. What aims are to be pursued by participating in social interactions? *Language learning* cannot be a convincing answer. *Construction of an identity* can reasonably be argued to be the goal pursued

by means of social interactions through which both language and culture are acquired. Therefore, Norton's (1995) Investment Model of L2 learning that accounts for identity construction by means of engaging in social interactions can be the most comprehensive L2 learning model that is inclusive of all aspects of L2 learning. Norton (1995) concentrated on the identity of the learners and the *investment* they make in this line to "increase the value of their cultural capital [that will consequently equip them with an] access to the knowledge and modes of thought to function successfully in a variety of social contexts" (Ellis, 2003, p. 42). Therefore *Identity construction by means of L2 learning* can provide an integrated network that comprises all the fragmented aspects of the L2 learning.

Social accounts of L2 learning concentrate on "how the social identities that the learners negotiate in their interactions" provide them with opportunities to learn their new language (Ellis, 2003, p. 37). Therefore, the identity construction in L2 learning can be an inclusive model to account for a number of variables that are considered contributory to successful L2 learning in a functional and aim-oriented fashion. In the functional approach to identity, identity is not seen "as some discourse-external source that informs the use of language, but as discourse-generated properties of language use that serve specific functions of the discourse" (Tann, 2011, p. 170). The three elements of social identity, i.e. agent, context, and language, (Riley, 2008) integrated together are quite omnipresent in every L2 learning and if fused with Investment Hypothesis can provide a proper account of L2 learning process.

### 3. Language and Identity

Saussure's Structuralism and Bloomfield's Behaviorisms dominated all linguistic studies till 1956 and provided a pure linguistic and mechanic view of language, i.e. "scientific and non-mentalistic", in which all the contextual and social parameters such as "who was speaking, to whom, where, when, how, why, and everything that connected language to its uses and users ... were rigorously excluded from consideration" (Riley, 2008, p. 11). Saussure-initiated form focused linguistics culminated in Chomsky's *Linguistic Competence* of a non-existent "ideal speaker-hearer". Then Hymes' "*communicative competence*" in response to Chomsky concentrated on communicative aspect of language; taking into account the contextual variables and the capacity to adjust to "the exigencies of the situation" (Riley, 2008, p. 11). Chomsky' ideal model is a competent grammarian, Hymes' is a competent speaker, but sociocultural linguists' perfect model is an integrated member of the discourse community of the L2 native speakers (Riley, 2008).

Poststructuralists, like Bakhtin (1981), argued that current language utterances are not isolated bits but they are pieces of a chain started in the “past”, running through the present time and leading towards “future.” In poststructuralists’ account of language, language is not an independent phenomenon distinct from its context which includes the participants, socioculturally constructed contextual elements, temporal features, and everything that plays a role in the power relation established between the interlocutors and the meaning they try to construct. Utterances are not just linguistic elements selected to fit the linguistic requirements. They are purposefully linguistically constructed to establish a social setting in terms of power relations between the participants to serve best the interests of their speakers. Norton and Toohey (2002) asserted that speakers “struggle to appropriate” not their own utterances but also “the voices of the others”, to take the most advantage in line with their own interests (p. 117). Therefore, in poststructuralist approach to the study of language, utterances are constructed appropriately in accordance with all the contextual features and requirements, including current and even foregone/historical and upcoming/future elements.

Bourdieu (1977, cited in Norton & Toohey, 2002) in defining speech asserts that utterances are made “not only to convey meaning and be understood” but the speakers “wish to be believed, obeyed, respected, [and above all to be] distinguished” (p. 118). This last objective of speech, i.e. being distinguished, is in fact the identity that is pursued by every individual in his/her use of language. Riley (2008) believes that a new function - construction of an identity- has to be added to the other functions of language. The identity is always reconstructed in every linguistic act and “the different kinds of language use create different kinds of identity, different kinds of experience and different orders of meaning” (Scott, 2007, p. 37). Sociocultural and critical perspectives of SLL have concentrated on socialization within which identity construction is materialized. Based on the idea that language learning is constructed in language use or socializations, Wenger (1998, cited in Bluestone, 2009), a hard believer in the notion that “learners are social beings ... and learning is a fundamentally social activity”, asserts that learners “form identities as they negotiate meaning” in their interactive practice with others (p. 135) and all the interactions, working towards identity construction, are executed by means of language.

