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**The new social identity formation as a consequence of second  
language learning**

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## **Introduction**

The object of this thesis is to analyze the interrelation between the new social identity formation and second language acquisition in the intercultural context. Based on the poststructuralist approach, identity is conceptualized as fluid and dynamic, and its formation and acknowledgment occur during an interaction by means of the discourse practices in the process defined as identity negotiation. Discourse, in this sense, constitutes a communicative system associated with power relations among individuals. Everything that individuals know about a certain phenomenon might be expressed through the discourse and, therefore, the more it is known and internalized, the easier it becomes to deal with the interactive situations, whereby the social identity of the individuals is being shaped and negotiated.

The key role of the interaction in the identity formation process becomes more vivid when the rules regulating the interactive process among individuals change. In these situations, the individuals are no longer capable of positioning themselves in a way they want to be perceived by others. This especially concerns the adult immigrants, who were forced by certain circumstances or decided to leave their original communities and to relocate to the new socio-cultural context characterized by different behavioral and interactive features. These new characteristics, in addition, are affected by the underlying norms and values of the local socio-cultural communities. Therefore, the lack of resources to decode the cultural scripts might undermine the achievement of the desired social identity recognition. This might lead to a sense of vulnerability and acculturative stress in individuals, activating several identity defense mechanisms including the avoidance of the interactive situations in unfamiliar socio-cultural environments.

Resistance to the receiving socio-cultural community might become an issue when individuals need to acquire the language of this community (L2). As a matter of fact, while interacting with the members of the receiving community, not only the individuals might learn and practice the L2, but they could also acquire other forms of semiotic behavior, required in order to shape new social identities which could be recognized and accepted by the members of the local group. These new social identities constitute a resource for the individuals' to approach the new social conditions. Namely, when the context changes, the individual's self is naturally induced to adapt to the new circumstances, by creating a new

social identity deemed suitable for handling the daily life challenges of the new context. Hence, the immigrants find themselves in a situation wherein in order to have a chance for a better social position, they need to learn to negotiate their identities in accordance with the local discourses and the interactive features, in order to be decoded and acknowledged by the local cultural group.

Simultaneously, in order to acquire the local language and culturally-based interactive patterns, the individuals need to engage in interaction with the members of the host community. However, as stated earlier, interacting in unfamiliar social situations might be a destabilizing experience due to various misunderstandings and cultural clashes, which, in turn, might lead to the resistance of the receiving community. Besides, due to the little control over the local discourse practices, the immigrants might be assigned a lower position due to unequal power relations between the newcomers and the host community. This, similarly, will lead the immigrants to avoid social interactions with the locals, foreclosing the immigrants' chances for higher L2 competence and a better social position. This constitutes a paradoxical situation resulting from several identity factors, which will be addressed in this analysis.

At the beginning of the thesis, the new approach to identity will be illustrated. Previously, identity was conceived as a fixed and unitary product of several environmental features that affect the individual. The poststructuralist approach changes the idea of identity viewing it as fluid and subject to change in interaction. The individuals' identities are no longer considered as a consequence of culturally determined structures, they are rather considered as negotiated in interaction. Hence, since interacting is an act, social identity construction is considered in terms of human agency.

In the next section, the nature of social identity will be analyzed and the relationship between the self and social identity will be explored. The individuals' natural tendency to belong induces them to shape their identity in conformity with expectations of the members of the significant group or category. At the same time, within the group, the individuals occupy certain roles, and they generally tend to conform to the behavioral patterns ascribed to these roles. After that, the nature of the personal identity in relation to the social identity will be briefly explained, and the concept of identity salience will be addressed.

In the next section, the nature of the discourse and the identity negotiation process will be illustrated. Moreover, the concepts of performativity and the issues concerning power relations between groups will be addressed. In the following sections, the identity dimensions will be discussed. In fact, the identity might be observed from different identity domains: the self-image domain and situation-based domain involving secondary identities. The identities belonging to the self-image domain generally persist over time, and usually, the individuals are unaware of those identities, unless they move to a different context, characterized by different culturally determined interactive and behavioral patterns. Following the assumption, the various issues concerning identity negotiation in the multicultural context will be explored. After that, the process of intercultural adaptation and various factors affecting it will be discussed. Generally, the factors might be system-level associated with the socio-economic condition of the receiving community, individual-level factors concern various factors associated with certain personal characteristics, attitudes, and experiences of the individuals, and interpersonal level factors describing relevant interpersonal connections, required in order to protect their vulnerable identities and better adapt to the new conditions.

As a consequence of intercultural adaptation, individuals become aware that there is a certain interrelation between social identity and displayed behavior, therefore, individuals might start to imitate certain behavioral and interactive patterns in order to be recognized, understood, and accepted by the members of the host community. These imitations are generally followed by the internalization of certain behavior features, which, in turn, will affect the new identity formation (behavioral shift). Then, such notions as the acculturation process, acculturative stress, and cultural shock will be analyzed. In the last section of the first chapter, the notion of identity salience is further explored.

Following the assumption that language learning occurs by participating in communicative events with members of the host community, in the second chapter, the nature of these interactive situations will be explored and the identity transformation process, that the immigrants generally undergo by acquiring their second language, will be discussed.

In the first section, the nature of the interaction between the newcomers and the members of the receiving community will be observed. The second section concerns identity negotiation in the intercultural context. Since the interaction occurs in a different language this type of interaction will induce the new identity formation in an additional language. Besides, identity

negotiation occurs through the discourse practices, and in order to acquire the meaning of the local discourses, individuals need to participate in communities of practice in the receiving context. In the third section, the factors affecting intercultural communication will be further explored. Such notions as intercultural competence, misunderstandings, and cultural clashes will be analyzed. The following section illustrates the nature of the social situations in which intergroup interactions occur. Later, the nature of the language identity will be explored and the notion of audibility will be introduced.

Since the acquisition of the L2 occurs in a specific social context, the nature of this context should be taken into account. Intercultural interaction is a delicate process, affecting several identity mechanisms of the interactants. Besides, the interactive situations involve several underlying cultural norms and values, specific to each cultural context. Each society is characterized by its own immigration and linguistic history, which might affect the general perception of the intercultural interactive situation of both the immigrant and the members of the receiving community. Italy, in this regard, constitutes a very particular case, characterized by both a controversial migration history and a unique sociolinguistic and plurilingualism pattern.

In the third chapter, a brief account of the immigration history in Italy will be proposed and the primary laws regulating the immigration flows and integration of the immigrants will be illustrated. Later, the current situation concerning the legal and social position of the immigrants in Italy will be discussed.

Linguistic policies in Italy reflect the role of the single common national language historically considered as the key feature for national unity and identity. This led to monolingual schooling aiming to reduce the usage of other language varieties (the subtractive language policy). The plurilinguistic context in Italy, already challenging on the national level, was newly tried by the arrival of the new minority languages in the country.

Council of Europe proposed the guidelines for linguistic integration, by offering general indications of how the second language training should be programmed in order to guarantee effective language acquisition and integration of the individuals in the new society. It highlights the importance of the additive approach to language teaching and proposes different forms of linguistic integration.



The last chapter of this analysis includes the quantitative research aiming to determine how the general characteristics of the immigrants arriving in Italy in adolescence or in the adult age are affecting their general attitude toward the host society and, in particular, toward the interactive situation with the members of the host community.

The object is to determine whether the higher degree of integration, based on such criteria as L2 competence, level of education, personal relationships, length of stay, and the intentions concerning their permanence in Italy, will correspond to the better attitude of the participants. Besides, the acknowledgment, by the participants of the key role of the L2 in social integration will be measured. Finally, it will be explored what factors, grouped in three general categories (social, cultural, contextual), are more responsible for the desire of the participant to interact with that member of the host community.

## **Chapter 1: Identity change as a consequence of social interaction in a multicultural context**

In this chapter the concept of social identity will be illustrated. According to the poststructuralist approach, the identity is not fixed and unitary, as it was previously conceived, but rather fluid and subject to change in interaction. Therefore, since interacting is an act, social identity construction is considered in terms of human agency. Besides, the individuals' natural tendency to belong induces them to shape their identity in conformity with expectations of the members of the significant group or category. At the same time, within the group, the individuals occupy certain roles, and they generally tend to conform to the behavioral patterns ascribed to these roles. The identity is formed in interactions by means of the discourse, in a process called identity negotiation. In this process, various issues associated with the unequal power relation between the individuals and groups, might arise. As was stated above, identity is not a unitary unit, but it consists of different identity domains. Some of these domains are relatively fixed, while others are situation-based. Various interactive contexts might induce the activation of different identity domains.

### *1.1. From the structure to the agency (theoretical account)*

The interest in identity dates back to Western European Enlightenment and it remains a popular concept among many contemporary social scientists and social linguists. In the late nineteenth century, scholars in psychology and psychiatry put the concept of self in the foreground. The driving force behind this growing interest in identity is the process of secularization in the industrializing world, followed by the human rights arising together with social mobility endorsement. One of the consequences of such processes is that the main focus of the inquiry, conducted by the social scientists, shifted from the other-worldly activities, namely religion, to the worldly activities that concern human beings as individuals. In analyzing the individuals, the scholars started distancing themselves from such notions as stability, function, and structure. The idea of fixed demographic categories, such as gender or ethnicity, was replaced by the conception of these categories as fluid and unstable, setting up the prerequisites for the notion of individual agency, a namely certain degree of power to act in a given environment in order to achieve the desired social goals (Block, 2007).

More recently, the general approach to identity, popular among social theorists, sociologists, and social linguists, is strongly influenced by the notions related to poststructuralism, a theory rejecting previously established ideas of structuralism, which implied the “search for universal laws or rules of human behavior” (Block, 2007, p. 14). The structuralist scholars were convinced of the existence of the universal and invariant laws of humanity, operating at all levels of human life. The self, according to this view, was considered as a product of the social conditions that affected the self’s formation. In short, the nature of the individuals was predetermined by their cultural environment. And the culture, in turn, was conceived as a “relatively fixed worldview with rigid behavioral scripts and a limited number of artifacts attributed to the particular group of people” (Block, p. 2007).

Generally, the idea of biological and social factors being unique, or at least the most relevant conditions responsible for the individuals’ formation, belongs to essentialism. According to this view, socially defined groups were assumed to be characterized by a set of cultural and biological features, considered to be inherent to this group of individuals. These features constituted an explanation for the behavioral pattern of the specific group of individuals (Block, 2007). The view that considers biological characteristics to be decisive for the displayed behavior of certain groups is called biological determinism. The strong form of this theory claims that individuals are what their genes make them. In a broad sense, it is thought to be a correlation between the biological characteristics of individuals, such as skin color or biological sex, and their displayed behavior (Block, 2007).

The language was also viewed through the essentialist perspective. Namely, it has been assumed that each person was assigned a corresponding language, specific to this social group. Besides, speaking a certain language meant being a certain kind of person. Therefore, it was used for ideological purposes, since it has been long considered as strictly related to the individuals’ social identity and represented a medium for the power regulation in the society (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). Thus, according to the specific ideology featured in the society, a certain number of personal and cultural traits, and even certain types of activities and moral values, might be ascribed to the speaker of a particular language.

According to Pavlenko & Blackledge (2001), the use of the language for social and political purposes is still a common practice in many modern societies. The scholars, therefore, introduced the term misrecognition, in reference to the process whereby the standard

language variety is considered to have “greater moral, esthetic and/or intellectual worth than contesting languages or varieties” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2001, p. 247) The very conception that there are distinct languages associated with specific people is a product of the nationalist ideology inculcations. In practice, the ideologically homogeneous nation-states are constantly changing, and their symbolic boundaries are altered according to the dominant view that prevails among the groups in a particular society. Moreover, Pavlenko & Blackledge (2001) claim that within the same group, certain circumstances might induce individuals to use distinct languages or language variations to achieve specific communicative goals. This assumption might be considered as an additional argument against the position that presumes a symbolic association between language and a social group.

Hence, the assumed existence of homogeneous monolingual and monocultural societies constitutes a monocultural bias. As a matter of fact, the symbolic boundaries separating one social group from another are not so clearly defined and the individuals are not merely moving from one precise social group to another. This dynamic becomes more apparent when individuals decide or are forced to abandon their original social group, i.e. their in-group, and to enter into a new socio-cultural context to which they might choose to acculturate to a certain degree, for instance, by acquiring the language of the host community; and by this, to become culturally more similar to the members of the out-group. Thus, neither cultures nor individuals’ cultural identities should be considered as fixed and static. The cultures are continuously subject to internal modifications and adjustments as a result of the inevitable interaction between the dominant culture and the various subcultures. Moreover, socio-cultural environments are affected and transformed following the arrival of individuals with different cultural backgrounds (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001).

Following these considerations, poststructuralism conceptualizes the world's framework as fluid and multi-leveled rather than as a sum of the interrelated rigid structures; and social identity, in this regard, is reinterpreted and conceptualized as multiple, non-unitary, and subject to change. In fact, rather than considering the language as the cause and the explanation for individuals’ personal characteristics and behavioral patterns, language and identity are assumed to have a mutually constructive relationship (Norton, 1995; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). Identities, in this regard, are defined and expressed by using the terms and other linguistic resources supplied by language, and simultaneously the interaction constitutes a process by which social identities are constructed and acknowledged. This conception leads

to a more ethnographically oriented sociolinguistic approach which considers the identities “as fluid and constructed in linguistic interaction” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001, 245). Language in this view is conceived as a metaphoric ground for identity formation which, in turn, is affected by the major ideological structures and discursive practices that permeate a specific socio-cultural context. Therefore, the term used to refer to the process of identity construction and reconstruction during an interaction is negotiation. As claimed by Pavlenko & Blackledge (2001): “the individuals’ identities are always in a constant process of negotiation and renegotiation” (p. 252). This view attributes to the individuals a higher degree of agency in their identity formation. In this respect, in fact, identity might be understood as a synonym of subject position, meaning that the individuals are attributed a certain degree of control over the way they desire to be recognized and perceived during the interaction process in the specific socio-cultural context.

The analysis of the interrelation between the individuals and the society offers several perspectives on identity and the outcomes of the intergroup interactions for identity formation. Nevertheless, it is not sufficiently clear why, after entering a new socio-cultural environment and despite being members of the same ethnolinguistic group with similar socio-economic status, some individuals are more inclined to acquire the language of the host community (L2) than the others. Considering the assumption that social identity is negotiated and constructed in social interaction, learning the language appears to be an imperative condition for being able to operate in a new environment. However many individuals appear reluctant or even unable to achieve the desired outcomes. To better understand the reasons for such heterogeneity, other psychological and social factors need to be considered. As a matter of fact, an intergroup interaction, namely the communicative exchange between the newcomers and the members of the host community, is often governed by the relation of power and domination between the individuals belonging to different social groups. In this sense, acquiring and enhancing L2 competence represents the key to escaping the situation of social inequality (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001).

To sum up, the notion of identity is initially conceived as a fixed and unitary product of several environmental features that affect the individual. According to this perspective, individuals had little chance to avoid their destiny and to be assigned any different identity if not the one predetermined by the socio-cultural conditions. The poststructuralist approach changes the idea of identity viewing it as fluid and subject to change in interaction. Thus, the

interaction becomes an essential condition for identity construction and reconstruction. This interrelation between social interaction and identity formation is especially apparent when individuals move from one socio-cultural community to the new one. In these circumstances, individuals face the need to adapt to the new context, understand it and eventually become part of it. Namely, they need to find the appropriate way to position themselves based on their desired identity option. To achieve satisfying adaptation results, individuals need to learn how to act in their host community in order to be recognized, understood, and accepted as legitimate members of society. The more effective method to do so is through the interaction with the members of the host community since only by recognizing and acquiring the specific communicative and behavior patterns, individuals will achieve some degree of control over the way they are being perceived. Hence, the intergroup interaction, in this sense, has a double function, namely, it constitutes an important resource for the second language acquisition (SLA), along with the other interactive features, while simultaneously serving as a metaphoric setting for the identity negotiation. These functions of the intergroup interactions suggest that SLA is socially, as well as psychologically, a very delicate process. To analyze this process, the notion of social identity, identity change, and intercultural communication will be further explored.

## *1.2. Social identity*

Before analyzing the internal process that individuals' identities undergo in the intergroup interaction and specifically when it constitutes the resource for the L2 acquisition and an opportunity for the learning of various forms of cultural knowledge, the notion of social identity will be better explored.

According to Cinoglu & Arikan (2012), social identities are assigned to the individuals during the interaction with members of various social groups, through the process named identity negotiation, whereby the individuals negotiate their meanings and statuses.

### *1.2.1 The relationship of the self and social identity*

Ting-Toomy (1999) defines social identity as “an individual's conceptualization of the self that derives from memberships in emotionally significant categories or groups” (p. 27). In this definition, the scholar underlines the reflexive nature of the self, capable of taking itself

as an object and of categorizing, classifying, or naming itself in certain ways according to the social categories or classifications that are present in the context (Stets & Burke, 2000). Thus, the selves, in this sense, are conceived as dynamic entities that interpret and reinterpret their environments transforming themselves into what is known as social identity (Cinoglu & Arikan, 2012). Individuals, hence, construct, experience, and communicate their identities, viewed as reflective self-images, while interacting with the members of different groups in a particular social context (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Identity formation is a process whereby individuals recognize and internalize the roles that are expected from them or that are assigned to them by social groups, in the process called self-categorization or identification (Stets & Burke, 2000). According to this view, the self constructs a new identity based on what is perceived as required by the social context or a group. The factors, consequently, affect the new identity formation of the self. In this regard, identity might be understood as a combination of the ideas formed by the self in accordance with the recognized categories and assessing criteria prevalent in a particular social context. The ideas might regard different aspects of the self such as culture, gender, ethnicity, and other personality traits (Ting-Toomey 1998). When, however, individuals recognize themselves as distinct from society, they might attribute to themselves particular meanings in a process called self-concept or self-awareness (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). Although during their lifetime individuals form a unique self-concept by going through different social categories, they are born, however, in already structured societies. And they tend therefore to derive their sense of self or identity from the preexisting social categories to which they belong (Stets & Burke, 2000). Following this assumption, there are certain social processes and factors inducing the self into identity formation, in conformity with specific social beliefs, norms, and values spread in a particular culture. The self, accordingly, recognizes, possesses, and internalizes several social positions, and for each position, or social status, the self produces and displays the identity assumed as appropriate for the given social situation (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012). The self uses the identities to better operate in different social circumstances, thus the social identities represent an instrument for interacting with others. This leads to the idea of identity as flexible by nature, given its capacity to change according to the specific context or in order to meet the expectations of society or other identities. The identities, thus, acquire their meanings in the interaction with other identities.

These assumptions imply the existence of certain external and internal factors, or structures, affecting the identity formation process. This view is based on the fact that individuals find themselves adapting to the previously structured social norms and behavioral patterns. In this condition, individuals might not always be in total control over their identity options. It has been argued, however, in Cinoğlu & Arikani (2012) that individuals might still have some degree of choice over different behavior options within the limits of the structure, which constitutes another aspect of identity which is agency. According to Stets and Bruce (2000) in fact, when individuals find themselves in the situation presenting some sort of disturbance, such as situational factors or the previous actions of the self, which might affect the perception of the individuals by the others, they might take some action to modify or to gain some control over the situation.