#### 4. Constituents of cultural knowledge

Riley (2008) has classified cultural knowledge in three categories:

1. Know-what
2. Know-of
3. Know-how

**Know-what:** the permanent fixed beliefs about one's society, world, the permanent background knowledge, one's philosophy of life and existence, one's ontology

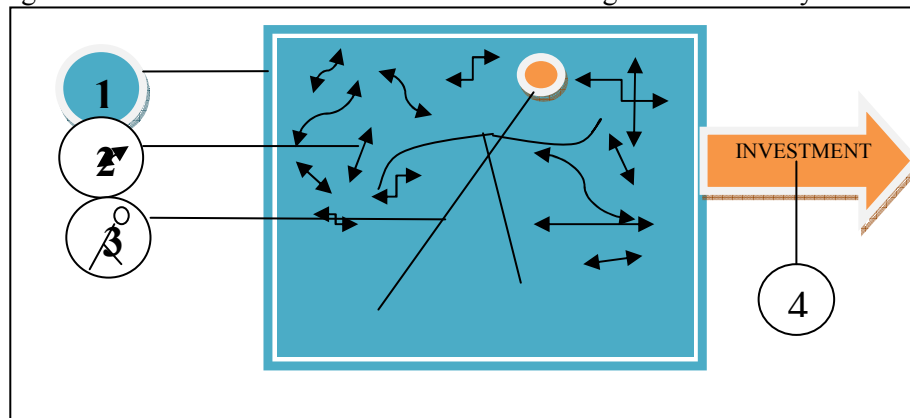
**Know-of:** the current events, happenings and developments in the society, who is who, what party is ruling the country and what the current economic features of the society are

**Know-how:** the proper skillfulness in handling social errands, such as: greeting, shopping, joking, dining, etc.

The combination of these three aspects of culture constitutes everyone's cultural competence which is "the sum total of beliefs [know-what], information [know-of] and skills [know-how]" (Riley, 2008, p. 44).

Culture is a personal quality that finds its existence only in social interactions. The identity one assumes for himself in interactions and falls in is the total result of the contextual forces and the individual's own desire to reflect a certain specific personality both to suit the context and to monitor it. Norton (1995) has constructed her Investment Hypothesis in L2 learning on individual's desired identity that is the most significant social function in every social interaction. Every one of the social interactions' elements mutually affects each other and integrated with each other they construct a complex system within which individuals strive to construct their cherished identities. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Constituents of a verbal interaction leading towards identity construction



1. Context, 2. Language, 3. Participant and 4. Desired identity

#### 4.1 Identity

Identity is the relative stance one assumes for himself in a relation with the social context which surrounds him both physically and mentally. Identity is a multiple construct inclusive of a big range of elements. It is not static but rather it is evolving and dynamic in the course of time. Its construction is materialized through interactions and negotiations with the immediate contextual elements within which and with which one individual is interplaying.

Identity of every individual is not solely constructed by that very individual himself/herself; rather, it is substantially constructed by the contextual elements that he/she is surrounded by and within which he/she is engaged in social interactions. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) assert that “identities are forged in action rather than fixed in categories” (p. 376). Language, culture, speech community and identity are intertwined and no one exists in isolation. In identity construction, all the contextual elements, including the individual himself, work together to shape one’s personal identity and among all the contextual elements, language and culture stand well above all the others. Language and culture are so interdependent that “loss of a language” is “associated with the loss of cultural identity” (Thornborrow, 1999, p. 148). Language is used to establish “social relations” and “a sense of identity” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 33). In fact, the language one speaks and the identity he assumes or constructs are merged in each other.

Individuals employ language to construct their preferred forms and contents as the main means to mold and manifest a personality. Every communication of information by means of language, regarding the constructed form and style plus the content, is monitored by the presumed identity of the participants. Thomas and Wareing (1999) argue that “Identity is [what] we are constantly building and negotiating all over our lives through our interactions with others” by means of employing language (p. 136). Sociologists, discourse analysts, and scholars on pragmatics believe that “language use is a form of self-representation” and that “we are shaped by and through our language” (Miller, 2004, p. 291). Communities also use language to mark their own cultural boundaries and also to identify and credit their own members. Therefore, language, in its totality, is not only means of manifesting identity but also means of constructing identity both in individuals and in speech communities.

#### 4.2 Poststructuralists' account of identity

Poststructuralists' account of identity, constructed and expressed through language, is context-based. They believe that "Taken-for-granted categories such as man, woman,... identity... must be understood as contingent [and] shifting and produced in the particular, rather than having some prior ontological status"(Pennycook, 2007, cited in Norton 2010, p. 352). Identity is the subject *of* the behaviours but it is also the subject *to* the contextual variables. Therefore, there is a feature of "continuity and change" within identity. It is not a fixed status of being. A single cross sectional cut of identity would reveal a number of static and fixed features of identity in a certain temporal and societal context, but such an analysis of identity will not present the whole of identity. The comprehensive study of identity has to be inclusive of the developmental stages integrated with each other in the course of time. Identity to poststructuralists is not static but dynamic and context-dependent. It is a shifting, developmental, and an ever-evolving phenomenon that is constructed and reconstructed in the course of time by means of language employed in social interactions. Ghafar Samar and Mahdavy (2009) having conducted a study on "the reflection of national, Islamic, and western identities in Iranian newspapers" concluded that "identities are constructed and reconstructed in the course of time and as a result of interaction with other identities" (p. 82, 85).

#### 4.3 Investment hypothesis in identity construction

Norton (2010) in her studies on language and identity concentrated on "identity and investment" and "identity and imagined communities." She also supported Bourdieu's idea of replacing "motivation" with "investment" in the studies on L2 learning. She hypothesized that learners' investment in the target language with the aim to enrich the "value of their cultural capital" is much stronger and prominent than the temporal psychological statehood of motivation on binary base of either existing or not. Within "instrumental motivation" a language learner is considered to have a "unitary, fixed and ahistorical personality" (Norton, 2010, p. 345) and a "primarily psychological construct" (Dornyei, 2001), but Investment Hypothesis defines L2 learners within a sociological framework and it seeks to make a meaningful connection between a learners' desire and commitment to learn a language, and their changing identity. Guerrero (2005) also maintains that "attaining full competence and building a new L2 identity is to a great extent a matter of personal choice" (p. 70). Chang (2011) in his studies on investment, agency and imagined communities found that Ph.D. international students "selectively invest" to promote their capital in terms



of academic and cultural values that in their “envisioned future communities” are expected to be marketable.

Motivationally defined L2 learner is not portrayed regarding his personality and the future perspectives he has of his developing identity in the course of learning a new language and the investment he makes in this regard. But Investment Hypothesis in L2 learning identifies L2 learners as a social being with an active role in the materialization of an enriched identity in the context of the new language. Norton, (2010) arguing in favor of investment hypothesis, asserts that investment in language learning can be more facilitative and can present a more comprehensive analysis of language learning process. Within investment hypothesis of L2 learning, L2 learners are provided with an active role as a member of a discourse community; whereas, in motivational approach to L2 learning, L2 learner is visualized as an agent either being or not being motivated. L2 learners who have made an investment in their L2 learning in terms of identity development strive to gain the perfect status of a member of their L2 discourse community. But a motivationally-interested L2 learner seeks to be a perfect speaker of his/her second language. Investment in L2 learning can materialize three objectives: opportunity of reconstruction of identity in a new sociocultural context, possibility of getting through barriers to better understand the L2 speech community, and opening a new channel to see the world and all its sociocultural phenomena from a different and new perspective (Giampapa, 2010). But in other approaches to L2 learning, linguistic flawlessness, communicative perfection, and at most intercultural or pragmatic masteries are sought and probably materialized.

#### **4.4 Investment hypothesis in language learning**

Investment Hypothesis of L2 learning concentrates on the identity that L2 learners try to construct by means of language used in the social interactions. In other words, it emphasizes the importance of L2 learners’ identity constructing efforts and its effects on their L2 learning achievements. Norton (2000) in his “construct of investment” argues that if the presumed identity in the new language that is being learned is of greater value/credit/power in the eyes of the language learner, then language learning process will be facilitated by the positive approach taken by the language learner. Norton and Toohey (2002) believe that when “learners are successful in their bids for more powerful identities, their language acquisition” can be “enhanced” (p. 415). L2 learners who find L2 context a more apt environment to develop their identities would strive harder in their language learning process. Investment is a sociological construct and is congruent with discourse/constructivist approach to identity construction

and language learning, and it provides a socially integrated and interactional base for identity construction and language learning (Dornyei, 2001). Norton (1997), supportive of this belief argues that:

Every time language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction and negotiation. (p. 410)