### *1.2.2. Social identity theory and identity theory*

According to the social identity theory, human beings are social organisms and in order to survive, they need to feel a symbolic connection with the individuals considered to be alike. For these reasons, they have a natural tendency to construct their identities in conformity with the norms and expectations that characterize the social context in which they are situated. In short, people tend to maintain a certain perception of themselves according to the identity standards in the given environment. The reasons behind the individual tendency for self-categorization might regard the need to feel less vulnerable and more worthy, which is called a self-esteem motive, while at the same time to be perceived by others as competent and effective, referring to self-efficacy motive (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Following the assumption that major identity needs of the individuals are feeling attached to the significant groups or categories and meeting the expectation ascribed to certain social roles in a particular social context, the notion of identity needs to be observed from two theoretical perspectives. The view that considers individuals based on the roles they play in relation to the other identities within a structured society is referred to as identity theory; while the theory which observes individuals as integral parts of certain categories or groups, is called social identity theory (Stets & Burke, 2000). In substance, according to these perspectives, each individual inevitably occupies a role and at the same time belongs to a group. In this regard, Ting-Toomey (1999) claims that individuals relate to themselves through two types of perception, namely the intergroup-based and interpersonal-based



perceptions. The former corresponds to the social identity theory's view on identity; while the latter, similar to the identity theory emphasizes, the relationship between different identities.

As has been claimed by Stets and Burke (2000), individuals categorize themselves as members of a certain group, but while being a member of a group each individual enacts a particular role in this group. By that, they are socially integrated organically to their groups or categories, through social identities, and they are integrated mechanically through their role identities within groups. Besides, both kinds of identities - the role identities and the social identities - are always and simultaneously affecting the perception and displayed behavior of the individuals.

#### *1.2.2.1. The role-identity*

As it has been indicated above, in the identity theory, individuals function as constituent parts of the structured society, they recognize each other and relate to one another as holders of different social positions or roles, characterized by certain meanings and expectations ascribed to these roles (Stets & Burke, 2000). Moreover, the behavior of the individuals occupying a certain social position is affected by the performance of their role, since individuals act to fulfill the expectations of this role. Indeed, according to the authors, there is a certain correlation between the meanings ascribed to the occupying role and the behavioral patterns displayed by individuals, while enacting that role, in the interaction context. Thus, the behaviour that accompanies the role presents and preserves the meanings associated with the role, also in relation to the other roles. The central cognitive process whereby individuals associate certain behavioural norms and meanings to their cognitive representation of this role is referred to as self-verification. During this process, the individuals tend to act in conformity with the identity standards (Stets & Burke, 2000). In short, certain perceptions and actions associated with the specific roles constitute the base for the individuals' role identity formation process. Besides, the role identity is conceived in relation to the other social roles, or counter roles. Indeed, despite being conceived as distinct from the other roles, the specific role's existence only makes sense if acknowledged and accepted by the counter roles.

Relations within the group, in this sense, are reciprocal rather than parallel. The group, in this regard, consists of a set of interrelated individuals each of whom performs unique but

interrelated activities. To function within a group, each role must be able to rely on reciprocity and exchange relations with other roles. Besides, several forms of interaction and negotiation usually imply a role-performance, and each member of the interaction context is directly involved in the role performance.

#### *1.2.2.2. The group-identity*

In the definition proposed in the previous chapter concerning the relationship between the self and social identity Ting-Toomy (1999) claims that the perceived “membership in emotionally significant categories or groups” (p. 27) is at the basis of the social identity formation process. Indeed, according to social identity theory, the notion of social identity corresponds to the individuals’ awareness of being tied to certain groups in which individuals perceive themselves as representatives of the same social category. Namely, they acknowledge having a number of characteristics of the same social nature as the other members of the same group.

The individuals who are considered to be similar to the self, are referred to as in-group; those who differ are categorized as out-group. When individuals accentuate the similarities that exist between the self and the other members of the in-group or, on contrary, when they underline the differences between self and the members of the out-group, it is called self-categorization. The dimensions that usually are emphasized during this evaluative process are usually selected with the aim to enhance the position for the self. In fact, the dimensions related to the in-group are judged positively, while those characterizing the out-group are generally judged negatively (Stets & Burke, 2000).

The social categories in which individuals position themselves are socially constructed. And, similarly to the assumption regarding the role identity, whereby a specific role can only be meaningful in the interrelation with the other roles, the social categories, as well, exist only in relation with other categories. In this regard, having a particular social identity implies a certain degree of identification with the members of the same group or category. Individuals see themselves as very alike to the members of certain groups, with whom they share the same group perspectives and hold similar views. This affinity is particularly emphasized when it is used to define the groups’ boundaries leaving outside the members of the outgroup. Indeed, intergroup relationships are formed by positioning ourselves as members of a certain

social group, or the in-group, in comparison with a distinct group, the out-group accordingly. And in-group homogeneity is especially prominent when there are no external or internal factors inducing the individual to separate the self from others within the group. As a matter of fact, in order to assert their distinction and to derive the energy for survival, the groups require the members with similar characteristics and goals, with the same source for reference, with the same ideas, with similar environment and, to some a certain extent, with a similar socio-economic status (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). Finding the individuals who perfectly fit all the groups' standards and expectations is, however, not an easy task. Therefore, the new members are often required to undergo the process of transformation or adaptations by learning the group's rules.

The group identification, or the group-based identity, implies the view of the self as prototypical in the group. The individuals characterized by taking on the group-based identity display, in general, the uniformity of perception and action with the other members of their in-group (Stets & Burke, 2000). The group-based identity, in fact, implies that all actors in the category have the same mutually reinforced perceptions and behaviours. This assumption emphasizes the similarity with others, as an essential criteria for group membership. This loyalty to the in-group practices concerns also the cases in which the individuals are assigned the low-status minority group. In order to distinguish themselves from the outgroup, these individuals will take part in the group activities and they will show their devotion to the group in their behaviour.

Personal identity, on the other hand, refers to the individuals' perception of the self as a unique entity, characterized by a number of the specific attributes and meanings inherent to the individual and distinct from those characterizing the other members of the same social group. This idea of self, formed during a certain period of time, is based on the achieving of the personal objectives which prevail over the community goals. Personal identity might constitute the base for some features of social identity, which are in agreement with personal characteristics and values (Stets & Burke, 2000). At the same time, personal identity might overlap with meanings of social identities.

The central cognitive process whereby, the group-based conception of self as prototypical of the ingroup characterized by the features associated with the specific social category, prevails over the personal identity, this process is referred to as depersonalization. This involves the

individual's acting in accordance with the norms perceived as representative of a specific social category, at the expense of the personal meanings, tendencies, and goals.

Concerning role identity, it has been claimed that in those cases when “the meanings and expectations of the role identities conflict with meanings of personal identity, individuals might disregard the role identity in favor of personal identity” (Stets & Burke 2000, p. 229). Personal identity might prevail over the role identity at the beginning, but once established, the impact of personal identity becomes less influential.

To sum up, being part of a certain social group or taking a particular role are affected by two factors: the identification with the certain category and the detection of prototypical behaviors associated with the category (Stets & Burke, 2000). Individuals, aware of the structured social categories and relationships, act in accordance with that knowledge tending to match the standards relevant to and associated with, the social group the individuals identify themselves with. And, in general, all types of identities need to be balanced by the individual. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), in fact, in the intergroup communication process, individuals need to feel included and accepted by the group of significant others but, at the same time, it is also important for individuals to maintain their sense of uniqueness.

#### *1.2.2.3. Salience*

As has been argued in Stets and Burke (2000), in the presence of certain factors, such as social comparison and normative fit, the individuals' social identities might be induced to prevail over their personal identities. This phenomenon is referred to as activation. This is the process by which the social identity becomes more prominent or more salient, i.e. it has a higher chance to be activated in a social situation when one's membership in a certain group needs to be emphasized. Thus, the activation of identity in a situation is called salience and it constitutes a product of two factors, accessibility - a readiness of a certain social category to become activated, - and fit - a perceived correspondence between the situation and the requirements assigned to a certain social category. Hence, salience might result from the social requirements of a particular situation that arise during an interaction, since an appropriate identity allows individuals to better manage the interaction process and achieve their social or personal goals.

### *1.3. Discourse as the resource of the identity construction*

By underlying the nature of identity as an integral and constitutive part of the social world, the term subjectivity has been proposed Weedon (1987) mentioned in Block (2007). This view on identity emphasizes the interaction of identity with the social world as its integral and constitutive part. In this regard, identity is conceived as a combination of the conscious and unconscious thoughts of the individuals with their emotions and self-perceptions in relation to the social world. Also defined as subject position, the identity in this sense is viewed as contradictory and unstable, subject to change and reconstruction through the discourse (inner talk or social interaction) defined as “[w]hat is known and can be talked about in relation to a particular topic or area” (Block, 2007, p. 18). Hence, the discourses are referred to as resources for identity construction. In this respect, it is a process whereby through language or other semiotic representations, a piece of certain institutionalized knowledge is being produced. This type of knowledge shapes the social practices and sets them into play. In addition to the words, it includes values, beliefs, gestures, and other manifestations of semiotic human activities that serve as an instruction on how to act in order to obtain a desirable social role recognized by others (Block, 2007). Hence, the discursive activity consists of any semiotic behaviour on the part of an individual and counts as the expression of the subject position or subjectivity.

It might occur though that the subject position offered by the discourse is highly distant from the identity option that the individual aspired to, leading to resistance by the individual toward the subject position (Block, 2007). Positioning is a conversational phenomenon referring to “the process by which selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines. Interactive positioning assumes one individual positioning the other, while reflective positioning is the process of positioning oneself” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2001, p. 249). Some instances of reflective positioning are contested by others. This situation is characterized by a certain degree of tension between self-chosen identities and others’ attempts to position them differently (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). As a matter of fact, there exist some contexts in which certain identities can not be negotiable. The identities, instead, are assigned to the individuals by the members of the dominant groups, who find themselves at the higher levels of the power structure, and their positioning might be hard to resist. The resistance of the particular positioning depends on the specific situation and the balance of power relations between the

groups and the individuals concerned (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). Besides, in certain historical periods and in many socio-cultural contexts the positioning could not be contested and the identity negotiation was inconceivable.

Moreover, the notion of performativity, mentioned in Miller and Kubota (2013) refers to those situations in which, as a consequence of social pressure, some individuals, especially minority immigrants, choose a certain subject position even though it is considered marginalized by mainstream society. This might occur in those cases when individuals perceive that it is expected from them to display a certain behaviour or communicative patterns, or to perform a specific identity. Moreover, some individuals decide to identify with non-mainstream culture, despite a larger choice of identity options, because this type of identity assures them a higher social status in the immediate social context they are located in.

Therefore, although individuals could be provided with several identity options, their choice might be restricted by the power relations with the members of the dominant group, who expect a specific identity to be performed by certain individuals, symbolically categorized through the discourse. The individuals might be either unable or unwilling to resist the subject position assigned to them by the dominant group. In other cases, they might decide for an identity option considered to be optimal for them, even though it might lead to an impairment of gaining the cultural capital acknowledged in different social contexts and required to achieve better social conditions (Miller & Kubota, 2013).

The interaction in multilingual contexts is always subject to societal power relations. The dominant majority group might opt for a monolingual, mono-ethnic, mono religious, etc. community as the ideal model of society (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). The self's ability to assume different identities allows individuals to find different solutions to overcome their daily life challenges. Nevertheless, it might also constitute a downside when these identities are not approved by the mainstream society resulting in tension or even in a conflict with the mainstream society (Cinoğlu & Arıkan, 2012). Namely, there is a reciprocal relationship of power between the society and the self and identity formation endeavors.

#### *1.4. Identity dimensions*

Identities might be observed in relation to several identity domains. The self-image domains include primary identities, that is cultural, gender, ethnic, and personal identities. Situational dependent domains, or secondary identities, on the other hand, comprise role, relational and symbolic interaction identities. Secondary identities tend to alter, along with the context changes (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Generally, the behavior, thinking, and communication patterns might be affected by each identity dimension.

The cultural identity, for instance, is conceived as a reflective self-image derived from the cultural socialization processes which consist in acquiring the “values, norms, and core symbols of their cultural and ethnic groups” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 41), also named enculturation. Hence, cultural identities derive from the cultural socialization of the individuals within a specific cultural group. Individuals generally attach the emotional significance to the sense of belonging to the specific culture (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Since it is formed in the early stages of life, cultural identity is hard to detect unless the major cultural differences are met. The individuals, in fact, are generally unaware of the fact that the behavioural norms and the interaction script they practice are mostly culturally predetermined. In fact, the cultural beliefs and values also provide “the implicit standards for evaluating and enacting different identity-related practices” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 43). Besides, cultural identity is characterized by the value dimensions affecting the individuals' behaviour, especially when the individuals' self-image is strongly associated with their culture. Hence, cultural membership and its relative values affect the way the identities are being constructed and perceived. Ethnic identity, on the other hand, derives from the subjective sense of identification with the specific ethnic group with which individuals share common ancestral links across generations (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Personal identities are formed by distinctive life experiences, unique personality traits, and by observing and imitating role models. The personal identity can be actual, referring to the set of characteristics possessed by the individual and recognized by others. When, instead, individuals desire to possess certain attributes, it is called desired personal identity.

The secondary identities instead are characterized by their quality to change in accordance with the several situational factors such as interaction goals, the roles of the interlocutors, their relationship, and other activities occurring in the situation affecting the identity salience, namely the degree of importance and commitment to a certain identity. The role identity, for instance, designates a number of expected behavior and the associated values ascribed to the

specific role and recognized by the members of the cultural community as appropriate and acceptable. A facework identity refers to the desired sense of social regard that individuals try to achieve and preserve while interacting with others. This identity dimension is vulnerable because it might be easily threatened, enhanced, or undermined in the interaction context, especially in a culturally unfamiliar environment, since different situations require different rules of facework. Indeed, the manner in which individuals protect their vulnerable emotions varies across different cultural groups. Finally, the symbolic interaction identity is formed via the culture-based verbal and nonverbal communication processes. During these processes, according to Ting-Toomey (1999), the individuals' reflective self-images and associated values of our group-based and person-based identities are acquired (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus, the interactive exchanges constitute the context in which the individuals develop the relation with interlocutors and evoke the desired identity identification.

### *1.5. Identity negotiation in a multicultural context*

As it has been mentioned above, social identity should not be considered, merely as a product of interrelations of various social conditions. Viewed in terms of the subject position, identity might be accepted, resisted, or changed by the individuals through the discourse in the context of interaction. As a matter of fact, the identity is formed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals during interactions with others in a specific context. In this regard, identity is assumed to be fluid, flexible, and subject to change in the process referred to as identity negotiation.

Negotiation stands for the “ransactional interaction process, whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to evoke, assert, define, modify, challenge and/or support their own and others' desired self-images” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.40). It is conceived as ‘an interplay between reflective positioning, that is, self-representation, and interactive positioning, whereby others attempt to reposition particular individuals or groups” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001, p. 249). That is, the individuals in a social interaction attempt to establish the desired identity while at the same time challenging the identities of the others.

By arriving in the new socio-cultural context, immigrants need constantly negotiate their identities which unceasingly undergo the process of gradual transformation, whereby the



individuals acquire and integrate the new roles and new adaptive skills to deal with the daily-life challenges in their new host communities

This process, in fact, is particularly relevant in multicultural contexts, where the identity negotiation process might be undermined by the limited cultural and linguistic resources of some individuals, required in order to sustain the interaction. Generally, in their interaction with others, individuals seek to satisfy their basic social needs such as identities, security, trust, inclusion, and stability. Therefore, intercultural encounters are strongly affected by the identity dimensions that concern security and vulnerability.

Individuals tend to position themselves in a certain manner during the interactive encounters trying to establish the desired identity. The way individuals perceive themselves and each other, the meanings we attribute the identities, is deeply affected by cultural, personal, situational, and relational factors (Ting-Toomey, 1999). These identity positions are acquired during the interactions with others in a certain cultural context, and the way these identities are valued depends on the shared norms and scripts prevailing in the area. Individuals, in fact, tend to feel more confident during the interaction process when they perceive the sense of support, acceptance, and familiarity from their interlocutors, with whom they share the common norms and values. While interacting with individuals who are culturally dissimilar, their behavioral norms and other routines might be disputed. This, in turn, might lead to identity shock, a transitional process considered to be threatening for the identity vulnerability, occurring when individuals move from the familiar context to the unfamiliar one (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Another assumption of identity negotiation theory is that all individuals, regardless of their socio-cultural background, desire to be perceived as competent communicators in any interactive situation. During the communication episodes, in fact, the reflective idea of self is constructed and the generalized opinion about the self and about the others is formed (Ting-Toomey, 1999). In this regard, the interaction in the multicultural context, between individuals whose perspectives and assessment criteria are based on different referential systems, might represent a critical moment for identity formation and negotiation. Following the assumption made by Ting-Toomey (1999), that all individuals share a common need for identity security, trust, and stability in interaction with others, it becomes clear that by interaction in a culturally unfamiliar environment, individuals have a greater chance to

perceive a sense of identity threat, vulnerability, and instability. Generally, “the larger the cultural distance or difference between two cultures, the higher the degree of identity vulnerability immigrants will experience in the new culture” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.234). They experience a sense of trust and emotional safety, instead, in a culturally familiar environment when they interact with similar others, due to the fact that expected norms and routines are more likely to appear. Besides, in familiar environments, the individuals, generally, experience a higher degree of inclusion. The notion defines the degree of perceived nearness to the members of in-group or out-groups (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Identity differentiation, on the other hand, stands for perceived emotional, psychological, or spatial distance with the members of in-groups and outgroups. Generally, the higher or differentiation is associated with the interaction processes occurring in culturally different environments (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

It seems clear that identity negotiation in the intercultural context is a very delicate process. By occurring during social interactions with members of a different socio-cultural community, this process might constitute a threatening experience involving several identity dimensions. Nevertheless, it might also provide individuals with positive and satisfactory interaction outcomes such as “feelings of being understood, valued, supported, and respected, despite the intercultural differences that may surface in the process” (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2001, p. 244).

### *1.6. Intercultural adaptation*

As has been mentioned above, moving from one socio-cultural environment to another constitutes a challenging experience for the identity vulnerability of the immigrants. Finding themselves devoid of the familiar reference points, the individuals experience a sense of identity loss and confusion. They realize in fact that their native identities, whose formation was affected by the cultural scripts, behaviours norms, and local assessment system, are no longer functional in the new context. Indeed, the newcomers in these circumstances do not have many other options left, rather than go through an incremental identity transformation process in a new community, namely the intercultural adaptation (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Acculturation, on the other hand, is a similar notion involving the process of the gradual identity transformation and the continuous integration of the new values, norms, and symbolic system of the new socio-cultural community.