Weedon (1997) has introduced the idea of *subjectivity* within which the individuals participating in a communicative interaction might be either “subject *of*” or “subject *to*” of the socially constructed power relation. The idea has been employed by Norton in her analyses of investment construct in L2 learning. According to Norton’s idea, the imagined community might provide an opportunity for the L2 learners to be the subject *of* the social interactions and assume an active agentive role in the discursively constructed identity. Morita (2004) in her study on second language learners’ negotiation of identity found that L2 students’ socialization in classroom activities is “closely related to important issues such as identity, competence, power, access, and agency” (p. 574). Toohey, (2005) also found that L2 learning’s success is a matter of “identity construction.” Hui Alice (2008) asserts that in Norton’s Investment Hypothesis “it is identity formation and maintenance which ultimately determines motivation and investment in language learning” (p. 14).

Individuals’ cultural enrichment entitles them to a greater access to material resources of power in their communities. Such privileges are presumably anticipated to be avail to L2 learners by means of being equipped with a new language. This prospect of an identity within an “imagined” speech community, for L2 learners, can bring about a strong propelling force to promote their L2 learning.

#### **4.5 Investment in L2 learning as an additional language**

Andrew and Kearney (2011) have introduced the idea of English as an Additional Language; hence they talk of EADL, rather than EFL or ESL. English or any other language, referred to as a FL or SL, is recognized in the light of their spatial status; therefore, they cannot provide a satisfactory account of the L2 learner who has invested in his L2 to build a new and richer ontological understanding. Norton’s investment in L2 learning portrays a language learner who is to reconstruct an identity to befit the culturally established, and, in Norton’s term, “marketable” norms of the L2

community. The criticisms leveled against acculturation, assimilation, integrations can be raised against Norton's Investment Hypothesis, though with some smaller severities. But investment in an Additional Language (ADL) goes beyond all these localities imposed on human communities and strives to gain a higher human being status with an enriched ontological vision. The term English as an Additional Language (EADL), or any other new languages learned next to the first language, as an ADL can be more explanatory in the analyses of an L2 learner who is investing in L2 learning to open up a new perspective for his identity rather than an L2-befitting identity.

SL/FL learners' investment would be an investment to reconstruct an identity befitting the L2 speaking community norms and in Norton's own word socially "marketable" values. But an Additional Language Learner (ADLL) is not to materialize an identity similar to L2 speakers', rather; he is the one who has invested in the learning of the new language to promote his identity to a level higher than the monolinguals'. An ADLL is to better define and construct his understanding of his relationship to the world by exploring the blind spots of his monolingually-constructed ontological world by means of equipping himself with an additional means, i.e. the additional language he is leaning. An ADLL invests in the new language but not for the sake that the new language's imagined community provides its new speakers with higher and better power position to be entitled to greater privileges in terms of having access to material sources available; rather, an ADLL learner invests in the new language because the new language provides a new perspective to help bring about an ontologically enriched identity.

### 5. Present Study

Culture, due to its sensitive and between-the-line nature, has yielded itself very little to academic studies in EFL context compared with other aspects of EFL. Most studies on identity reconstruction and L2 learning have been in ESL contexts. Little is done on Investment Hypothesis in EFL context in Japan, Turkey, and Hong Kong (Wong, 2009) but culture and language proficiency integration among Iranian EFL students has not been investigated. The construction of identity by means of L2 learning, in terms of cultural personality features, has not been investigated in **the** Iranian EFL graduate context. This study attempted to study the impact of EFL learning on Iranian EFL students' Multicultural Personality Traits (MPT) and its consequential effect on their English language proficiency.

## 6. Research Questions

This study attempted to investigate Iranian MA EFL students' investment in their L2 learning and its consequential impact on their EFL proficiency; therefore, the following research questions were posed to be investigated.

1. Are Iranian MA EFL students' MPTs scores significantly reflective of their gained English language proficiency?
2. In which one of the five subcategories of MPTs [cultural empathy (CE), open-mindedness (OP), social initiative (SI), emotional stability (ES) and flexibility (FL)] are Iranian MA EFL students' scores significantly reflective of their gained English language proficiency?

## 7. Method

### 7.1 Participants

There were 72 Iranian MA EFL students (31 male and 41 female) in this study, 32 of whom were majoring in TEFL, 12 in Literature, and 28 in Translation at Allameh Tabataba'i University. They were classified in three groups, in accordance with their TOEFL scores as High, Mid, and relatively Low-proficiency EFL students.