Hence, the intercultural adaptation process is defined “as a degree of change that occurs when individuals move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 233). It constitutes a gradual transformation process, which can be boosted by sustained initial contact with the members of the host community. Generally, during this long-termed process of adaptation to the new socio-cultural context process, individuals might undergo external as well as internal changes. And, besides. Besides, the longer the stay in a new community lasts, the deeper cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes the individual will be subjected to. And immigrants and refugees are generally aiming for long-term stay in their host community (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

#### *1.6.1. Factors associated with the intercultural adaptation*

Antecedents factors typically associated with the intercultural adaptation process of the immigrants are selected along with two levels - the system level and the individual level.

##### *1.6.1.1. System-level factors*

System-level factors involve the host culture’s socio-economic conditions. If the host community is characterized by more prosperous socio-economic conditions, its members tend to be more tolerant and welcoming toward the immigrants; while in the communities where the socio-economic conditions are low, the newcomers are perceived ‘as competing for scarce resources and they are often accused of being the cause of the economic problems in the community (Ting-Toomey, 1999). ‘Another system-level factor is the new culture’s attitudinal stance on cultural assimilation or cultural pluralism. Namely, whether in the host society the ethnic identity formation is determined by the dominant group values, and the immigrants are expected to conform to the local cultural practices or its formation rests on the individual’s personal choice. This is the case of an assimilative society, characterized by the low tolerance toward the immigrants’ retention of traditions and customs of their heritage. In the latter case of the pluralistic society, individuals can choose between maintaining their ethnic identity and creating a new more suitable one (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.237). The members of societies with a pluralist stance display a more tolerant attitude and acceptance toward the immigrants’ transitions and practices. Local institutions might facilitate the adaptation process of the immigrants employing various social programs helping the

newcomers to acquire the new language and find a workplace, but they can also undermine this process. Another factor concerns the way the host community defines the notion of the stranger. If the stranger is perceived as an intruder, the members of the host community will more likely display a hostile attitude toward the immigrants. If instead they are conceived as new members of a large family, the sentiments toward newcomers will be more positive. Essentially, some cultures explicitly mark distinctions between insiders and outsiders, while others facilitate the socialization and adaptation of the newcomers. The final system-level factor is the cultural distance between the groups, which refers to “the degree of psychological adjustment that needed to bring the dissimilarities between the culture of origin and the culture of entry” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 238) The distance might include differences in cultural values, language, and behavioral styles or in self-conceptions. In the case of the high distance degree, immigrants are required major affective, cognitive, behavioral, and other supportive resources to transcend such differences.

#### *1.6.1.2. Individual-level factors*

Individual-level factors involve motivational orientation now the immigrants leave their home countries. For instance, the permanent residence status for immigrants might constitute a motivational drive to acquire the new symbols and routines in order to better cope with various identity dislocation problems, to create better opportunities for themselves and their families, and in general to have greater chances for personal advancement, and better job and education opportunities. Another factor concerns individual expectations which stand for “the anticipatory process and predictive outcome of the upcoming situation” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 240). It has been argued that individuals with realistic expectations deal more effectively with the negative stressors linked to the adaptation process. Besides, positive expectations tend to become the self-fulfilling prophecy in their successful adaptation, since they affect the newcomers' mindset, attitudes, sentiments, and behavior. Another critical factor is the newcomers' cultural knowledge (history, political system) and interaction-based knowledge (communication styles and issues) about the host culture. Knowing the host community's language is assumed to have a direct positive impact on developing relationships with members of the host culture, boosting the socio-cultural adaptation. Personality attributes such as high tolerance for ambiguity (accepting ambiguous situations), internal locus of control (inner motivation), and personal positivity and openness, constitute predictors of

more successful adaptation. Also, the younger children and the individuals with higher educational levels are found to have more effective adaptive skills (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

### *1.6.1.3. Interpersonal level factors*

At the interpersonal level, the factors linked to the interpersonal relationship skills are considered important for protecting the immigrants' vulnerable identities. These factors include the contact network, which stands for the combination of supportive social and personal connection in the host community, these factors represent effective resources such as identity support, and the exchange of empathic messages. Instrumental resources entail practical assistance or resource exchange. The informational resources such as sharing knowledge and keeping the other person informed of current news, also provide the newcomers with effective identity support. Another factor found significant during the adaptation process, is the interpersonal or social relationships with the members of the same or similar ethnic background, since they might have gone through similar overwhelming experiences during their initial adaptation stage. Besides, it has been established a positive correlation between immigrants' taking part in various host community activities and the positive attitude toward the host culture. In fact, social or friendship supportive networks are claimed to be of great importance during the initial adaptation process in terms of emotional and identity support. The quality of the interpersonal contacts between the members of the host community and the newcomers constitute an important adaptation factor. High-quality interpersonal connections are claimed to be an indicator of a more gratifying intercultural adaptation outcome (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Moreover, the ethnic media might also reduce the adaptive stress of the newcomers by contributing to creating a familiar environment and providing the immigrants with a sense of comfort and identity connection. The host media, in turn, might constitute a safe environment for the new arrivals to learn the host language, recognize the specific interactive patterns, and acquire other communication skills. Besides, the host media provides the immigrants with different types of information concerning the national topics, which might help the individuals to feel more like a part of the new community (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Nevertheless, the newcomers are not the unique group that might benefit from the intercultural approaches. The interaction with individuals from different cultures generally

constitutes the chance to broaden the identity boundaries, acquire different perspectives, and integrate new ideas both for the newcomers as well as for the members of the host community.

### *1.7. The identity change process*

It has been argued in Ting-Toomey (1999), that one of the most common collateral effects of the intercultural adaptation process is identity change, also referred to as identity transformation or dislocation. When the social context changes, it is implied that the social identity is also subject to alteration. It appears reasonable, in fact, to assume that if the circumstances change, the individuals might tend to adapt their identity to the new situation. This transformative process might constitute an especially challenging experience for the newcomers in the culturally unfamiliar environment, in which the individuals' interactive patterns affected by the cultural scripts are no longer appropriate.

In certain circumstances, what is known about certain phenomena might no longer be valid in the new context, making the identities, possessed by individuals, inappropriate for the social position they aspire to. These conditions, or stressors, might induce the individuals to change their social identity, viewed as less than satisfactory or unable to guarantee the desired social outcomes. In fact, as it has been mentioned in the chapter concerning the relationship between the self and social identity, the self might adopt several identities, considered suitable for the social situation recognizable by the members of the new social context (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). Namely, the individuals are fostered by certain circumstances, to consider whether they should keep, change or even abandon at least one of their identities. Identity might actually become an issue in critical situations characterized by the disrupting of what was previously considered to be stable and coherent. Which, in turn, might lead to a sense of doubt and uncertainty on the part of the individual (Pavlenko, 1998).

As has been discussed above, identity formation, change, and reconstruction occur through the discourse during social interactions, in the process known as identity negotiation. This is especially common in the contexts characterized by the presence of immigrant groups. In fact, these multicultural contexts manifest several instances of interactions between the members of the host community and the newcomers (inter-group interactions), allowing to

observe and to analyze the numerous consequences of such connections for the identity transformation process.

During the intergroup interactions, the individuals become aware of the fact that there is an interrelation between social identity and displayed behavior. They might choose to adopt a certain type of behavior that is better suited to support the identity image, recognizable by the members of the host community, that serves for the achievement of communicative or/and other social goals. Moreover, the identities are based on social consensus as a “product of negotiation between individuals and a given situation” (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, 247). For this reason, these inter-group interactions might result in the adoption of single or multiple identities.

The identity is said to be stable when it is characterized by a sense of continuation and consistency over time. In those cases in which the individuals find themselves in unfamiliar environments and, this notwithstanding, they experience the sense of identity security while interacting with others, the identity change is more likely to occur. If, on the contrary, the individuals feel threatened and vulnerable they will tend to preserve their identity stability. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), however, both processes should be balanced since the high identity stability will lead to the limiting, ethnocentric perspective or identity stagnation, while if the change occurs too frequently it might lead to the total lack of core values and the sense of loss in the individuals.

### *1.8. Acculturation process*

As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, at the beginning of their stay, the new arrivals commonly have to face a transitional period characterized by identity-threatening experiences, the phenomenon known as cultural shock. The notion was coined in 1951 by American anthropologist Cora Dubois, referring to the experience of intercultural adaptation of the anthropologist during the fieldwork. After that, in 1960 the term was applied more generally by Kalvero Olberg to describe the experience of the individuals who by finding themselves in a new cultural setting lose the familiar frame of reference of social interaction (Goldstein, 2013). Indeed, arriving in the new cultural community, immigrants realize that previously stable and familiar cultural practices and scripts are no longer suitable in the new setting and the social and friendship connection, which provided the individuals with the

sense of safety and acceptance, vanished. Besides, they become aware that commonly perceived and accepted norms of social interactions are no longer functional for the new community, which leads to a sense of disorientation and anxiety (Block, 2007). Thus, cultural shock is “an emotional phenomenon generating cognitive disorientation and identity dissonance leading to the identity disequilibrium state” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 245).

The first phase of this destabilizing phenomenon is identity loss or identity deprivation which involves the renunciation of the core values, social status, friends, etc. Moreover, the cultural shock might lead to identity strain as a consequence of an excessive psychological effort to adapt to the new culture. The realization that their native identity is no longer acceptable or recognizable in the new environment might also constitute a disconcerting experience. This might result in several defense mechanisms, such as isolation and regression, eventually leading to reduced contact with the members of the host community, precluding the possibility of developing the new appropriate social identity. However, in the case in which individuals perceive social interaction as a unique solution to overcome this sense of disorientation, they might choose to search for the occasion to interact with the members of the host community. Another common issue concerning entering a new society is the language shock, that is “the feeling of stress or even shame in individuals who suddenly find that they have to communicate in a code in which they sound comical and over which they don’t have a firm command” (Block, 2007, p. 67). Similarly, this might lead to the decision to minimize inter-group interaction.

In psychology, Berry (1992) describes this phenomenon as acculturative stress. Generally, stress “is a generalized physiological and psychological state of the organism, brought about by the experience of stressors in the environment, and which requires some reduction (for normal functioning to occur), through a process of coping until some satisfactory adaptation to the new situation is achieved” (Berry, 1992). Acculturative stress, in turn, refers to the stress, caused by the stressor associated with the process of acculturation, which constitutes a multidimensional process whereby the cultural patterns might change, as a consequence of intergroup contact (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Various stress manifestations during acculturation might include unstable mental health status, such as anxiety or depression, leading to a sense of alienation and marginality (Berry, 1992). Followed by the increased inter-group contact the contact-related problems might arise. In fact, becoming aware that their identity is no longer suitable to act in the new environment could be a very confusing and stressful experience for



the migrants. However, if managed mindfully the acculturative stress, or cultural shock, might produce several positive effects such as higher self-esteem, cognitive flexibility, enhanced confidence, and a sense of trust toward others (Ting-Toomey, 1999). According to Berry (1992), acculturative stress depends not only on the presence of stressors but also on the coping strategies and resources of the individuals. The scholar argues that for the individuals who are able to cope, the presence of stressors will not lead to the emergence of acculturative stress, while for those unable to cope, acculturative stress may be substantial.

As stated in Berry (1992), there exist three main strategies that the individuals might decide to adopt in their adaptation to the new environment, namely, adjustment, reaction, and withdrawal. The first strategy, adjustment, implies the changes in the individual, whose main objective is to increase the congruence between the individual and the new environment in order to achieve harmonious coexistence with the host community. This notion stands for what is often referred to as adaptation. In those cases in which the changes are directed against the new environment, this type of strategy is called reaction. It might also lead to the major congruence between groups, due to some changes occurring in the environment. The third strategy is withdrawal. In this case, the pressure from the environment is reduced by the forced or voluntary “removal of the groups and individuals from the adaptive arena” (Berry, 1992).

Thus, in order to face the identity instability issues, immigrants need to engage in what is called the acculturation process defined by Berry (1992) as a "culture change that results from continuous, first-hand contact between two distinct cultural groups". This definition underlines the group-level nature of the phenomena, while more recent studies also include the individual-level perspective, namely, the psychological acculturation (Berry, 1992), referring to the individual changes that accompany the migratory experience. At the group level, in addition to the physical, political, and economic changes, the individuals also sustain cultural changes (linguistic, religious, educational, etc) and alterations in social relationships. Besides, although the definition implies alterations in both cultural groups - the host community and the migrating group - generally, the latter experiences a major degree of changes (Berry, 1992). In fact, although both groups are inevitably affected by the contact, the changes that the members of the migrating group undergo are more perceptible due to the rapid pace at which these alternations take place. In this regard, Galetcaia (2013) maintains

that migratory behavior might be viewed as “the most transformative exploits of the human experience and dynamic instances of social action” (p. 4270).

In a culturally plural society, or pluralist as in Ting-Toomey (1999), which allows the maintenance of the ethnic identity, the immigrants might have several acculturation options. The choice of one of the alternatives is based on two main factors. The first factor is the extent to which the individuals desire to preserve their ethnic distinctiveness in the host society based on the deemed value of their cultural identity and customs (Berry, 1992). The second consideration is the desirability of the inter-ethnic contact, namely the individuals should decide whether relations with the larger society is important and should be sought (Berry, 1992). These two factors mainly regard the attitudes and values of the groups.

Hence, acculturation in this sense might occur through assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization processes.

The abandoning of the original cultural identity in order to facilitate settling in the larger society is called assimilation. It might occur by “absorption of a non-dominant group into an established dominant group” (Berry, 1992) or by merging of several distinct groups and their features creating a new society, often referred to as a melting pot. In those cases in which the radical relinquishing of the cultural identity of the group is not an appealing option, the individuals might decide on the bicultural-oriented option, maintaining some of their traditions and practices. This option is referred to as integration, and it implies simultaneously a certain degree of resistance to change (reaction strategy) as well as an openness to become an integral part of a larger society (adjustment strategy). In other cases, the individuals might decide to limit their participation in the host society and not to establish any meaningful relationships with its’ members. Thus, they might choose the tradition-oriented option preserving their ethnic identity and customs. If this condition reflects the choice of the acculturating group to lead an independent existence, it is defined as separation (reaction and withdrawal), if however, it is imposed by the dominant group the option takes the form of segregation (exclusion). Another alternative, which does not really constitute an option, is associated with the loss of cultural and psychological contact with both ethnic and the host society, followed by feelings of alienation and identity loss. In this case, the individuals are said to undergo the process of marginalization (exclusion or withdrawal) (Berry, 1992).

Besides, according to Berry (1992), large individual differences in acculturation are typically found in any acculturating group. On the individual level, acculturation implies bringing the behavioral pattern as close as possible to those more frequently found in the new society and unlearning the old repertoire of behaviors, the phenomenon in psychology is referred to as behavioral shift (Berry, 1992). The behavioral shifts themselves consist of two distinguishable phenomena, namely, learning behaviors from the new culture and shedding features of the individuals' original culture (Berry, 1992). Most culture learning and most culture shedding occur as a result of the assimilation strategy, while the least of both occur during the separation strategy. Considerable new culture learning, combined with limited culture shedding occurs with the use of the integration strategy.

Generally, acculturative stress might arise from different factors, namely, group-level factors, individual-level factors, factors that precede the process of acculturation, and the factors that exist in the acculturation context (Berry, 1992). The right choice of the acculturation option should be the one that facilitates rather than interfere with successful adaptations. Besides, most of the conditions "are subject to some degree of control by policymakers and health professionals" (Berry, 1992). This implies that making appropriate policy choices and by implementing appropriate programs might increase the rate of successful adaptations (Berry, 1992).

### *1.9. Ethnic identity salience*

As mentioned in the previous section, the integrative option (Berry, 1992), allows the immigrants in the new socio-cultural community to preserve, at least to some degree, what is called their ethnic identity, namely the "aspects of the self derived from real or perceived common bonds with the ethnic group" (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 246), while developing a new one, which is deemed as more suitable for the new socio-cultural environment (Noels, Clement & Gaudet, 2004). Although ethnic identity belongs to the primary identities of the self-image dimension, it is notwithstanding situationally bound. According to the scholars, as a matter of fact, different contextual features might affect the activation of this type of identity. This assumption is consistent with Berry (1992) who argues that the integration option allows the 'selective adoption of behavior from the repertoires of the two societies', which might lead to heritage behaviors prevailing in the private life

(family and ethnocultural community), while the newly learned behavior pattern “adopted from the larger society” (Berry, 1992) might be reserved for the public domains (schooling, work, and political involvement).

In this regard, Noels, Clement & Gaudet (2004) claim that the level of acculturation and ethnic identity activation are not uniform across different domains. In intimate settings, the identification of the original ethnic group might be stronger, than in a public domain, since the intimate domain generally is relatively sheltered from acculturative contact. While in the public domain, where the host cultural identity is more likely to be activated, or the two identities might be integrated, given the fact that such situations are characterized by the higher chances for interaction with the members of the host community, which might foster the increasing identification with the outgroup. Therefore, although people might feel quite strongly about their first cultural identity these feelings might be lessened in public situations so that both identities are permeable. Generally, the norms and activities of the host community are more likely to be internalized, if the newcomers are allowed to participate in those activities and if they feel accepted by the host group as rightful members of society (Cinoğlu & Arikan, 2012).

Different situational domains (more or less intimate) are important aspects of interactive social contexts. Situational characteristics such as setting, relationships between interlocutors, and the activities individuals are engaged in are decisive for defining any interpersonal situation. There are different situational domains according to Noels, Clement & Gaudet (2004), individuals are more inclined to identify themselves with the members of a specific group in a more intimate domain, rather than in an unlicensed domain.

The lengths of permanence might also affect the individuals’ inclination towards the assimilation and acculturation processes. Those who are not intended to stay in a host community for a long period of time, temporarily constitute a minority group and then return their majority status in their country of origin. Still, the minority status might affect the identity formation and change, in that the members of minority groups might “shift their identification from their group of origin to the group of higher validity” (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 251).

## **Chapter II: Identity change as a consequence of the second language acquisition**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, social identity might be affected by the social context in several ways. Generally, when the environment changes, an identity capable to deal with the new circumstances is required. Thus, the self is induced to form a new identity in accordance with the new socio-cultural factors, but at the same time, these factors are involved in the identity formation process. This assumption implies that identity and the social context are strongly related, nevertheless “the relationship between the language learner and the social world is problematic” (Norton Peirce, 1995, p. 12).

The role of the social context in identity formation becomes especially clear when individuals are forced or decide to relocate to the new socio-cultural community. Adult immigrants, in fact, by leaving their countries find themselves undergoing a process of language acquisition and acculturation to the host community. Besides, following the claims of the identity negotiation theory, the identity is formed and acknowledged during interaction through the discourse practices. This implies that in order to be assigned the desired social position, the rules and the meanings of the new discourse practices should be acquired.