Table1: MA EFL students' classification based on their TOEFL and MPT scores

Participants	Test taken	Classified groups	TOEFL score	MPQ
72 Iranian EFL Students	TOEFL	HP 30 students	A <sub>1</sub>	B <sub>1</sub>
		MP students		
		LP 30 students	A <sub>2</sub>	B <sub>2</sub>

### 7.2 Instruments

Two instruments were used in this study to measure the participants' personality traits and English language proficiency. The first was Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) developed by Van Oudenhoven & Van Der Zee (1998 & 2001). The second was a truncated version of an actual TOEFL administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 2004.

#### 7.2.1 Multicultural personality questionnaire

In order to assess MPTs of the participants, Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) developed by Van Oudenhoven and Van Der Zee (1998 & 2000) at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands was used. An authentic copy of MPQ, a personality assessment questionnaire measuring the intensity of five personality traits (cultural empathy, open-

mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, and flexibility), was received from Dr. Oudenhoven. It is used to assess individuals' capability of adjustment to other cultures in FL contexts (Van Oudenhoven & Van Der Zee, 2000; Burkard & Ponterotto, 2008).

**7.2.2 TOEFL**

A truncated version of an actual TOEFL which was administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 2004 was administered to assess Iranian MA EFL students' English language proficiency. Listening section of the mentioned test was not administered due to lack of equipment.

**7.3 Data collection procedures**

The participants were assured of the anonymous registry of their answers to reduce their pretentious tendencies of presenting an affected personality different from their genuine real personalities. Participants took MPQ and TOEFL at the same time.

**8. Results**

Participants' MPTs and TOEFL scores are presented in Table 2. Their total MPTs mean was found to be 273.83 out of 400 and their TOEFL mean was 76.58 out of 100. Their detailed descriptive statistics of their personality traits are presented in Table 3.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of means of MA EFL students' TOEFL and MPTs

variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
TOEFL/100	72	53	93	76.58	10.75
MPTE/400	72	218	333	273.83	25.11

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of MPTs of MA EFL Students (N = 72)

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness	
					Statistic	Std. Error
Cultural Empathy	44	76	61.51	7.077	-.050	.283
Open-Mindedness	44	73	58.33	6.384	.236	.283
Social Initiative	32	75	54.65	7.958	.106	.283
Emotional Stability	24	64	48.06	8.602	-.455	.283
Flexibility	36	67	51.28	6.904	.367	.283
Total MPTs	218	333	<b>273.83</b>	25.113	.254	.283

Then, as mentioned earlier, the participants were classified into three groups. Table 4 presents the data collected from High-Proficiency EFL

participants and Table 5 presents the data collected from Low-proficiency EFL participants.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of High-Proficiency EFL students' TOEFL and MPTs

Groups	Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
High-proficiency Group N = 30	TOEFL/100	80	93	86.47	4.15
	CE	49	76	61.63	7.27
	OP	49	72	58.30	5.70
	SI	32	75	54.20	9.14
	ES	24	61	48.17	8.40
	FL	36	66	51.20	6.32
	MPTe	236	333	273.50	23.49

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of Low-Proficiency EFL students' TOEFL and MPTs

Groups	Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low-proficiency Group N = 30	TOEFL/100	53	76	66.27	7.33
	CE	44	72	60.33	6.94
	OP	44	69	56.70	6.08
	SI	39	65	53.53	6.11
	ES	31	58	46.40	8.41
	FL	40	67	49.27	6.06
	MPTe	218	304	266.23	21.12

The relationship between TOEFL and MPTs was investigated using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient. There was a small, positive correlation between the two variables (2-tailed) [ $r = .23$ ,  $n = 72$ ]. The analyses done on the collected data on the relationships between TOEFL and every one of MPTs' subcomponents also indicated a small, positive correlation between TOEFL and subcomponents of MPTs. (Table 6)

Table 6: Correlation between MPTs' subcomponents and TOEFL of all EFL students

Variables	TOEFL	MPTe	CE	OP	SI	ES	FL
TOEFL	1	.23	.07	.17	.08	.22	.23

In the following stage, EFL students were categorized in accordance with their TOEFL scores as High-Proficiency (HP) and low-proficiency (LP) EFL students and then the correlations between HP and LP groups' MPTs and their TOEFL scores were sought. The findings in this stage were

significantly meaningful (Tables 7 and 8). There was a large and strong positive correlation between HP EFL students' English language proficiency and MPTs [ $r = .62, n = 30$ ]. But for the LP EFL students there was very little correlation [ $r = .012, n = 30$ ]. The correlations between MPTs' subcomponents and EFL proficiency in HP and LP EFL groups, as presented in Tables 7 and 8, revealed the following results:

- There was a large and strong, positive correlation between TOEFL and MPTs of HP group. [ $r = .62, n = 30$ ]. But there was no significant correlation found in LP group [ $r = .01, n = 30$ ].
- There was a large and strong, positive correlation between TOEFL and Open-Mindedness *only* in HP group [ $r = .50, n = 30$ ].
- There was a large and strong, positive correlation between TOEFL and Emotional Stability in HP group [ $r = .42, n = 30$ ].
- There was a medium and positive correlation between TOEFL and Flexibility in HP group [ $r = .465, n = 30$ ].
- But there were no outstanding correlations in LP group between their TOEFL and MPTs.

Table 7: Correlation between EFL proficiency and MPTs in the HP group

Group	Variables	TOEFL
High- proficiency EFL students N=30	TOEFL	1
	MPTs	.62
	Cultural Empathy	.31
	Open-Mindedness	.50
	Social Initiative	.32
	Emotional Stability	.42
	Flexibility	.46

Table 8: Correlation between EFL proficiency and MPTs in the LP group

Group	Variables	TOEFL
High- proficiency EFL students N=30	TOEFL	1
	MPTs	.01
	Cultural Empathy	-.21
	Open-Mindedness	-.07
	Social Initiative	-.11
	Emotional Stability	.22
	Flexibility	.17

### 9. Discussion

The collected data and the conducted analyses revealed that the relationship between MPTs and EFL Proficiency of *total* EFL students was too low ( $r = .238$ ). But when the EFL students were categorized into three groups in accordance with their TOEFL scores: High-Proficiency, Mid-Proficiency and Low-Proficiency EFL students, the data analyses on HP and LP groups disclosed interesting results. The correlation between MPTs and TOEFL in the HP EFL students was outstandingly high ( $r = .62$ ), whereas in the LP group it was very low ( $r = .01$ ). High positive correlations between TOEFL scores and OP ( $r = .5$ ), ES ( $r = .4$ ), and FL ( $r = .4$ ) were only found in the HP group. But there were *no* significant correlations between TOEFL and MPTs and its subcategories in the Low-Proficiency group.

The above findings, indicating strong correlations between MPTs, OP, ES, and FL of HP EFL students and their EFL proficiency, significantly confirm the fact that there are significant contributions from EFL students' MPTs development in their L2 milieu to their L2 proficiency achievements. Therefore, the null hypothesis for the first research question is rejected and it can be concluded that Iranian MA EFL students' MPTs scores are significantly reflective of their gained English language proficiency. The existence of high correlations between MPTs and three of its subcomponents (Op, ES, and FL) in the HP EFL students but no such correlations in LP group can be interpreted as HP Group's greater investment in EFL as a means of developing an enriched personal identity in these three fields. Therefore, the answer to the second research question is that OP, ES, and FL are the three subcategories of MPTs that are significantly reflective of Iranian MA EFL students' English language proficiency.

High-proficiency EFL students possessing higher MPTs than Low-Proficiency group is confirmatory of the idea that there is a very close connection between EFL students MPTs and their EFL proficiency. These two features, i.e. HP in English language and high MPTs were seen to be running abreast in all parts of this study and either one's presence proved to be a guarantee of the other one's existence. This finding is also in line with sociocultural constructive approach to language leaning and specifically L2 learning calls the attention to the fact that L2 classes should be looked at as a social setting in which students should be promoted to the level of active social beings who are to develop personalities of a higher/richer quality; otherwise, with students recognized just as present participants, new language learning, in its *perfect* sense, cannot be materialized. Personality development in L2 learning deserves to be paid a greater attention. This type of approach that provides the human face for language classes need to be supported. The social aspect of human life needs to be established in



language classes to facilitate both language learning and personality/identity/cultural development for these two cannot be detached from each other. Contents of every language, i.e. its speakers' culture, and its form are well integrated into each other and their combined entity contributes a great deal to its speakers' personality and identity. L2 learners who have opened the eyes of their mind to this genuine constituting characteristic of language would be in a better position to gain higher levels in their L2 learning efforts.