Thus, identity negation, in this regard, occurs in parallel with the acculturation and SLA processes. Becoming more familiar with the cultural scripts affecting the behavior of the members of the host community will provide the immigrants with a major number of identity options. Besides, cultural scripts also affect verbal behavior, such as verbal choice and strategies, that changes according to the various situational features affecting the interactive context. Hence the immigrants, by relocating to the new socio-cultural community, find themselves in circumstances where they need to recognize and acquire the cultural code that affects the linguistic behavior of the out-group members. In order to become more familiar with the new cultural capital, immigrants are required to participate in social interactions, which, in turn, require a certain competence in L2.

Moreover, language learning results from participation in communicative events. This leads to the assumption that the identity formation process and second language acquisition are strongly interrelated since it is through the language that identity is acknowledged during the interactive events. Generally, language is needed in order to construct or reshape single or multiple identities and, at the same time, it is through the language that the identity is

presented and explained by the means of various linguistic forms and strategies, which are recognized and understood by others. Namely, due to the communicative nature of the identity negotiation process, identities might be confirmed or reshaped while messages are being exchanged (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001).

Besides, it has been claimed in Norton Peirce (1995) that extensive exposure to the target language and the opportunities to practice the target language are essential conditions for second language acquisition. However, adult immigrants, do not always have easy access to the linguistic codes or cultural practices of their local communities (Norton Peirce, 1995), due to various social and psychological factors that will be analyzed in this work.

### *2.1. Investment in SLA*

According to Norton Peirce (1995), language learning results from participation in communicative events. This assumption implies that one of the crucial factors determining second language acquisition is the opportunity to practice the target language, namely the exposure to the L2. Besides, the amount of time the individuals spend practicing their target language should be relevant from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Although the learning is unlikely to proceed without exposure and practice of the L2, the adult immigrants do not always have easy access to the communities of practice of their receiving communities, where not only have they the opportunity to acquire the linguistic code but also the cultural practices (Norton Peirce, 1995).

Following the post-structuralist approach, the idea of a language learner, previously conceived in terms of fixed, long-lasting traits, is viewed as contradictory, dynamic, “and subject to change over time and social space” (Norton, 2013, p. 2). In these terms, the individual is conceived subject to/of relationships depending on different social sites. Namely, the individual might be in a more or less powerful position compared to other individuals.

During the communicative events, in fact, the immigrants’ language competence is often assessed and judged by the interlocutors who feel dominant in the discourse, positioning the immigrants as inadequate interlocutors. This leads to the impossible dynamic whereby the immigrants need to interact in order to acquire and improve their L2 competence, but they

cannot always get sufficient practice unless they are guaranteed the right to speak and to be spoken to (Block, 2007).

As a matter of fact, the relationship of power between L2 learners and the members of the L2 community, according to might constitute an obstacle affecting the social interaction required for the second language acquisition and enhancement. This factor might interfere with the opportunities to speak the target language (Norton Peirce, 1995). In this regard, second language learning is considered as the social practice whereby the individuals become aware of the relative power among individuals in certain social situations and learn to claim their right to speak aiming to achieve true equality and integration (Norton Peirce, 1995, Halstead, n.d.). Thus, as stated in Miller and Kubota (2013), “learners invest in L2 learning because they believe that knowing the language will offer them desirable identity options in the future” (p. 230).

In order to better analyze how the socio-cultural contexts and specifically the members of the L2 community might affect the SLA process, the sociological dimension should be added to language acquisition analysis. Namely, the local communities should not be overlooked, since they provide conditions under which the individuals might gain access to practices required for the L2 learning. In this regard, the members of the host communities constitute the language source capable of promoting or undermining the development of L2 competence. The second language learning process, in this sense, is conceived as “a relational activity that occurs between specific speakers situated in a particular socio-cultural context” (Norton, 2013, 2).

Among the various attempts, made by psychologists, to measure the learners’ commitment to learning the target language in relation to the L2 social context, which has an undeniable impact on the SLA process, Gardner (1985) proposed a motivation construct involving instrumental and integrative motivation. The former implies “the potential pragmatic gains of L2 proficiency” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 78) such as a higher income or a better workplace, while the latter indicates “a positive disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 78).

Generally, this construct represents an early endeavor to analyze the extent to which the social environment is interwoven in the process of SLA.

As stated in Dörnyei (1994), integrative motivation is also defined as cultural-affective. This statement implies that while considering the L2 learning process, the sociocultural and socio-psychological dimensions of the individuals should be taken into account. “the integrative motivational subsystem is centered around the individual's L2-related affective predispositions, including social, cultural, and ethnolinguistic components, as well as a general interest in foreignness and foreign languages” (Dörnyei, 1994, p. 279). Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, is based on the assumption that acquiring the L2 might lead to the obtaining of some external benefits, such as better occupations. This claim actually reveals a certain degree of a casual relationship between L2 acquisition and the enhancement of the social position of the individuals.

Although Gardner’s motivational construct represents some broad tendencies rather than universal rules (Dörnyei, 1994), the theory gives a general orientation for the further analysis of the relationship between the L2 learner and the sociocultural context in which the learning process occurs. Norton (2013) shares Gardner's view that the affective factors influencing the SLA process are socially constructed. Nevertheless, the scholar argues that the concept of motivation should be further analyzed (Norton Peirce, 1995).

As stated in , motivation, in accordance with the poststructuralist view, should be analyzed in reference to various social dynamics that create possibilities or obstacles for learners in their second language learning endeavors, rather than be treated as a stable, or fixed, personality trait.

Norton argues that, while speaking, the L2 learners do not merely exchange information with the speakers of the L2 community, but they rather ‘organize and reorganize the sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world". This claim is consistent with the identity negotiation theory, discussed in chapter one. According to this idea, while interacting with members of different groups, in an intercultural setting, individuals undergo the process whereby they tend to acquire a desired social position, deemed to be appropriate for the current social situation, while challenging the others’ attempt to reposition them, that is, ascribing them an unsatisfactory social status (Pavlenko & Blackledge 2001; Ting-Toomey 1999). Based on these assumptions, Norton Peirce (1995) suggests that L2 learners, while interacting with the members of the host community, are consciously capable of constructing



the desired identity, and the target language, in this regard, is conceived as a key for achieving the desired identity negotiation outcome. Thus rather than motivation to learn the language, according to the scholar, learners should be considered in relation to their level of commitment to invest their time and energy in their second language learning. In this regard, Norton Peirce (1995), proposes the term investment, arguing that investment in second language learning implies several conscious choices learners make, to enhance their social status.

According to the author, although the social context might be affected, to some degree, by the preexisting social structures, L2 learners are capable of acting over the established social conditions that might prevent access to the L2 input, i.e. they have agency. In fact, learners could make several conscious choices, such as taking some extra language courses or consciously searching for more social contacts with the members of the L2 community, which might eventually lead to the enhancement of their language proficiency. This conception is consistent with the statement of Miller and Kubota (2013) concerning the learner's agency, which, according to the scholars, "is understood to be at work when learners choose to learn a language if they perceive that it will bring them desirable social and linguistic capital and enhance their future identities" (p. 239). Besides, they state that the individuals might decide, as well, not to invest in L2 learning, for instance, when they perceive that their original, native identity is threatened and they desire to preserve it. Generally, through the human agency, learners are able "to reframe their relationships with their interlocutors and claim alternative, more powerful identities from which to speak" (Norton, 2013, p. 3).

According to Norton Peirce (1995), by deciding to learn an L2, learners are conscious that this will lead to acquiring a wider range of hitherto unattainable symbolic and material sources, required to increase their cultural capital. The notion - cultural capital - proposed by Bourdieu (1977), stands for the knowledge and modes of thinking, in reference to the various social situations, specific to the members of certain socio-cultural groups. Social capital is required, according to Norton Peirce (1995), to recognize and apprehend various culturally specific interactive features for the more appropriate behavior in various social situations. This view, in addition, is consistent with Forgas's assumption concerning the social situation, discussed later, according to which, various culturally determined features of social situations affect the verbal behavior of the interlocutors (Forgas, 1985). Therefore, in the case in which

the interactive and verbal behavior performed by the interactants are recognized as inappropriate for the given social situation, the meaning exchange and the identity negotiation might result in undesirable social outcomes.

The reasons for claiming alternative and more powerful identities derive not only from the desire to achieve some economical and occupational advantages, as it is for Gardner's instrumental motivational subsystem. In fact, by controlling the reception of their interlocutors, the individuals could challenge the others' impression of who they are and they might become capable of altering the subject position as immigrants assigned to them (Norton Peirce, 1995). Besides, by deciding to invest in the learning of L2, the individuals set the conditions for achieving the recognition of the more powerful social identity, or subject position, from which to speak. Thus, the main reason for individuals to invest in their second language learning, according to Norton Peirce (1995), is the determination to acquire the power to defend their rights, by refusing to be silent. Generally, as stated in Miller and Kubota (2013), "learners invest in L2 learning because they believe that knowing the language will offer them desirable identity options in the future" (p. 230).

Based on the assumption that all individuals share a common need for identity security while interacting with others (Ting-Toomey, 1999), Norton (2013) stated that the learners are more inclined to engage in social interaction if the social situation provides them with a certain degree of social power for their subject position, namely if they feel valued and accepted. Instead, in those cases in which the learners are assigned a marginalized position, they might perceive a sense of identity threat and vulnerability, and, therefore, they might decide to avoid the opportunities for interaction (Norton, 2013). As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, if the social context constitutes the identity threat, it might result in several defense mechanisms, such as isolation and regression, eventually leading to reduced contact with the members of the host community, precluding the possibility of constructing the new appropriate social identity. For instance, in those cases in which the host community is perceived as racist, elitist, or generally not reflecting the learners' inner values, they might decide to not engage in the language practices of the given community (Norton, 2013).

Hence, the concept of motivation, according to Norton Peirce (1995), does not entirely account for the individuals' success or failure in the L2 acquisition process. Some social conditions, as stated by the author, might affect the learners' decision to interact with the

members of the L2 community, despite being highly motivated. These social factors, linked with several identity processes, influence the L2 acquisition outcomes. Therefore, to better understand language learning, identity should not be overlooked, since it is integrated into the second language acquisition process.

## *2.2. Second language identity construction*

As stated in Noels, Clement & Gaudet (2004) language is very important in identity and intergroup contact since a “new identity is negotiated between interlocutors through language” (p. 255).

Following the poststructuralist approach, whose main goal consists in achieving a plurality of meanings in social, educational, political, and other contexts, Norton Peirce (1995) considers language, culture, and identity in terms of plurality and fluidity. In this regard, the subject position, or identity, is dynamic by nature, in that it is constituted in interaction (Miller & Kubota, 2013) and can be reconstructed in accordance with the social situation.

When learners intend to participate in the new discourse practices, they might encounter struggle and contestation since their previously taken-for-granted reference points are no longer suitable for the new social contexts. Besides, the only available identity options provided by those discourses practices, in the given context, might be perceived as disempowering and thus undesirable (Miller and Kubota, 2013). Therefore, learning the linguistic system is hardly sufficient for being viewed as a legitimate speaker of the language, since this status is negotiated during the discourse practices with the members of the L2 community (Miller and Kubota, 2013).

According to Miller and Kuboota (2013), “the identity changes occurring during the L2 learning process represent partial conservation of a previous social identity and the gaining of the parts of a new one, as a consequence of being exposed to the new social context” (p. 232). This hybrid identity might provide individuals with the premises for constructing desirable identity options, thus acting agentively.

Generally, it appears clear that the interactive process has an undeniable influence on patterns of identity. The identity negotiation and the new identity formation will be affected by the

various features present in the environment in which the negotiation process takes place. Besides, one of the most important components characterizing the interactive acts, is verbal communication, namely, language. As a matter of fact, language plays different roles in identity negotiation and identity formation processes. Primarily, language is needed in order to construct or reshape single or multiple identities. Simultaneously, it is through the language that the identity is presented and explained by the means of various linguistic forms and strategies, which are recognized and understood by others (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). This assumption implies that language is inseparable from social identity.

### *2.3. Community of practice*

As it has been mentioned above, second language learning occurs while interacting with the members of the receiving community. This is a necessary condition for achieving a higher L2 competence, as well as a larger range of social identity options. As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, identity is negotiated in interaction by means of the discourse which, defined as “[w]hat is known and can be talked about in relation to a particular topic or area” (Block, 2007, p. 18) constitutes a resource for identity construction. What is known about a certain entity often implies a certain degree of institutionalized shared meanings among the members of a certain community, since by interaction the individuals define and learn about the object of their interest.

The Communities of Practice (CofP), the notion coined by Etienne Wenger, is a situated learning conceptual framework (Miller & Kubota, 2013). The community is defined by the social engagement of individuals around a mutual goal or commitment. All the practices such as “the ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relation [...] emerge” (McConnel-Ginet, 1992, p. 7) during their joint activity carried out by the members of the community of practice in order to enhance or learn more about the object of their mutual endeavor. It might be family, friends in a bar, members of a book club, or people working together, etc. “Individuals participate in multiple communities of practices, and the individual identity is based on the multiplicity of this participation” (McConnel-Ginet, 1992, p. 8). In this regard, the individual is seen ‘as an actor articulating a range of forms of participation in multiple communities of practice’ (McConnel-Ginet, 1992, p. 8). This engagement in communities of practice is what is required to acquire the L2. “Language learning is viewed as a dynamic process, by which the learners decide to invest in language learning, as a result

of their aspiration to participate in the communities of practice that can provide learners with desirable identity options” (Miller and Kubota 2013, p. 234).

Legitimate peripheral participation designates the process whereby newcomers to the new community of practice initially can only participate in a limited, or peripheral way.

“[Individuals] gain a space for participating in particular practices of those communities, and if they have the resources for doing so, they have the potential to increase their involvement toward more intensive participation and to develop desirable insider identities in these communities of practice” (Miller and Kubota 2013, p. 234)

As stated in Miller and Kubota (2013), in those cases in which the individuals are banned from participation or they are reserved only marginal participation to the community of practice, they will unlikely reach the same learning outcomes as those individuals who were fully engaged in the communities of practice. Generally, when individuals are assigned undesirable social identities, it might induce the learners to avoid the community by isolation or by resistance to participation (Miller and Kubota, 2013). This might lead immigrants to avoid interaction with the members of the L2 community, narrowing even more the number of opportunities for participation in the communities of practice, necessary to develop a new language identity. Instead, they might decide to retreat, choosing to speak mostly to their friends and family in the L1.

Since the L2 is acquired during an interaction with the members of the receiving community, which constitutes an out-group for the L2 learners, the interactive situation might be also defined as intergroup communication or intercultural communication.

#### *2.4. Intercultural communication*

Due to the recent changes in the global economy, transportation, and immigration policies, the opportunities for contact with people belonging to different cultures have significantly increased. In these new circumstances, different communicative issues might arise from a simple misunderstanding during an interpersonal interaction leading to more serious intercultural conflict (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The term intercultural refers to “the communication process between members of different cultural communities” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 16). A similar concept *cross-cultural* designates a process that compares

communicative styles in different cultures. Intercultural communication means “the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 16). According to Ting-Toomey (1999), the degree of difference in intercultural communication processes stems from the factors that determine cultural group membership such as beliefs, values, norms, and interaction scripts. Intergroup communication, in turn, suggests a certain distance between groups derived by general group membership factors including ethnicity, gender, and social class. For this analysis, the term - intergroup - is used to refer to any type of verbal and non-verbal interactive episodes characterized by some degree of categorical difference between the interactants.

#### *2.4.1. The factors affecting the intercultural communication*

If during the intercultural interaction process, “the decoding process of the receiver matches the encoding process of the sender” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 18) the message exchange is deemed to be successful. Nevertheless, such encounters are often characterized by misunderstandings due to the various issues deriving from the uncertain language competence, differences in communication style or/and in referential values. As a matter of fact, the misunderstanding during the interactions might occur by misinterpreting the social situation as a result of being devoid of the means to untangle the cultural code in the linguistic message (Block, 2007).

Culturally shared beliefs involve the core conceptions concerning the origins of human beings, concepts of time and space, as well as the meaning of life and death. Besides, it involves a set of shared norms and habits inherent to certain groups. As stated in Forgas (1985) all fragments of cultural activity, apprehended in terms of their symbolic value, may be analyzed as a unit of culture, referred to as *cultureme*, the smallest meaningful unit of culture. *Cultureme* might also refer to the behavioral settings, such as school, home, or restaurant, which are places characterized by symbolic culturally-defined interactive norms and expectations (Forgas, 1985). Besides, all kinds of signs, such as linguistic, iconic, indexical, etc., that require a certain level of culturally-specific knowledge for their interpretation are referred to as symbols. As a matter of fact, all these symbols contain objective and subjective meanings attached to them that may vary considerably within the different cultural groups (Ting-Toomey, 1999). These differences, in turn, are reflected during

an interaction in the form of communicative errors derived from the lack of interpretation of the distinct core linguistic symbols, affected by the values and meanings of the certain cultural community, that need to be recognized and acquired.

In the intercultural communication process, four stages might be recognized. The unconscious incompetence, whereby the individuals are unaware of their communicative errors while communicating with members of a different cultural community. Conscious incompetence refers to the situation in which the individuals despite being conscious about their intercultural incompetence, reject the possibility to enhance this type of knowledge. Conscious competence describes the stage when individuals, facing several obstacles during their interaction with the members of the out-group, decide to improve their intercultural knowledge. Unconscious competence designates the situation in which the intercultural interaction process proceeds fluently though there is no conscious awareness on the part of the individual (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Moreover, the intercultural communication process is characterized by well-meaning clashes (Ting-Toomey, 1999). By learning different cultural scripts belonging to their own native communities, the interlocutors tend to unconsciously use these scripts in evaluating the appropriateness of the behavior and of the conversational features displayed by members of the different cultural groups which might lead to various misunderstandings. These clashes are said to be well-meaning, because individuals, in fact, by acting in accordance with the politeness norms of their own culture, try to appear well-mannered and to assure successful communication outcomes without realizing that their actions are automatic and are based on the learned cultural scripts.

As a matter of fact, from birth the individuals are programmed and enculturated into their own culture, namely, they are made to acquire norms, ideologies, beliefs, and values belonging to their native cultures. This process is supported by family, education, religious and political systems. Moreover, individuals are constantly affected by the media and by the people sharing a similar worldview, factors leading to the strengthening of the enculturation process (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

As it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, intercultural contacts, due to the various degree of social, psychological, and cultural distance between the members from different

groups, might lead to identity dissonance or stress due to some unfamiliar patterns characterizing the interaction. The combination of such factors constitutes interactive unpredictability, which the communicators generally prefer to avoid. As a matter of fact, individuals would rather prefer to communicate with the interlocutors considered to be similar to themselves, although it is a known fact that much more might be learned from the individuals which are different from ourselves. This occurs because, in interaction with people viewed as similar, individuals employ common scripts, i.e. “recurring behavior routines” (Forgas, 1985, p. 6), that might predict the communicative outcomes - predictability in fact. Besides, individuals feel more comfortable communicating in a familiar cultural environment, conveying a sense of confidence and safety. While in “an unfamiliar cultural environment, we experience emotional vulnerability and threat” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 8).

Finally, intercultural communication always takes place in an embedded system, which is “an interdependent set of ingredients that constitute a whole and simultaneously influence each other” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 23). This type of communication is always situated in a context permeated by different cultural value dimensions affecting the exchange process between communicators. In the next section, the nature of the communication context will be discussed.

### *2.5. Interactive situations in SLA*

“Learning is situated in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world” (Block, 2007, p. 29). As has been already mentioned, social communication, namely the linguistic interaction with the members of the host communities, is determinant for the SLA process. Hence, to be ‘physically located in a country or place where the target language is the predominant linguistic mediator of day-to-day activity’ (Block, 2007, p. 94) is assumed to be one of the most efficient methods for acquiring the L2. Thus, spending time among the members of the target language community undoubtedly provides the learners with opportunities for interaction, which is crucial for the development and enhancement of L2 competence. Based on these assumptions, the nature of the interactive situation will be analyzed.

An interactive situation, according to Ting-Toomey (1999), stands for the interaction scene characterized by concrete features, the actual physical setting for instance, and by



psychological aspects, such as perceived roles of the interlocutors and the relational dimensions between them.

Based on the implicit assumptions preceding the poststructuralist view and implying that situational features might directly determine language behavior across a wide range of possible encounters, the social psychologists made several attempts to define what *situation* objectively means. Situations might be observed from either psychological or sociological perspectives. The former, the psychological orientation, considers the situations at the level of individual representation; while the latter, the sociological view, observes the situations at the level of social and cultural groups (Forgas, 1985).

Among the recent attempts by psychologists to describe the situation, Firth (1957) proposed the notion “context of situation” involving three major complements, namely, characteristics of the participants, relevant objects, and the effects of the verbal action (Forgas, 1985). Similarly, Gregory (1967) identified three situational features - the medium, the role, and the addressee. These necessary constituents of the situation refer to the communication channel, the topic, and the interpersonal relationship respectively. Linguistic choices and other dimensions relative to the discourse, such as mode, field, and tenor of the discourse, vary according to these situational features (Forgas, 1985). Hymes (1967, 1972) develops the SPEAKING model, a mnemonic summarizing the situational factors that affect the communicative events (all activities involving interaction): S - setting and scene; P - participants; E - ends (outcomes and goals); A - act sequence (sequence of speech acts); K - key (manner of communication); I - instrumentalities (forms and styles of speech); N - norms (social rules); G - linguistic genre. Nevertheless, the situations are not some sets of objective facts and circumstances, since they can be perceived subjectively. The language choices, in turn, are assumed to depend on the perceived situation rather than on actual, objective features. According to Leodolter and Leodolter (1976), in fact, the social world is constituted by the situational experiences, in which the individuals’ behavior is affected by the situations, which, in turn, are the products of the individuals’ perception (Forgas, 1985). According to Brown and Fraser (1979), situations involve scenes that include both the setting and the purpose of the interaction, and the participants, considered in terms of the individual features of the partners, and relationships between the participants. This taxonomy recognizes that the social roles of the individuals and their derived relationships constitute relevant features defining the social situation. Besides, the model acknowledges that language behavior is

affected by the subjective representations of situations, namely the perception of the situation. Moreover, not only is the choice of language code determined by the situation, but it also determines it (Forgas, 1985). Finally Giles and Hewstone (1982), following a more social-psychological orientation, claim that the most relevant aspect characterizing communicative situations is whether the participants are involved in an intergroup or an interindividual encounter. The type of encounters will determine, according to the scholars, various situational features such as formality, involvement, perceived tension, and cooperation (Forgas, 1985).

### *2.5.1. Cognitive representation of the situation*

In the last decades of the twentieth century, the themes concerning the cognitive representation of the situations and the situational variables affecting the interactive behavior were of great interest among scholars. Also termed as social episodes, the communicative situations stand for “consensual cognitive representations about recurring interactive routines” (Forgas, 1985, p. 7). Besides, Forgas (1985) argues that these “cognitive representations can be reliably quantified” (p. 7) and be related to language behaviors. The way social episodes are perceived, according to the researcher, depends on ‘a person’s subcultural background, group membership, and personality characteristics (Forgas, 1985, p. 7), such as social and linguistic skills.

As it has been previously mentioned, the individuals act upon the circumstances presented in the social situations, despite the fact that various components forming the episodes are perceived rather than objectively experienced by the individuals. Namely, the social episodes involve the connotative dimension which represents the basis for the situations’ perceptions. Therefore, most of the features defining the situation reflect the subjective perceptions of the individuals, undermining the objective evaluation of the encounter. Thus, the language choices of the individuals might be predicted by the certain significant psychological aspects characterizing the social setting, namely “language behaviors are dependent on [...] subjective representations, rather than on the objective situational features” (Forgas, 1985, p. 9). This connotative dimension of the situational perceptions, in turn, might be culture-based or to be the result of the individuals’ personal specific experiences.

Hence, cultures have different scripts regulating conversations. These culturally-related conversational norms (e.g. to be relevant, truthfully, not speak too much, etc.) define the way the speakers are expected to carry on the discourse according to the social situation. Besides, “our culture and society provides (sic.) us with a situational repertoire which is in some sense ‘given’”(Forgas, 1985, p. 3). Thus, situational features affect language use and interactive behavior. Nevertheless, the individuals, by symbolizing and abstracting their interactions, develop their unique shared situation definitions with participants in the specific interaction context (Forgas, 1985).

### *2.5.2. The role of the social situations in the SLA*

Assuming that both language and social situations, in which, among other things, the language might be acquired, are cultural products, “maintained and revised in the course of our daily interactions with one another” (Forgas, 1985, p. 11), in the following section the nature of the social situations and how the situational variables might affect the language behavior of the individuals will be explored.

As it has been mentioned above, the cultural meaning system involves sets of culturally - sensitive knowledge, behavioral norms, moral values, assessment criteria, and symbolically created realities, which are learned by the members of society and transmitted to the other members of their in-group through everyday interactions and other communication tools. Besides, intercultural communication includes underlying referential sets of “traditions, beliefs, values, norms, symbols, and meanings that are shared to varying degrees by interacting members of a community” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 10). Culture inevitably affects individuals' thinking process and their reactions, which, in turn, are reflected in the individuals' displayed behaviors during an interaction. In this regard, it might be assumed that during the interaction process, the language behaviors (language choices and strategies) are affected by the various situational features present in the interactive context, which are, in turn, influenced by the culturally meaning system. To sum up, the cultural norms are mapped into the scripts, which involve the criteria designating proper behaviors in particular social situations during an interaction with others.

As a matter of fact, intercultural communication involves verbal interactions that consist of almost completely routinized verbal exchanges (Forgas, 1985). In order to achieve the desired

communicative goal, different language strategies or verbal choices are used according to specific social situations. Besides, the culturally determined dynamics inherent to each type of social situation should be recognized and learned by the individuals, to display their verbal behavior in appropriate ways and to obtain the desired interactive goals. In fact, the link between language and social situation is formed early in life. This implies that all utterances produced and understood by members of different socio-cultural groups depend on the shared meanings of the utterances and on the knowledge concerning the surrounding social situation in the specific cultural context (Forgas, 1985). Thus, the way the individuals define specific social situations depends on the shared cultural scripts that assess the forms of interactive behavior, defining whether they are acceptable or not. Therefore, the process implies the consensual definition of the situation between the interactants (Forgas, 1985) since the “patterns of communication between members of a group eventually become a consensual system of coding and decoding information specific to individuals in that network” (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 255). Based on these assumptions, it is implied that in order to obtain the desired communicative outcomes, the newcomers are required to recognize and to acquire the culturally formed meanings of the utterances and of the situational features characterizing the new interactive context.

Since cultural scripts play an important role in defining interactive situations, the cultural functions involved in the interaction process will be analyzed.

## *2.6. Cultural functions*

Culture is defined as a learned system of meaning, communicated through natural language and other symbolic systems, capable of creating cultural entities and particular senses of reality. Through these systems of meaning, individuals and groups adapt to their environment. The way they structure their interpersonal activities and define the appropriate interactive pattern also depends on this learned system of meaning (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

As a matter of fact, as stated in Ting-Toomey (1999) culture carries out several functions. Some are worth mentioning for the scope of this analysis. First of all, it includes the identity meaning function, whereby the referential features, such as beliefs or values, affect the meaning individuals attribute to their identities. Secondly, it serves as the group inclusion function needed to satisfy the individual's necessity for belonging and for experiencing the

sense of community. Within their own community (the in-group), individuals experience a sense of inclusion and acceptance. Speaking the same language and sharing common cultural symbols, during an interaction, allow a more accurate assessment of the others' moods and intentions. Conversely, with the members of a different group (the out-group) more effort in interpreting or guessing their cultural meanings is required. Besides, major attention should be paid by individuals to their acting, during the interacting process. Another function is the intergroup boundary regulation function, whereby the assessment criteria concerning the interactive behavior of the individuals from out-groups are shaped. Generally, this function regulates the manner in which the interaction with individuals from different cultural groups should be conducted. In this respect, culture constitutes a form of restriction limiting the way the members from different cultural groups see and interpret each other. The next function is called the ecological adaptive function. Generally, culture facilitates the adaptation process of the individuals to their external environment. Besides, it has been argued by the author that there is an adaptive interrelatedness "among the self, the cultural community, and the larger environment" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 14). This definition suggests that in the process of adaptation, whereby the individuals adjust their needs and ways of acting to the changes accruing in their environment, their culture also tends to change accordingly in response to these alterations. Culture, in this regard, is considered as a dynamic and evolutionary process, whereby although the individuals are affected by their cultures and tend to preserve it, simultaneously, they are those who alter it over time. Finally, the cultural communication function, which, by means of the shared linguistic codes, norms, and scripts "shapes the implicit theories we have about appropriate human conduct and effective human practices in a given sociocultural context" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 15). In fact, according to Forgas (1985), "people are constituted as a society with a certain culture to the extent that they share the same means of communication" (p. 10). This statement leads to the assumption that all the episodes of cultural activity rely on ideas or generalization, which are then transmitted through the language (Forgas, 1985).

Intercultural communication implies the negotiation of shared meanings, considered to be the main purpose of intercultural interactive encounters. The message, in fact, generally contains multiple layers of meaning, which need to be recognized and understood by the interlocutors. First, the content meaning designates the factual information conveyed through verbal interaction or other communication mediums. The relational meaning, on the other hand, is inferred through intonation or body language that follows the content message and it defines

the relationship state between the interlocutors (e.g power distance). Finally, identity meaning stands for a role or a position the interlocutors are assigned to during the interactive episodes, through the process called identity negotiation, discussed in chapter one (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Generally, intercultural communication entails several features. Primarily, there are varying degrees of cultural differences and similarities between the members of two distinct groups. The distinction might concern cultural traditions, beliefs, and moral values. Moreover, each interactive episode is characterized by simultaneous encoding and decoding of verbal and nonverbal messages. And, according to Ting-Toomey (1999), both parts of the exchange process are responsible for the effective interaction process and its successful communicative outcomes.

Block (2007) argues that although negotiation of meaning is a crucial factor during an interaction, since the common aim of the interlocutors is mutual understanding, immigrants, however, are often held responsible for monitoring the negotiation of understanding. The members of the L2 community, in fact, are not always willing to adapt their language, by avoiding specialized jargon, or by using less ambiguous phrase construction (Block, 2007). This condition, according to the author, might cause a sense of failure in the immigrants who are unable to reach their communicative goal. Besides, during the communicative events, the immigrant's language competence is often assessed and judged by the interlocutors who feel dominant in the discourse, positioning the immigrants as inadequate interlocutors (Block, 2007).

### *2.6.1. Mindful intercultural communication*

According to the identity negotiation theory, mentioned in the previous chapter, the communication outcomes in order to be considered positive should include the feeling of being understood and respected, meaning that the behavior and practices the individuals perform, in order to be assigned the desired identity option, are deemed as legitimate by the others. Moreover, the individuals want to feel supported and to be viewed positively also by members of different cultural groups (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Thus, in order to achieve satisfactory intercultural communication outcomes, the participants in the communicative

episodes are required to integrate their cultural knowledge and various communicative skills and to act mindfully during the interactive process.

As previously mentioned, intercultural interaction is affected by the issues derived from various external and internal factors. Therefore, the participants in the intercultural communication episodes need to consciously analyze various behavioral patterns characterizing the members belonging to the different cultural groups, namely the need to practice mindfulness. The term refers to “the readiness to shift one’s frame of reference, the motivation to use new categories to understand cultural or ethnic differences, and the preparedness to experiment with creative avenues of decision making and problem-solving” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 46). When, instead, during the intercultural interactive episodes the individuals tend to act automatically without any conscious reflection, relying solely on the familiar frame of reference, the routinized scripts, and categories, and do things only in customary ways, they are said to practice mindlessness (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Mindful intercultural communication is based on the interlocutors’ perceptions derived from the evaluation of each other’s communicative performance. This performance displayed during the interaction might be assessed positively or negatively based on the socio-cultural context and the participants’ cultural background. What might be judged from one cultural perspective as effective and appropriate, may be deemed as inadequate from another (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Mindful intercultural communication, thus, implies the integration of the necessary cultural-sensitive knowledge, motivations, and adaptive interaction skills to the intercultural encounters to achieve the desired interactive goals and to manage various communicative issues, arising during the interactive episodes, more effectively (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Cultural-sensitive knowledge stands for the cognitive understanding of the cultural features required to communicate appropriately and effectively in a given situation (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Without this kind of knowledge, during intercultural interaction, the communicators might not be able to associate identity-based behavior with the underlying cultural behavioral norms and values. Thus, it consists of recognizing and understanding a series of phenomena such as cultural membership and personal identity factors. This knowledge is acquired as a result of conscious and unconscious gaining of information through personal experience,

explicit learning, or/ and observation. Hence, intercultural competence is achieved, when the individuals become aware of their own mental scripts and preconceived categorization affecting their thinking and judging systems. Following this acknowledgment, the individuals should become detached from their viewpoints and accept different perspectives, recognizing the existence of multiple realities and multiple truths. “By conveying our respect and acceptance of group-based and person-based differences, we encourage interpersonal trust, inclusion, and connection” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 54)

### *2.7. Acculturation and SLA*

According to Schumann (1976), there is a certain correlation between the level of acculturation and the second language acquisition outcomes (Norton Peirce, 1995). This assumption is consistent with the ethnolinguistic identity theory mentioned by Giles and Johnson (1987) whereby the learners who attempt to maintain their ethnolinguistic, or linguistic, identity and use of L1, and who diverge from outgroup speakers, are less likely to acquire nativelike proficiency in their second language. They observed that some members of a group in certain situations converge toward outgroup speakers by attenuating their linguistic distinctiveness; whereas, others accentuate their ethnolinguistic characteristics and diverge from outgroup speakers.

The language “is the primary medium of communication of cultural information, it is intimately linked with identity” (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 255). In fact, as has been stated in Halstead (n.d.) all human languages are characterized by cultural charge. Thus, since language and culture are closely intertwined, learning a new language implies learning a new culture. Many researchers argue that “language acquisition comes from cultural attitudes and associated values” (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 255).

The variation in identity, however, occurs not merely by language shift, but is negotiated during the interactive episodes. The cultural identity, conceived as a reflective self-image derived from the process of cultural socialization of the individuals within a specific cultural group or enculturation (Ting-Toomey, 1999), therefore, might change as a result of the acquisition of a new routine. Language learning, in fact, is more than the acquisition of a new language system, instead, it is an “experience interlinked with questions of culture, involving the transformation of the way of thinking, feeling, and acting” (Bock 2009, p. 70). According



to Pavlenko (1998) by acquiring the new language, learners gain access to the new socio-cultural realities. In this regard, the native and the newly entered worlds somehow coexist in learners. And when individuals switch from one language to another, they realize that these two worlds clash, uncovering all the conceptual boundaries and limitations reflected in the different linguistic systems possessed by the learner. Thus, when individuals switch from one language to another, they realize that by changing the form, the content is also subject to change (Pavlenko, 1998). As a matter of fact, as has been argued by Noels, Clement & Gaudet (2004) that original cultural identity and the newly acquired cultural identity of the host community “are stored as separate knowledge structures” (p. 255). Hence, when linguistic forms are activated in a particular language “the associated cultural characteristics are likely to be evoked” (p.255).

Native cultural scripts of behavior and social interaction often result in cultural clashes leading the learners to become aware of their native culture (Pavlenko, 1998). In fact, as discussed in the chapter concerning the identity dimensions, the individuals are generally unaware of their cultural identities and underlying cultural scripts. Besides, Pavlenko (1998) states that since “the history of people is essentially the sum of the external influences to which it has been subjected [...] there is no point in imprisoning oneself in traditional national values” (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 12).

Learners who live in their L2 community usually find themselves going through the process of acculturation. Discussed in the previous chapter, the notion stands for a complex multidimensional process, whereby the cultural patterns might change leading to the reorientation of thinking and feeling, consequent to the intergroup contact, in order to better adapt to the new socio-cultural context (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Namely, acculturation refers to the degree of closeness to the specific cultural group. In this sense, the integration is an intermediate or bicultural-oriented condition, whereby the L2 learners conform to the cultural practices of the L2 community while preserving their own culture for some specific practices (Berry, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1999). It states between assimilation which is a total abandonment of one's own culture in favor of the culture of the host community and preservation, or separation as in (Berry, 1992), which is an opposite process.

Assuming that the development of the L2 competency depends on the interaction between the learner and the native speakers, “the degree of cultural, social, and psychological distance

might infer with the process of acculturation undermining the enhancement of the second language competence” (Halstead, n.d., 3). In fact, as has been mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the main system-level factors affecting the process of intercultural integration is the cultural distance between the groups, namely, “the degree of psychological adjustment that is needed to bring the dissimilarities between the culture of origin and the culture of entry” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 238). The social distance generally refers to the social difference between two groups, which is manifested in a different attitude toward a series of social phenomena (Norton Peirce, 1995). The distance might also concern language, and behavioral styles or self-conceptions. In the case of the high distance degree, immigrants are required major affective, cognitive, behavioral, and other supportive resources to transcend such differences, which might lead to the low acculturation degree. Since the acculturation process implies a cultural change which might lead to the reorientation of thinking and feeling required, in order to achieve better SLA outcomes, a modification in attitudes, knowledge, and behavior is also required (Halstead n.d, 3).

The acculturation process, besides, might depend on several psychological factors. The first one is the psychological health of the first language ego (Norton Peirce, 1995). Having strong self-esteem in one’s own culture will promote the development of a new persona in the new language. Another factor might be the degree of tolerance of ambiguity mentioned in Ting-Toomey (1999). It has been assumed that individuals characterized by “the higher degree of tolerance for ambiguity [...] have less fear in approaching cultural strangers than individuals with the lower degree of tolerance for ambiguity. In general, ‘[i]ndividuals with personal flexibility are more ready to experiment with new knowledge and new skills in culturally diverse situations” (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 45).