HP EFL students gaining and possessing a higher level of MPTs ( $M = 273.50$ ), whereas LP group gaining relatively a lower level of MPTs ( $M = 266.23$ ) is reflective of the fact that HP group had already recognized that cultural elements are infused in language and if they are to learn the language in its totality, they have to facilitate their language learning efforts with some means to recognize these cultural peculiarities and then gain them. Three subcategories of MPTs - OP, ES, and FL - that were found having high positive correlations with TOEFL scores in HP EFL students have high contributory role in helping EFL students to prepare the ground for recognition and mastery of cultural elements of the new language. Open-mindedness, that is the capacity to be open and unprejudiced when encountering different people and cultures with different values and norms, is indispensable for understanding the rules and values of other cultures and coping with them in an effective manner. People who score high on open-mindedness have an open and unprejudiced attitude towards other cultural values and norms and are open to new ideas and will easily overcome the cultural barriers creating difficulties for L2 learners (Van Der Zee & Oudenhoven, 2001). L2 learners with high Emotional Stability will also be more competent in remaining calm in stressful situations and cope well with psychological and emotional discomfort. Lack of emotional stability can lead to frustration, tension, fear, social detachment, and interpersonal conflicts all of which can hamper L2 learning process. The third outstanding personality feature with high correlation with high L2 proficiency in HP EFL students was flexibility which is associated with people's ability to adjust their behavior to new and unknown situations. When faced with different cultures, individuals with high flexibility are able to change strategies and manage to find ways to balance the new with the old. People who score high on flexibility perceive new and unknown situations as pleasing challenge and stretch their mental scopes far enough to digest new and different cultural features existing in their L2. Highly flexibility L2 learners are able to change behavioral patterns in response to unexpected circumstances within another culture. People who score low in this feature see new and unknown situations as a threat and prefer to take shelter in their

already accustomed safe socio-cultural world that would deprive them of having a direct impression of the cultural values of their L2 and this finally will result in relative low L2 proficiency.

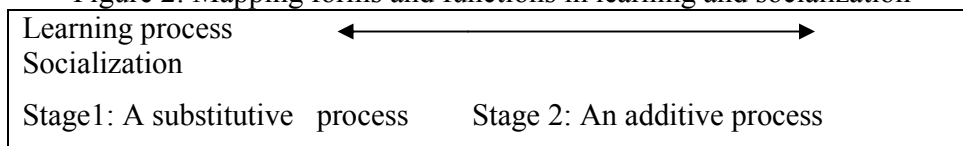
### 10. Implications

In the discussions and studies on L2 learning, L2 learners' Individual Differences (IDs) have been excessively investigated, but L2 learner *himself* has been completely forgotten. Mankind during the course of his/her phylogenetic development invented language to provide a physically manifestable and consequently communicable and transferable means for the meanings and thoughts generated in his/her mind. But language, invented to serve the mankind, grew strong enough to dominate thinking and meaning-generating process. It gradually gained credit and equated itself with its content, i.e. meaning, culture, and identity. Language finally took the lead and superseded the culture and meaning and enshrouded mankind in itself.

L2 learning, which is truly the means to help every L2 learner to crack his linguistic cocoon and open the eyes of their mind to see themselves anew and at least as a two-color winged beings has attracted all the attention to itself and L2 learners as individuals with desires to fly higher by means of the new wing gained are altogether forgotten. SLL, without Investment Hypothesis, is all dealing with the perfection of the means, i.e. perfect flawless L2 mastery. But Investment Hypothesis is shifting the attention to the aim of being a bifocal, two-dimensionally receptive and creative individual. This individual sees L2 not as a SL or a FL but as an Additional Language (ADL) which provides a means to get over the limitations imposed on thought and meaning-generating process by a single language.

In light of investment hypothesis, L2 students' Form/Function mapping should be hypothetically placed along a continuum of Learning an L2 and Experiencing an ADL. *Learning* process is void of any meaningful genuine socialization and just provides L2 learners with the knowledge of L2 language; whereas, on the other end of the continuum, L2 students *experience* perfect meaningful interactions with their ADL elements, i.e. socialization and valorization that constitute the foundation of a new ontological understanding take place and consequentially an enriched identity is forged.