Another internal psychological factor, that might influence the psychological distance between the L2 learner and the members of the L2 community, is *ego-permeability* (in Halstead, n.d.). Ego, a concept elaborated by Freud (1923) develops early in life, once children become aware of the external world and their own body. It is required in order to guide the children's behavior, helping them to control their basic instincts associated with the identification of self. Learners who more easily open themselves to the new culture, to the new society, and to the new language, are considered to have more permeable and more flexible ego-boundaries. And according to Halstead (n.d.), the learners with more flexible ego boundaries are more successful in their second language learning than those rigid

ego-boundaries who did not want to assimilate. Children are said to have a greater language ego permeability since they have a shorter experience with their language. Adolescents, however, are obliged to go through a series of physical and emotional changes which might lead to inhibition, and their ego permeability starts to fade. Consequently, for adults, ego permeability is even lower (Halstead, n.d.). According to Block (2007), language ego permeability might be enhanced through empathy.

## *2.8. Language identity and SLA*

Following the poststructuralist approach to L2 learning, the role of the language in constructing and reproducing social relationships will be analyzed. According to this perspective, all forms of semiotic activity acquire their value through discourse practices (Miller & Kubota, 2013). Namely, all instances of language use are interpreted as indicators of the interactants' identity. In this regard, the utterances constitute acts of identity (Miller & Kubota, 2013). These indexes might refer to different identity dimensions, such as ethnicity, nationality, or socioeconomic status. The enactment of any of these identity dimensions is reflected in all the utterances that occur during an interaction. In this sense, the language identity is multidimensional and it involves, in addition to the verbal utterances, all forms of semiotic behavior (Miller & Kubota, 2013). Namely, other symbolic accessories attached to the verbal exchange, such as hairstyle or facial expression, might affect the communication and the identity negotiation processes.

In order to become an accepted member of the community of practice, the individuals should display the multimodal package required by the social interactive context in question (Block, 2007). The extent to which the interactants are capable of enacting the required multimodal package is called audibility (Block, 2007). The notion defines “a combination of the right accents as well as the right social and cultural capital to be an accepted member of a community of practice” (Block, 2007, p. 64). As stated in Block (2007), the development of the new linguistic identity in additional language consists not only in learning and processing of the target linguistic features, but it also includes “dress, expressions, movement, behavior, and all other forms of semiotic behavior” (Block, 2007, p. 64). Although audibility appears to be an objective and reliable indicator of linguistic competence, the individuals, despite presenting an acceptable multimodal package, are not always in control of the reception of their audibility due to some unrelated factors such as racial phenotype (Block, 2007).

As in the case of other types of identity, language identities might shift dramatically during one's lifetime (Block, 2007). When individuals learn their L2 and then lose their original group identity and language, the phenomenon is called subtractive bilingualism and "corresponds to assimilation indicative of ethnic cultural loss" (Noels, Clement & Gaudet 2004, p. 251). Additive bilingualism refers to a phenomenon in which although the L2 is learned and the new cultural identity is acquired, the original cultural identity is integrated with the new one (Noels, Clement & Gaudet, 2004). According to Halstead (n.d), in those cases in which the first language, due to some historical or social reasons, contributes to the negative social identity, the individuals are more inclined to assimilate linguistically to the target language group.

### *2.8.1. Language ego*

According to Galetcaia (2013), migratory behavior might be viewed as "the most transformative exploits of the human experience and dynamic instances of social action" (p. 4270). And this transformativeness constitutes the main characteristic of the L2 learning experience (Galetcaia, 2013). As mentioned in the section concerning the interrelatedness between the level of acculturation and L2 learning outcome, the extent to which individuals invest in new language identity formation affects their L2 competence.

The immigrants are often associated with the action of moving which takes the name displacement. The moving, as a matter of fact, concerns not only the actual experience of relocating to the new socio-cultural context, but it also implies being "dispersed in space, disconnected from the homeland and disrupted from the originally presupposed existence" (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4270). In fact, by moving, the individuals find themselves building their living space "in the virtual absence of real or imaginary home, home culture, and "home" language" (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4270). This condition might lead the immigrants to feel 'neither here nor there" (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4274).

The initial mindset of the immigrants is often characterized by a positive attitude toward the future changes viewed as the opportunities for the enhancement of the living conditions. Nevertheless, the pure psychological readiness to deal with various dramatic factors unfolding throughout the individual's adaptation period, such as a more inferior social

position in the receiving country, might transform the preexisting expectations concerning self-realization into a sense of failure and disappointment (Galetcaia, 2013).

According to Galetcaia (2013), in fact, the initial hopes for an effortless intercultural adaptation might fade as a result of direct interaction with the members of the receiving community, displaying unfamiliar forms of socialization. This assumption is consistent with the notion of unpredictability mentioned by Ting-Toomey (1999) and discussed in the previous section. According to the scholar, in an interaction between the members from different groups, such factors as the degree of social, psychological, and cultural distance between the individuals, will determine the occurrence of the unfamiliar interactive patterns during the interactive exchange, namely unpredictability. High unpredictability is likely to lead to identity dissonance or stress. The immigrants, in the condition of difficult adaptation to a new setting, might develop a sense of emotional discomfort, which, in turn, might evolve into confusion, frustration, aversion, and eventually into fear of the other (Galetcaia, 2013). This sense of inadequacy, in turn, will result in a series of psychological defense mechanisms such as isolation and regression, eventually leading to reduced contacts with the members of the host community, or even to the emergence of hidden hostilities. Besides, “the negative response to the host culture may be transferred to the language” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4274). These factors will allegedly preclude the possibility of developing the new appropriate identity in an additional language. Namely, by resisting the new language and the host culture, individuals might lose precious opportunities for the enhancement of their L2 competence.

The deep inner conflict following the interactive episodes in the new socio-cultural context that leads to the rejection of the host culture and, eventually, the L2, is referred to as anxiety or “ego conflict” (Galetcaia, 2013 p. 4274). According to Guiora (1972), mentioned in Galetcaia (2013), the main cause responsible for the adverse reactions, such as language and personal inhibition, undermining the use of L2 and effective integration in the new community, is called language ego. It is “an agency responsible for higher/lower effectiveness of SLA based on its qualities of adaptability/non-adaptability, flexibility/non-flexibility, submission/resistance, openness/closedness and tolerance/intolerance of ambiguity” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4270). Language ego constitutes a sort of inner filter against threatening situations, affecting the adaptation to the new socio-cultural setting as well as the outcomes of the SLA process. It might affect the learner’s

capacity to adjust to the surrounding circumstances, by regulating “the process of intercultural diffusion, tending to preserve or vindicate the core characteristics of selfhood formed under influence of the home culture and mother tongue” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4274).

According to Galetcaia (2013), language ego induces the learners to become aware of their ego-boundaries, which might be extended to connect on a deeper level with the symbolic dimension of the new language and culture. This assumption is consistent with the notion of ego-permeability, discussed in the previous chapter. To be characterized by more flexible or permeable ego-boundaries, namely to be more open to the new socio-cultural and linguistic contexts, is associated with the major success in L2 acquisition (Halstead, n.d). Generally, the notion of flexible ego boundaries is related to the process of cultural assimilation, viewed as indicative of better SLA outcomes.

The transformative process is affected by the dominant primary structures. Namely, the individuals’ mother tongue and associated culture might evoke in the learners’ “a sense of self-torn between the mother tongue and home culture on one hand and the new language and host culture on the other” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4274).

The value of the language forming the learners’ identity is often underestimated. The learners acquire new identities together with their newly acquired competencies. “When a learner engages with multi-dimensional aspects of the new language, she soon experiences an urge to reshape her identity based on new conditions” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4271). “The acquisition and use of the additional language in the social context of the host culture engendered transformations in their self-perception” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4272). Thus, the L2 constitutes a tool for both subjective expression and communication with others. “the language is a door to the [new] socio-cultural world”, where the individuals think, socialize, and behave differently from the members of the original cultural group of the immigrants.

When newcomers spend a considerable amount of time around the members of their host communities they might start “to imitate the gestures, intonation, facial expressions and posture of the host” (Galetcaia, 2013, p. 4271), which might lead to the development of more complex psychological reactions. This assumption implies that the use of different languages might lead to several changes in the behavior and personal responses of the individuals, due to a different sensory perception and intellectual processing of the features associated with

the socio-cultural language realities (Galetecaia, 2013). This deep psychological transformation, which follows the L2 acquisition is referred to by Pavlenko (1998) as self-translation.

### *2.8.2. Identity shift and self-translation*

According to Pavlenko (1998) the L2 learners, driven by the desire to belong, to be accepted and understood, engage in second language and culture learning on all levels of discourse, which leads to the deep transformation of culturally formed selves.

Translation, in this sense, refers to the process of “making meaning of the new cultural practices and reinterpreting one’s own subjectivities (self-translation) in order to mean in the new environment” (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 4). Generally, the individuals realize that meaning is not equivalent in their two discursive systems, and since the social identities are negotiated through the discourse practices, the individuals need to learn the way to be decoded in terms of the discourses available in that society (Pavlenko, 1998), thus to translate themselves.

When the individuals find themselves reflecting about their subjective experience in the lexical categories of L2, they become aware that these categories are not the exact equivalent of the lexical categories in their L1, especially when the emotional categories are concerned. All individuals are affected by their cultural scripts guiding their behaviour and attitudinal patterns. Not only do the cultural scripts affect the displayed behavior but they also constitute an evaluative system, namely, the way the individuals approach or react to various events is culturally formed. This assumption implies that the same emotional experiences might have different interpretations by the members of different linguistic communities since the attitudes toward these subjective experiences are culturally formed. For instance, admitting to experience such emotion as jealousy, might be stigmatized by some cultures, while for others it does not constitute a source of shame, instead, it rather might entail a certain degree of irony. This suggests that the interpretation of the emotional experience “cannot be separated from the subjective experience itself” (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 14), which is, however, affected by the cultural scripts.

Thus, in order to adapt to the new socio-cultural context, the newcomers need to acquire the behaviors, attitudes, reactions, and ways to express themselves in order to display appropriate

interactive patterns during the interaction. Besides, since this transformative process also concerns mimics and body language, the notion of self-translation is consistent with the concepts of audibility and cultural capital discussed in the previous chapter.

Pavlenko (1998) distinguishes two main stages of language learning in immigration. The first stage, according to the author, is associated with continuous losses the individuals learning L2 generally undergo. The second stage, on the other hand, corresponds to the phase of gains and gains and (re)constructions. The stages include several substages, which are not perfectly consecutive, instead, they might present a certain degree of overlap.

The first stage of losses involves five sub-stages. The first substage is referred to as careless baptism describing an imposed name change. By arriving in a new L2 community, immigrants often need to change their name due to phonetics or some formal reasons. This process is accompanied by the necessity to get used to these new names since they often do not correspond to the socio-semantic value they entailed in the original social community. This factor, besides, leads to the alteration in the forms of social interaction (Pavlenko, 1998). The second substage is called the loss of all subjectivities, which stands for the loss of ethnic, cultural, and class identities, creating a sense of disorientation in individuals experiencing it. The next substage is the loss of the frame of reference, which occurs when words in the new language do not evoke the associations of the same words in their L1. The words are perceived merely as referents without any conceptual backup systems, such as the connotative associations or the moral system behind the concepts. It also concerns the geographical frame. Namely, the individuals realize that the original geographical location is not a center of the world anymore, but an abstract location characterized by some symbolic categorization, such as “large cold place”. The fourth substage is the loss of the inner, private voice or speech used for talking to ourselves and in constructing the self. Finally, during the fifth sub-stage individuals experience the first language attrition or linguistic dispossession (Pavlenko, 1998).

The second stage is referred to as the stage of gains and (re)construction and it includes four sub-stages. The first substage of the second stage corresponds to the appropriation of others’ voices. When the immigrant’s voice is no longer appropriate in the new social context, they need to assume others’ voices and make them their own in order to achieve more successful communication with the members of the L2 community. Namely, when immigrants start



lacking their own voice, they assume the voice of others, their modulation, and intonation, which is considered to be useful to satisfy several social needs. The following substage concerns the emergence of one's own new voice and self. During this period, the individuals, by learning about their new environment, start to become aware of subtle signals, cultural rituals, behavior, and traditions. This new awareness allows the individuals to correctly use various symbolic meanings, such as metaphors, enhancing their ability to express themselves. The third substage is referred to as translation therapy, whereby the past experiences connected with the mother tongue are translated into L2. Finally, continuous growth, implying the acquiring of new positions and subjectivities, as a consequence of deliberate renegotiation of the learner's identities during an interaction with members of the receiving community (Pavlenko, 1998).

Consistent with the transformative model of the second language learners proposed by Pavlenko (1998), Halstead (n.d.) describes her own transformative experience during her stay in New Zealand. The author claims that once she was fully immersed in the new language and culture of the host community, the new L2 persona emerged. After a short period of internal conflict, this new identity was integrated with her L1 or native identity. This manifestation of the new identity initially created a sense of insecurity and uncertainty, which leads to confusion in determining her idea of self. The personal experience of the author is yet another argument suggesting that both language acquisition and adapting to the new culture are interrelated with several social identity processes of the learner.

The second stage of language learning proposed by Pavlenko (1998) and the subjective experience shared by Halstead (n.d) describe late bilinguals, the individuals who spend a considerable amount of time in their host communities. What the immigrants experience while interacting in L2, is comparable, to some extent, to what the monolingual speakers undergo when they “shift attitudes when switching from office discourse to friendly to family talk” (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 15). Similarly, immigrants come to realize that their subjective experiences and social identities might not be compatible with their new socio-cultural environment or hard to read for the members of their receiving community. This condition induces the individuals' selves to reconstruct in conformity with the culturally-based interactive and behavioral patterns of the host community and to “ensure full participation in discursive interactions of their new speech communities” (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 15).

Generally, the late bilinguals' experiences are characterized by the coexistence of two worlds, namely "there are two voices and selves, which coexist, peacefully or violently, at times reacting differently to events and people, providing contradictory, conflicting answers to posited questions" (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 14). This statement is consistent with the assumption, previously discussed in the section concerning the social situation in SLA. According to this view, the displayed behavior of the individuals during an interaction reflects their thinking process and reactions, which are affected by the culture (Forgas, 1985). Thus, allegedly the displayed behavior will change once the different linguistic and related cultural patterns are acquired. This, in turn, leads to more profound psychological changes and the deriving new self-image, or social identity.

As stated in Pavlenko (1998), "once a second identity takes a place alongside the first one, bilinguals - with great pain and effort, with losses and gains - learn to navigate between the two worlds, two ways of thinking, assigning distinct functions to each of them" (Pavlenko, 1998, p. 14). Thus, the transformative process of the immigrants described by Pavlenko (1998), involves the terrifying experience of the individual's self drowning in the vast ocean of meaningless water, but then emerging with the new identity, impregnated with new cultural meanings.

However, intercultural adaptation is a hard process affected by several psychological and social factors. In fact, the immigrants are required to make a huge cognitive as well as emotional effort to be recognized as legitimate speakers (Block, 2007), and "fully functioning members of different communities of practice" (Block, 2007, p. 98).

During the adaptation to the new socio-cultural environment and L2 acquisition, the individuals undergo an exhausting and unsettling process of transformation. This process, according to Pavlenko (1998), might constitute the cause of why not everybody reaches a nativelike fluency in L2, rather than because of some memory limits.

To sum up, in this chapter, several conditions affecting identity formation in additional languages have been analyzed. As it was argued above, L2 acquisition is a very delicate process due to its social, psychological, and cognitive nature.

Affected by the cultural scripts, the interactive patterns of the interactants might clash, due to the different referential systems. These clashes might lead to various misunderstandings in

terms of linguistic or other symbolic meanings. In these circumstances, the immigrants might be assigned an inferior social position, due to the relations of power between the newcomers and the members of the host community. The only way to overcome this undesirable subject position seems to be the acquiring of the L2 and the relative cultural knowledge. Since the identity is negotiated through discourse practices, the immigrants need to learn how to be decoded in terms of the local discourses. To achieve this immigrants are required to acquire the L2 and to undergo the acculturation process, at least to the extent, allowing the recognition and enacting of the multimodal package of new linguistic identity.

### **Chapter III: Social and linguistic integration policies in Italy**

Intercultural interaction is, by all means, a very delicate process, since each interactive episode affects the social identity projection of the interactants. This is especially true for the individuals who find themselves in the contexts in which their interactive behavior needs to be adapted to the different and unfamiliar interactive scripts, deemed as appropriate in the new communicative context. The interactive situations involve several underlying cultural norms and values, specific to each cultural context. It is a very challenging process since each society is characterized by its own immigration and linguistic history, which might affect the general perception of the intercultural interactive situation of both the immigrant and the members of the receiving community. Italy, in this sense, constitutes a very special case. Having to deal with the rapid shift from the country as a source of the emigrants to the destination of the huge immigration flow. Besides, the plurilinguistic context in Italy, already challenging on the national level, was newly tried by the arrival of the new minority languages in the country. The lack of explicit integration policies often leads to the appearance of various norms aiming to regulate the immigration flow, viewing it as a problem rather than a precious cultural resource for the host society. Considering the acquisition of the language as directly linked to the integration, the standardized language testings for the immigrants applying for the long-term permit of stay were introduced. This measure reflects the historical tendency to the subtractive approach privileged in Italian schools in the post-unification history. Standardized language testing is not really an objective indicator of the immigrants' integration level, and it also excludes the categories of individuals with little literacy background. Besides, the schools offering the L2 courses had to shift their approaches, prioritizing the preparation for the standardized tests rather than a more effective additive language teaching. Council of Europe proposed the guidelines for understanding the integration in terms of the intercultural dialogues. It also offers general indications of how the second language training should be organized and what features of the immigrants need to be taken into account, in order to guarantee effective language acquisition and the integration of the individuals in the new society. In addition, it illustrates the importance of the additive rather than a subtractive approach to language teaching, since the other language(s) known by the immigrants constitute a precious cultural heritage of the individuals. Valorization of the other languages known by the immigrants is required in order to protect their self-esteem since it reflects and is linked to immigrants' original identity.

### *3.1. Historical account of immigration in Italy*

Since its unification in 1861, Italy has been characterized by massive emigration flow, with millions of Italian citizens leaving the country, emigrating toward the American continents and other European countries for economic and political reasons. In the late 1970s, Italy began to experience its first significant immigrant arrivals, switching from being the country of strong emigration to the popular destination of the immigrants (Camozzi, 2011; Scotto, 2017)

Although Italy is not the unique country undergoing this type of transformation, the rapidity with which the inversion of the migratory balance took place, has posed a number of difficult challenges to the country as a whole, thoroughly testing its ability to interpret, adapt to and manage this new condition (Pastore n.d). Generally, several countries of western and northern Europe knew this parable. Today, a similar migration transition is taking place in vast areas of the world (Pastore n.d). In Italy, this transformation began as many Northern European countries began to close their borders to immigrants. In these new circumstances, the immigrants from other countries began to arrive in Italy, unstopped by the immigration laws lacking, at that time, the norms regulating the flows. The official policy was issued in 1986 (Legge n. 943 del 1986) (Camozzi, 2011).

When foreign immigration began to affect Italy, it was not sustained by an explicit demand for labor from the business world, nor by an active migration policy, as it has been elsewhere in Europe. Thus, although immigration was functional to an economic system in need of flexible and inexpensive work, its positive function was never officially acknowledged. Therefore, in these circumstances, immigration law and policy in Italy developed under the impulse of conflicting needs and not always consistent trends (Pastore, n.d). Namely, through a series of legislative interventions, such as the law 388/1993 approving of the Schengen agreements, restricting the legislation on entry and residence in the country. However, the general attitude toward the presence of the irregular immigrants was objectively forbearing, which was reflected in a non-comprehensive discipline of expulsion, as well as in the repeated regularizations undertaken in the country. However, due to difficulties encountered by the public authorities in bringing migration flows under control, the overall prevailing attitude toward the policy of integration was characterized by a low commitment in their implementation (Pastore n.d).

In the same period, the international geopolitical landscape was disrupted by the collapse of the Soviet Union, followed by the decline of the Soviet block. The removal of this obstacle constituted a push factor for the migration of citizens from Central and Eastern Europe toward wealthier countries, including Italy. In fact, from that moment on the composition of the immigrant population in Italy further changed by adding the citizens from such countries as Albania, Romania, Ukraine, Poland in addition to the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Scotto, 2017). Although the different economic developments and political events in other countries did not involve Italy directly, the country needed to face the consequences of the upheaval. Italy, in fact, began to accept asylum seekers and immigrants from various regions, including Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. The Arab Spring in 2011, followed by the destabilization of authoritarian regimes in North Africa and the Middle East contributed to the growing number of individuals fleeing civil war and instability and seeking new opportunities in Europe. Besides, the geographic position of the peninsula made it become the passageway for maritime arrivals for those who intended to move towards Northern European countries (Scotto, 2017). Today Italy accommodates around 5.3 million immigrants, including about 530,000 foreign residents in an irregular situation (Fondazione Ismu 2018). In 2020, immigrants reached 8.4% of the total number resident population of Italy with 83.1% concentrated in the Center-North (Istat, 2022).

### *3.2. Immigration policies in Italy*

The first law formally regulating the immigration phenomenon was TULPS (*Testo Unico delle Leggi di Pubblica sicurezza*), the Consolidated Law on Public Security, which dealt with immigration in a generic way, namely focusing on national security and public order. The first law on immigration was issued in 1986 (the law n.943 of 1986), informally known as Fosci Law (*Legge Fosci*). This law for the first time included the rules on the placement and treatment of non-EU immigrant workers and presented the norms against illegal immigration. The law provided for guarantees for all non-EU workers, legally residing in its territory and their families. Besides, the law stated equal treatment and full equality of rights with respect to Italian workers. The Italian Republic also guarantees the rights relating to the use of social and health services. Besides, it also included the norms that assured the maintenance of cultural identity, access to education, and the availability of housing. However, while recognizing many important rights for the immigrants, the law was still

lacking the programming for the systematic treatment of the phenomenon. The most important part of the law was the amnesty (*la sanatoria*) of the positions of foreigners already present in Italy illegally. This initiative aimed at giving an initial response to the problem of undeclared work (La Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1986; Loprieno & Fantozzi, 2014).

Subsequently, the decree-law, n. 416 of 1989, also known as the Martelli Law, was enacted. It contained the rules on political asylum, entry, and stay of non-EU citizens and the regularization of non-EU (and stateless) citizens already present in the territory of the State. It was converted into law in 1990 and it inaugurated the first policy of programming migration flows. The law was intended as an instrument designed for preventive control of the flows through a gradual absorption of foreigners, in order to facilitate their future social and work integration. The law provided for the rules on political asylum, entry, stay, and the expulsion of non-EU citizens, according to a strict immigration control perspective. It also introduced some new types of residence permits, established the first reception centers, and introduced the institution of the expulsion of non-EU citizens. It also added an improvement in the regulatory situation of foreign workers. This resulted in the frequent use of *sanatorie* in order to legalize the status of foreigners living in Italy (la camera dei deputati, 2021).

However, despite the designed programming, the law was unable to regulate economic migration flows and to reduce irregular migration, due to the scarcity of real resources for reception and assistance of the newcomers, and for enforcing the expulsion of irregular migrants. The expulsion took place only by notification in the written form to the foreigner to leave the country on their own initiative within 15 days, which in most cases did not happen. In addition, the low sanctions against irregular employers resulted in a further flow of illegal labor immigration attracted by the practical possibility of finding work even if in illegal conditions. Besides, the forced expulsions were strongly opposed by many politicians and social forces, considering it as a violation of individual freedom which is crucial for the Italian legal tradition (Loprieno & Fantozzi, 2014).

The Martelli Law remained unchanged until 1998 when the center-left government approved the Turco-Napolitano Law.

In this period, foreign immigration became an ordinary phenomenon in Italy and needed to be regulated in an organic and coherent manner in all its many aspects. The law was inspired by

the so-called binary logic, separating regular immigration for work reasons, linking them to the endeavors aimed for the facilitating of their social integration, from illegal immigration, which instead needed to be limited, prevented, and repressed. For these reasons, the more effective planning of entry flaws for work was implemented, while enforcing the sanctions against legal immigration and the criminal exploitation of migratory flows. Besides, the law included the policies for the more effective integration of the new immigrants and the foreigners already legally residing in Italy, through explicit recognition of several rights of the immigrants (Gazzetta ufficiale, 1998). Namely, the document identifies

“the general criteria for defining the flows of entry into the territory of the State, outlines public interventions aimed at promoting family relationships, social integration and cultural integration of foreigners residing in Italy, in compliance with diversity, and of the cultural identities of the people, provided that they do not conflict with the legal system; and provides for every possible instrument for a positive reintegration in the countries of origin” (Law n.40 dated 6 March 1998, art.3, Gazzetta Ufficiale 1998, my translation).

Besides, the law assigned the role to the regions, provinces, municipalities, and other local bodies in adopting the measures to pursue the objective based on the removal of the obstacles preventing the full recognition of rights and interests recognized to foreigners in the territory of the State, with particular regard to those relating to accommodation, language, social integration, in compliance with the fundamental values rights of the human being (Gazzetta ufficiale, 1998).

In accordance with the criteria of this law, in 1998, the Government issued the Legislative Decree n. 286 of 1998, containing the Consolidated text of the provisions concerning the discipline of immigration and rules on the condition of the foreigner (*Testo unico delle disposizioni concernenti la disciplina dell'immigrazione e norme sulla condizione dello straniero*), which includes the measures for the social integration of the immigrant. Namely, the main principle underlying the act are the norms concerning the overall management of the migratory phenomenon, such as rules for entry, control, and also the measures against the violation of such rules. It also defines the integration rights including the conditions for citizenship, fights against discrimination, protection of social rights, health care, family reunification, right to study, and political rights (except the right of the active and passive electorate) (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1998a).



The document states, that the State, the regions, the provinces, and the municipalities are required, in collaboration with the associations of foreigners, with the organizations operating on their behalf, with the authorities, and with public and private entities of the countries of origin, to favor the activities undertaken in favor of foreigners legally residing in Italy. This implies the carrying out courses in the language and culture of origin, by foreign schools and cultural institutions legally operating in the Republic. Besides, it promotes the dissemination of any information useful for the positive integration of foreigners into Italian society, in particular regarding their rights and duties, the various opportunities for personal and community integration and growth offered by public administrations and associations, as well as the possibilities of a positive reintegration in the country of origin. The Consolidated Law (*il Testo Unico*) favors the knowledge and enhancement of the cultural, recreational, social, economic, and religious expressions of foreigners legally residing in Italy. It also promotes the fruition of the information material concerning the causes of immigration and the prevention of racial discrimination or xenophobia, also produced in the original language of the countries of origin of foreigners residing in Italy. Besides, it incentivizes the employment within their own structures of foreigners, holders of residence cards or residence permits for a duration of not less than two years, as intercultural mediators in order to facilitate relations between individual administrations and foreigners belonging to different ethnic, national, linguistic and religious groups. Finally, it promotes the organization of training courses, inspired by criteria of coexistence in a multicultural society and of prevention of discriminatory, xenophobic, or racist behaviors, intended for operators of public bodies and offices and private entities that have habitual relations with foreigners or who exercise relevant immigration skills (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1998a).

Moreover, with the Art. 46, the Commission for integration policies (*Commissione per le politiche di integrazione*) was established by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers (Department for Social Affairs). The Commission has the task of preparing for the Government the annual report concerning the state of implementation of policies for the integration of immigrants, to formulate proposals for interventions to adopt these policies, as well as, to provide answers to questions posed by the Government concerning immigration and intercultural policies and interventions against racism (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 1998a).

Just four years later, the provisions of the consolidated act, accused of not offering a valid barrier to illegal immigration and related crime, are modified by law no. 189 of 2002, also

known as Bossi-Fini law. Although it did not alter the overall structure of the act, it introduced a series of norms aiming to contrast the spread of illegal immigration in the country. Among which, the obligation to undergo digital fingerprinting for the foreigner applying for a residence permit or its renewal. Expulsion carried out by the Quaestor through forced accompaniment to the border becomes the main method of expulsion. The procedures for the recognition of refugee status were modified. Besides, by eliminating the sponsor system introduced by the previous law and by creating a single procedure, based on the residence contract, it became much more difficult for non-EU citizens to come to work legally in Italy. Therefore, this law was followed by a gigantic amnesty, the most massive in European history, which involved over 650,000 individuals (Fantozzi & Lopriore, 2014; Casella, 2016; Atti Parlamentari, 2017).

The new center-left government tried to mitigate the harshness of this law with the Amato-Ferrero bill of 2007, but this never saw the light due to the early termination of the legislature. In the meantime, the system was modified again, implementing a certain degree of harmonization with the other European states. Previously, however, a security package, launched by the then Minister of the Interior Maroni was introduced. It includes crime for illegal immigrants and those who favor their illegal stay on Italian territory, the rules restricting the possibility of family reunification by limiting the number of family members that can be reunited, also by raising the level of income necessary to access this right (Casella, 2016). In 2017, during the government led by the Democratic Party, with the decree-law, n.13 “containing urgent provisions for the acceleration of proceedings in the field of the international protection, as well as for the fight against illegal immigration” (Camera dei deputati, 2017, my translation), further rules concerning the international protection combating illegal immigration were introduced.

### *3.2.1. Contradicting nature of the immigration policies*

Recent political situations in many European countries generated such phenomena as exclusive policies, whose aim is the exclusion of immigrants as legitimate members of the local community. Due to the values of democratic societies, such as social equality and human rights protection, the exclusion policies are not explicitly hostile towards the individuals, they are rather disguised as aimed for the national security and the protection of general interests. Thus, the immigrants, even those who live the greater part of their lives in

the host community, are treated as temporary guests with no solid policies or measures for their integration or rights protections. Besides, the exclusion of the immigrants from the active and passive vote in the local polls makes it hard to overcome this condition (Ambrosini, 2011).

In Italy, the largest number of immigrants is concentrated in the northern and central regions, due to their favorable socio-economic conditions and better chances for employment seeking. In the main northern regions (Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont) the right-wing populist political formation called *Lega Nord* (Northern League), later becoming just *Lega*, emerged. Although they never reached the majority in the Italian Parliament, the condition required in order to decide the prime minister, they achieved, however, a moderate success. The main point of their political proposal was the defense against immigration, which contributed considerably to the victory of the center-right parties. Generally, the integration of immigrants in the economic and social structure is often associated with the stronger political rejection of their presence (Ambrosini, 2011), since they are viewed as concurring for the limited resources, although such limits are often apparent.

Nevertheless, the demands of the labor market require the policies consisting of the regularization programs, since the economic system in Italy needs many more immigrants than the politicians try to make it appear. And although the program of regularizations (*le sanatorie*) is not an exclusive feature of Italian politics, it is where the phenomenon appears especially contradictory. On the one hand, Italian families demand stricter regulations and tighter controls against immigrants, on the other hand, they are simultaneously the main actors in the regularization process, regularizing the immigrants who work for them (Ambrosini, 2011). In this sense, immigrants are considered as necessary to the Italian economy and at the same time as dangerous to the Italian national unity and identity (Love, 2014).

As mentioned above, the citizenship law also reflects the attitude of exclusion, since it makes distinctions between several categories of immigrants. The descendants of Italians, even those who emigrated a long time ago, are immediately recognized as citizens; the citizens of the European Union and other developed countries are required four years of residency before applying for citizenship, while non-EU immigrants are obliged to have ten years of uninterrupted legal residence to apply for citizenship (Ambrosini, 2011). The second

generation, namely those who are born and have always lived in Italy, can apply for citizenship “after eighteen years of age and before the age of nineteen” (Ambrosini, 2011, p. 141).

Generally, due to their conflicting nature, the local policies for immigrants have attracted the attention of many scholars. On the one hand, the local policies are characterized by the inclusive prospects and measures promoted by the Consolidated text on immigration and other laws regulating immigration. On the other hand, the implementation of inclusion policies is hindered by various regulations aiming to contrast the spread of illegal immigration, which however often results in massive regularizations. Besides, the slow reforming of the present norms concerning the integration of the immigrants legally residing in Italy, as for example the law on citizenship, also reflects the vacillating nature of the immigrants' condition in Italy.

### *3.3. Integration and inclusion*

Based on the values of the democratic society, the European Council promoted the new idea of intercultural integration. The new idea of integration implies a cultural exchange of human experiences whereby the insertion of the immigrants in a new social structure is viewed as functional for mutual enrichment (Cellini & Fideli, 2002).

The research conducted in Italy on immigration revealed the ambivalent pattern of the integration process. In fact, it might be considered as a unilateral process called adaptation, or bilateral implying a cultural exchange. Historically, the way to conceive intercultural adaptation was mainly unilateral implying a process of assimilation of immigrants to the host society. More recently, however, this notion shifted towards the new conception of the phenomenon, underlining the importance of the interaction between immigrants and the members of the receiving country. This new way of interpreting the integration is consistent with the objectives of the European Council, which defines the integration as

“as a two-sided process and as the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life. It encompasses all aspects of social development and all policies” (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008).

Thus, the Council of Europe by placing human rights and social cohesion at the center of migration policies defines integration as a two-way process. According to this new vision, migrants must show that they invest in their migration project, for example by learning the language of the host country, but the host country also has responsibilities, such as allowing access to the labor market and avoiding discrimination (Beacco, Little, Hedges, 2014).

Namely, the integration constitutes an intercultural dialogue, defined as

“a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies” (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008, p. 17).

Social cohesion, in turn, denotes the “capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding polarization” (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue 2008, p. 11). This new vision of integration highlights the importance of the preservation of the cultural identity as well the comparison between different cultures. Assimilation, in this sense, is viewed as a limiting process forcing individuals to abandon a precious part of themselves. In some cases, however, the individuals might decide for themselves whether they want to preserve their culture of origin or choose assimilation, motivated by the legitimate aspiration to equal prospects for social and employment advancement (Cellini & Fideli, 2002). In achieving these goals, intercultural dialogue constitutes an essential tool.

Language acquisition plays an important role in achieving the goal of social cohesion through intercultural dialogue, which implies exchange, discussion, negotiation, and resolution of potential conflicts. Nevertheless, the notion of integration is multidimensional, and it encompasses different aspects of social life, therefore sole language acquisition does not necessarily guarantee full integration.

#### *3.4. The historical issues concerning the plurilingualism in Italy*

Current language policy in Italy reflects the challenging plurilinguistic dynamics of a relatively recently unified nation-state, characterized by mass emigration, an internal migration, and the rapid transformation into a globalized country, the destination of the immigration flows. Namely, policies in Italy to some extent reflect more complex issues of the role of multilingualism, national identity, and education in the nation-building process (Love, 2014). The use of language for national identity discourses is a common practice of many nations. The presence and dominance of a national language often formed the normative understanding of what makes a legitimate nation-state. Under this ideology, the nation-states are considered to be the most appropriate and natural form of political organization. While the members of the nation are considered in terms of shared common language along with other historic characteristics linking the people to a given territory (Love, 2014).

In many societies, a single common national language constituted the key feature of the notion of national identity. This led to monolingual schooling aiming to eliminate or marginalize the usage of other language varieties. This type of linguistic policy is called subtractive, since it removes a part of the linguistic repertoire of the individuals. Addictive approach, on the other hand, implies the addition of the new repertoire to the one already existing (Love, 2014). This type of policy was conceived as essential for supporting the national language for the purposes of national unity and identity. In some cases, the subtractive language policy, however, excluded many individuals from the economic, political, and educational resources and cultural capital required in order to obtain social equality. In this sense, “the standard national language often ensures that power and opportunity remain in the control of elites who practice privileged linguistic registers” (Love, 2014, p. 28).

Italy has been long characterized by its linguistic diversity. Each region and sometimes even small towns are characterized by different linguistic varieties. In the mid-nineteenth century, standard Italian was spoken by merely 2.5% of the population. Generally, literacy in any language of the recently unified nation was an issue. Still today, there are still more than twenty Italo-Romance and historic minority languages. And the linguistic situation was even more diverse 150 years ago. Today the local language varieties are referred to as dialects of Italian, although linguistically they did not derive from standard Italian but from Latin as well as Florentine (Love, 2014).

The founder of unified Italy was concerned with this linguistic diversity, initiating the process of national language fostering, which also led to the stigmatization of the regional languages. Schools were assigned the role to spread the national standard variety of the language, but they had only a small influence on the language shift, since the majority of the population did not attend the public school, or did it for only a brief period. Therefore, the peninsula remained multilingual (Love, 2014).

The national language was viewed as fundamental to the newly formed national unity and social cohesion. The distrust toward local languages has deeply affected, besides the school, political and socio-economic possibilities for the majority population for the large part of the post-unification history of the country. During the Fascist period, many efforts were done to eliminate Italy's linguistic diversity through various political initiatives. In 1923, under Giovanni Gentile, the Minister of National Education, the Italian language became obligatory in all elementary schools in Italy. However, despite the authoritarianism of the Fascist education policy, regional and local languages were still the primary spoken varieties of the majority of Italian citizens. With the fall of Fascism, official national language policy acknowledged the need to protect the characteristic multilingualism of Italy. The 1948 Italian constitution considered multilingual rights to be so important that article six explicitly safeguards minority languages (Love, 2014).

Nevertheless, in the same period, several changes in Italy's socioeconomic and political situation had the most consequential impact on the spread of the Italian language and the slow decline of regional language use.