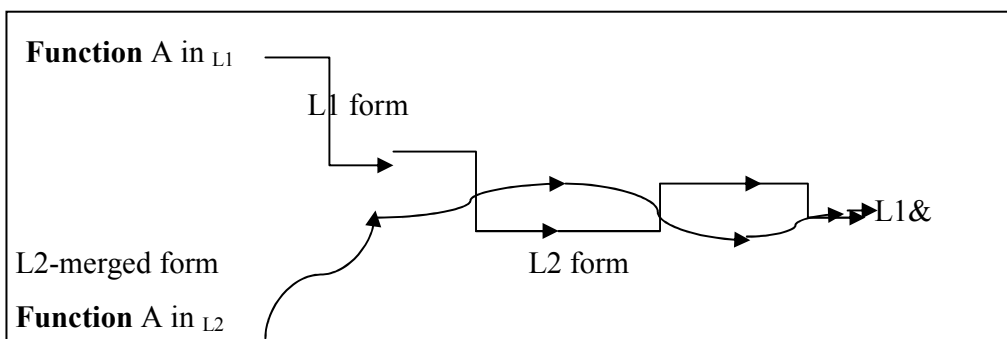
Figure 2: Mapping forms and functions in learning and socialization



In learning process, identity of functions in L1 and L2 are taken for granted and new L2 forms to express the already-existing L1 functions are just *learned*, i.e. new L2 forms are mapped on old L1 functions. But in socialization process, an acquisition-like *adding process* is experienced by means of socialization in which new L2 functions are first recognized and perceived as independent entities and are mapped with their own proper L2 forms. L2 learning will not yield a new valorization; therefore, cannot nurture any new ontological realizations to lay the foundation of an enriched identity on. But at the socialization end, the association of forms and functions in L2 is independent from similar associations in L1. L2 *experiencers* by means of valorization will have a new opportunity to improve their cognitive capabilities and gain richer identities. L2 *learner* will map his L1 with L2 but L2 *experiencer* will open his first-language-like new-category-creating capability and create new entities for functions in their L2 and associate them with their own L2 forms. L2 *learner* will only produce an L2-copy of his L1, but L2 *experiencer* will create every aspect of his L2 anew and with this creation he/she will gain a new understanding and consequently a new and value-added identity.

Perfect identity construction in the Investment Hypothesis of L2 learning that is even one stage further than the *experiencing* process is called here *merging* process (Figure 3). In *merging* process, an L2 student merges his L1 world with his L2 world and creates a world anew that is truly not only larger than each of his L or L2 worlds but also richer than the sum of both.

Figure 3: Mapping forms and functions in an integrated process in investment theory of L2 learning



Stage 3: L1 and L2 merging process

## 11. Conclusion

L2 learners' investment in L2 leaning to develop an enriched personality and its influential role in their L2 proficiency investigated in this study revealed that it will help them to gain both high English language proficiency and a richer personal identity. High EFL proficiency was found to be concomitant with high Multicultural Personality Traits (MPTs) and specifically with high Open-mindedness, Emotional Stability, and Flexibility. It was confirmed that MPTs gained by EFL students have high positive correlations with EFL proficiency only in high proficiency EFL students and not in low proficiency ones; therefore, it can be concluded that the higher the MPTs achievements, the higher the L2 proficiency.

L2 learners' recognition of the possibilities offered to them in their L2 and their desire to use them to improve their ontological understandings and personalities provides them with greater personal satisfactions that will boost their language learning efforts, and they will joyfully pursue an enriched image of themselves as perfect bilinguals. The *process* through which this perfect L2 mastery is materialized starts with *L2 learning*, goes through *L2 valorizing or experiencing*, and results in *L1/L2 merging*. Based on these three stages of L2, several interesting hypotheses can be strongly proposed:

1. L2 proficiency can gradually increase as L2 students move from *L2 learning* to *L2 experiencing* and *L2/L1 merging*.
2. Personality development can gradually improve and get richer as L2 students move from *L2 learning* to *L2 experiencing* and *L2/L1 merging*.
3. *L2 learners* will be monolingual in terms of meta-lingual phenomena; whereas, *L2 experiencers* will develop a bi-conceptual view point of the meta-lingual world and an *L1/L2 merger* will create the bi-conceptual world of L2 experiencer and then merge the two and create a world of understanding richer than the sum of both.
4. From a pedagogical point of view, *L2 learners'* motivation will gradually erode as they go further with their *L2 learning*. Because in their mapping of L2 functions with L1 forms, they will have frustrating experiences of frequent mismatches between L2 functions and L1 forms. But the creative efforts of *L2 experiencers* and *mergers* in constructing new conceptual entities in their L2 F/F mapping will improve their cognitive system and provide them with a pleasant sense of success and achievement that will be an omnipotent and omnipresent propeller for their L2 learning motivation.

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