In 1999, the Italian parliament allowed for more specific protections for the officially recognized minority languages (Albanian, Catalan, Germanic, Greek, Slovenian, Croatian, French, Franco-Provençal, Friulian, Ladin, Occitan and Sardinian languages (article 2 of law no. 482 of 1999). Following regional laws in Sardinia and Friuli Venezia-Giulia, the national law of 1999 allowed for certain local governments to be able to provide bilingual education in Italian and the official minority language. Even though this law aims to protect minority languages, it also makes it clear that Italian is still the most privileged and important language of the country: "the official language of the Republic is Italian" (article 1 of law n. 482 of 1999).

The regional and local languages however were not protected, including the majority of regional languages referred to as dialects and the newly forming immigrant languages. In this context of historic linguistic diversity, where the standard national language still proves to be dominant in policy discourses, the linguistic situation has been further complicated by the addition number of immigrant languages.

This contradictory linguistic history and present demonstrate how the standard national language has served both as an instrument of national unity and of the construction and maintenance of difference and privilege within the nation-state (Love, 2014).

### *3.5. Current language policies*

The integration of newcomers in the host society implies, in addition to social inclusion, access to housing, work, education, health services, political life, etc. Besides, it includes a specific dimension, namely linguistic integration (Beacco, Little, Hedges, 2014). Generally: "learning the language of the host country is not a prerequisite for integration, but it is certainly an essential element. For migrants, it is very important to feel integrated into the host society in terms of linguistic communication and that they are perceived as linguistically integrated by the members of the host society' (Beacco, Little & Hedges 2014). In this regard, many Member States recently organized support systems for the integration of adult migrants, intervening in the language learning process. In fact, throughout Europe, language testing has emerged as an increasingly popular legislative tool to measure such integration (Love, 2014). These actions sometimes, however, might lead to exclusion of some categories of individuals, especially if these actions are based on standardized tests of knowledge of the host language and society.

The subtractive nature of current Italian language policy toward the multilingualism of immigrants were reinforced in 2009 and 2010 when legal residency permits became contingent, in part, on formal Italian language learning. The new legislation requires the passing of a level A2 Italian language test in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR) for permanent legal residency status and for the so-called integration agreement (Love, 2014). "The foreign citizen who has lived legally in Italy for more than 5 years and intends to apply for the EC permit for long-term residents (article 9 of the



consolidated immigration law) must take and pass the test of knowledge of the Italian language, governed by the decree of the Minister of internal June 4, 2010” (Ministero dell’Interno, 2010). Hence, the individuals who decided to apply for the long-term permanent residency status in Italy need to demonstrate their linguistic abilities through a standardized language test.

The new policy of immigrant language testing is justified by its purpose to incentivize the immigrants to integrate by promoting social cohesion and community participation. “However, based on the nature of the integration tests imposed by governments, there is an increasing feeling that, very often, these tests are simply a means of limiting the number of immigrants rather than a real tool at the service of integration, and it risks discredit and undermine the actions that are really meant to improve their integration” (Beacco, Little & Hedges 2014, p. 27, my translation). Besides, such initiatives might also lead to marginalization and to the criminalization of the linguistic differences of the individuals who fail to pass the test. The main issue is that the Italian language test, under this new legislation, is mostly written and requires a relatively high level of literacy skills in order to pass. This dynamic is particularly challenging for a significant number of immigrants with little or limited formal education and literacy backgrounds, also referred to as LESLLA (low-education second language and literacy acquisition). This category of students has the additional pressure of learning to read and write for the first time in a second language, while the socio-economic and political reality of Italy is not always supportive of such important practices (Love, 2014).

Formal, decontextualized language learning is deemed representative of an immigrant’s willingness and ability to ‘integrate’ in Italian society, and therefore, have the right to legally stay in the country. In this context, the new language testing immigration policy has reinforced the position of the national language as the contemporary gatekeeper to legal, political, and socio-economic status within the community (Love, 2014). Besides, according to Love (2014) that “the politicization of adult immigrant language learning, with its subtractive instead of additive understanding of multilingualism, is serving as a serious obstacle for the accommodation of the real educational, linguistic and literacy needs of adult immigrant and refugee students” (p.28).

### *3.5.1. The issues arising from the subtractive language learning*

Regardless of the stability of immigration flow in Italy, the linguistic resources and needs of migrant students have not been systematically addressed in Italian public schools. Therefore, the individual schools, administrators, and teachers make decisions concerning this category of students that can range from proactive and progressive to discriminatory and inadequate (Love & Varghese, 2012). Besides, the Italian public schools have constantly suffered from budget cuts over the last decades. Thus, the initiatives of individual schools to promote the languages of migrant students have to deal with inadequate funding. In this context, the real educational need of immigrant students has been pushed aside, promoting the linguistic agenda of the dominant culture and the subtractive policy goals of the state (Love & Varghese, 2012).

Many language schools and educators across the country agree that integration and language learning are deeply interconnected. Although the direct connection between the two processes often appears rather problematic, language learning, at least in part, is central to the integration of migrants into Italian society. However, the reality of discrimination and unequal access to key resources reduces the possibility of any real integration into Italian society for many immigrants. As stated in Beacco, Little & Hedges (2014):

“linguistic integration is not necessarily a guarantee of full integration: a migrant can have good skills in the language of the host society without this being able to benefit from equal access to employment with native speakers of that language if he does not adopt some behaviors commonly accepted by the host company. However, the acquisition of skills in the majority language can facilitate integration” (p. 7, my translation).

Besides, the immigrants do not constitute a homogeneous category of learners, instead, their learning needs are complex. And their complex nature should be taken into account by the public authorities and teaching methods (Love, 2014).

The current formal language assessment appears, in this sense, as exclusionary and punitive. It constitutes mainly a monitor for controlling the language use of immigrant communities. Rather than promoting authentic second language learning and usage, it gives the documentation to only certain educationally privileged immigrants (Love, 2014). In this regard Beacco, Little & Hedges (2014) argued that “If the priority of the Member States is the effective linguistic integration of these people and not the control of migratory flows

through the control of their skills linguistics, language training must be of quality because only such training can really help adult immigrants to integrate into the new linguistic-cultural context” (p. 8, my translation).

Current language policy toward immigrants in Italy centers extensively on the ability of the migrant to demonstrate language skills through the medium of standardized testing, which according to many scholars has a slight connection with the real competencies of people. In fact, “many scholars are questioning and critiquing the ability of standardized tests to measure the complex and unique ways that language is used in the everyday lives of individuals and communities” (Love, 2014, p. 35). This especially concerns the LESLLA students who are often able to learn the host country’s language orally, but they might be unable to overcome the difficulties in completing a written standardized test (Love, 2014).

In Italy, the new language assessment practices of formal language testing substituted the authentic educational, literacy, and linguistic needs of migrant students, and the schools, according to many language educators in Italy, have severely limited the possibilities for innovative and effective language and literacy pedagogy (Love & Varghese, 2012).

### *3.5.2. Local consequences of subtractive language policy*

The adult language schools in the public, private-social, and volunteer sectors were particularly affected by the contradictory immigrant language policies in Italy. As a matter of fact, the recent language policy forced many adult Italian language schools to shift from their traditional language teaching offered in conjunction with other services, such as helping migrants to adjust and adapt to a new society and avoid the condition of isolation toward a more testing-oriented pedagogy. According to Carlo Marini, the teacher and coordinator at a CTP (*the centro territoriale permanente*) in Turin for over 20 years, whose words were reported in Love (2014) “the paradox (of this new language policy) is that it was born principally of a repressive function on the part of the government ... from laws that regard ‘security’ more than integration, and in any case, the management of this law is under the control of the Minister of the Interior ... (in this regime) the immigrant is not seen as a resource, but a problem” (p. 36)

Generally, the adult public schools in Italy have historically reflected their progressive and social ‘justice-minded’ (Love, 2014, p. 37) nature. As a matter of fact, after World War II, working-class schools were formed in order to combat the high degree of illiteracy of the adults in the country. The permanent territorial center or, CTPs currently provides around 50% of Italian as a second language course around the country and are the principal institutions given the responsibility to administer the required Italian language test for the long term permit of stay achievement. Certainly, the law has generated more requests for Italian courses throughout the country, which might be considered a positive outcome (Love, 2014). However, unfortunately, this increased interest has been followed by the limited investment by the national government. This general lack of funding limited the possibilities of many CTPs in many Italian regions to provide education to all the adult students, both foreign and autochthonous (Love, 2014). As funding for adult education was reduced, it has become more difficult for the CTP to provide both language test-preparation courses and basic adult education, which includes reinforcing functional and technological literacy and helping adults finish their basic education (Love, 2014). The role to fill this gap is assigned to the volunteer and social-corporative groups. In Rome, for instance, around 60% of free language courses are conducted by volunteer organizations. Only 10% of the costs required to run such courses come from grants and funding, mostly from the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals and the European Fund for Refugees (Love, 2014). Nevertheless, the language courses in Rome are still not enough to satisfy all the requests.

As stated above, the pedagogy that this law promotes has little to do with the genuine educational, linguistic, and literacy needs and goals of adult students. Instead of promoting a strategy that can help develop adequate and complete teaching activities, L2 teachers find themselves confronted with directives that have very little to do with the transmission of knowledge, which is especially crucial for students with limited education and literacy backgrounds. This is because, as recent research has demonstrated, LESLLA students learn an L2 in different ways than highly literate students do, and therefore require different instruction to be able to succeed in written language production and understanding (Love, 2014).

According to Love (2014), the initiatives to privilege standard Italian language learning over all other language and literacy learning objectives reflect historical trends of national language protectionism, rather than moving towards the additive approaches. Throughout

Europe, language policy toward immigrants still reflects the subtractive schooling discourses that defined early nation-state formation. The consequences of these policies may be that education for immigrants with little formal education and literacy backgrounds misses the opportunity to help students become more active participants in their communities, families, and workplaces. With the advent of language testing, schools are forced to focus less on the real needs of the individual students (Love, 2014). Generally, “if the overall objective of the tests is better integration of migrants, a non-negligible proportion of people are excluded from the process, which raises concerns about the fairness of treatment” (Beacco, Little & Hedges 2014, p. 28, my translation).

### 3.6. *The guidelines of the Council of Europe for the linguistic integration of adult immigrant*

The linguistic integration of adult migrants is often understood as the obligation that migrants have to learn the language of the host society for reasons that are not only practical but also ideological. Often this implies that, in addition to the good language knowledge they are expected to acquire, they also need to be less distinguished from the majority of the local speakers, if not for some small degree of accent (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014). However, the new approach for intercultural integration, promoted by the Council of Europe suggests that the training programs aiming to facilitate linguistic integration must take into account several features and needs of adult language learners.

Primarily, as stated in *the Linguistic integration of adult migrants. Guide to policy development and implementation* (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014), the languages the immigrants already know play an important role in the new language acquisition. Besides, the immigrants need to be encouraged to value their language(s) of origin, to pass it to their children, since they constitute the source of self-esteem for the immigrants and enrich the host society. Besides, the specific linguistic need of the adult immigrant school is considered due to the diversity of migrant populations. Thus, the training programs should be adapted as much as possible to particular individual situations, since generalist training might be demotivating and, thus, ineffective (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

The additive approach to second language teaching, in fact, constitutes a respectful way to successfully integrate adult migrants into the host society.

As a matter of fact, individuals possess a set of knowledge and language skills that are used in several domains of social life. This constitutes the individuals' linguistic repertoire. For the adult immigrants, this repertoire also consists of more than one language and is based on their multilingual competence. The languages of the repertoire perform different functions such as communicating in a family context, with neighbors, in the workplace or expressing the individual's cultural identity. The functions may vary over time or according to communicative situations. In this sense, the acquisition of a new language changes the balance of the individual repertoire, which must be reorganized. In the case of adult migrants this reorganization, imposed by the new context, constitutes an important identity challenge since it occurs in interaction with the native speakers and the members of their ethnolinguistic groups (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

### *3.6.1. Forms of the linguistic integration*

Since the host society's language fully participates in the social integration of those who learn it, it must fit into individual repertoires without causing identity alienation or suffering. In this view, several forms of integration of this language into individual repertoires are proposed by the Council of Europe (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014). The passive linguistic integration implies that the competence in the majority language might not be sufficient to manage ordinary situations effectively and without excessive communicative effort. Communication often involves recourse to other people and its success largely depends on the understanding attitude of the interlocutors. Therefore, some social activities that are not sought of might be avoided as not sustainable on a linguistic level, and, in addition, they can also give rise to attitudes of exclusion on the part of native speakers. In this sense, only the native language is reserved for all the functions in terms of identity. Another option is the functional role of the language. In this sense, the resources in the L2 language and in other languages of the repertoire are sufficient to allow adult migrants to manage with relative success in most communication situations (personal, social, professional). The role of the language of the host community is merely practical. The goal of the speaker is to achieve communicative effectiveness, while the numerous linguistic mistakes do not constitute an issue for the speakers, since the identity status is retained by the language of origin. The third form is proactive linguistic integration, whereby adult migrants seek to improve their skills not only to better adapt from a linguistic point of view, but also for personal reasons (for example, for their work-related activities or to develop their social and personal

relationships). This form is characterized by the immigrants' attempt to reduce linguistic mistakes as well as to acquire more advanced and acceptable skills. The last form of linguistic integration coincides with the development of the new linguistic identity. The immigrants consciously rearrange their repertoire by fully integrating the language of the host society. The native language retains the function of reflecting their original identity, while the language of the host society becomes co-identity. In this sense, the coexistence of multiple languages identities might be compared to the notion of dual nationality (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

The different forms of linguistic integration of the immigrants depend on their objectives, their educational level, their cultural background, and other factors. Thus the immigrant has several options concerning their repertoire. They might decide to modify it just in a limited way, or despite being motivated to modify it, are unable to due to various obstacles of daily life, such as lack of time or adequate support or self-esteem. This condition might lead to discomfort and psychosocial suffering. Some individuals can be committed to improving their L2 competence, but without paying too much attention to grammatical correctness. Besides, they are not concerned about the linguistic errors, approximations, their accent, and different interactive patterns, transferred to the new language. The last option consists in acquiring the skills of the native speaker, in order to adapt linguistically, which involves the marginalization or abandonment of the language of origin. Thus according to the objectives and proposals of the Council of Europe, the immigrant should be left the chance to choose the form of linguistic integration which is deemed to be the most appropriate for their objectives and their identity (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

Generally, the notion of the migrant is sociological of a linguistic category and it does not constitute a defined and homogeneous linguistic group. Immigrants, as a matter of fact, are characterized by the different repertoires and different learning experiences of L2 learning. Therefore, the development of the linguistic integration policies in order to be effective should concenter a series of features. This leads to the assumption that universal standard solutions for organizing language training and evaluating its outcomes are far from being effective, instead, they should be as personalized as possible. It is necessary to take into account the similarities and differences between the language of origin and the language of the host country. It is also necessary to consider the moment of migration, the phase prior to actual migration or arrival in the host society, and the form of stay. Thus, these differences in

the nature of migration must guide institutions in identifying the objectives of language training, and therefore, in the preparation of courses (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

Finally, although the sufficient language command and being familiar with the culture of the host society considerably facilitate the integration processes, they alone do not constitute a sign of integration. ‘Adherence to the fundamental values of the host society is a socio-affective process of identity which must be characterized by a set of parameters and be evaluated according to the global behavior of migrants and not just their linguistic abilities’ (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014, p.14). Conversely, weak knowledge of the language does not necessarily mean that the immigrant has not adhered to the fundamental values of the host society (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

Language training programs that do not take these factors and the diversity of these contexts have little chance of being effective. The Member States must opt for flexible courses, tailor-made forms of assessment, and tests. The general process for developing training programs and courses can be summarized as follows: define the characteristics of the learner groups: the expression language course ‘for migrants’ is too general, among other things because migrants can have very different linguistic repertoires and levels of knowledge of the host society's language; define the language needs, i.e. the communication situations (oral and written) that adult migrants wish to become able to master or that they want to be able to manage; starting from the situations thus defined, specify the objectives by type of activity (oral interaction, written comprehension, etc.) and by the domain (family life, professional life, social life, etc.) using for this purpose the descriptors of the CEFR (Beacco, Little & Hedges, 2014).

To sum up, the social and linguistic integration of the immigrant is a challenging process, especially in those contexts in which the immigration and linguistic laws and policies are not explicit, leading to the lack of the coherent and homogeneous treatment of the category. Besides, being a very heterogeneous group, immigrants are characterized by different educational competencies and needs, often difficult to deal with on the macro level. Moreover, specific historical and social features of many countries in terms of immigration and plurilingualism, might affect the policies aimed to manage the integration process. In Italy, for instance, the subtractive approach to language integration which was dominant throughout the post-unification history is reflected in the modern measures undertaken in



order to, supposedly, facilitate the integration process. Based on the principles of the democratic society, the Council of Europe proposes a new way to conceive the integration, in terms of the intercultural dialogue, which implies a cultural exchange between the newcomers and the members of the host community, rather than simple assimilation of the forms to the linguistic and interactive behavior of the others. The outcome of such exchanges is the mutual enrichment of both sides, and valorization of the cultural identities of the individuals, especially during the challenging period of social adjustment.

## **Chapter IV: Research project “The factors affecting the immigrants’ attitude toward the interactive situation in the host society”**

### *4.1. Introduction*

Based on the directives of the Council of Europe, the integration of the immigrants in a new society should occur in terms of intercultural dialogue, which implies a psychological and cultural exchange between groups, leading to mutual enrichment. Namely, it is defined as a

‘process that comprises an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect. It requires the freedom and ability to express oneself, as well as the willingness and capacity to listen to the views of others. Intercultural dialogue contributes to political, social, cultural and economic integration and the cohesion of culturally diverse societies’ (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008, 17).

In fact, the valorization, rather than marginalization, or even discrimination, of the others’ cultural identities, is a key to avoiding isolation of the individuals or of entire ethnolinguistic communities, which, in turn, might cause psychological sufferance to the individuals and general resentment toward the host society.

This intercultural dialogue takes place in an interactive situation, which is affected by several social, cultural, and psychological factors. Certain circumstances might lead to the desire to participate in the social situation, while others make the decision to avoid it. Unfortunately, these factors are not always objective, but they are rather perceived, due to the uniqueness of the individuals’ personal experiences. As was mentioned in the first chapter of this work, the personal identities of the individuals are the combination of multiple social identities formed in various social contexts that the individuals find throughout their lives. Namely, personal identities are formed by distinctive life experiences, unique personality traits, and by observing and imitating role models (Stets & Burke, 2000). And, therefore, the list of the aspects affecting the attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and their desire to participate in the interaction with the members of the host communities is quite extensive.

By interacting with members of the same cultural group, the interactive pattern results familiar to both sites of the communicative process. The outcomes of the interactive situation

are more predictable since the cultural factors affecting the interactive situation are shared by the interactants. In this context, individuals might decide, at least to some extent, how to position themselves, that is, what social identity they want to be acknowledged by others. Differently, interacting with the members of different social groups might constitute a challenging experience for the interactants since they have to meet others' expectations concerning the appropriate interactive behavior, in order to reach the desired social goals. Besides, although both parts of the interactive context should contribute to the positive interactive outcomes, this responsibility, however, is often attributed to the immigrants, due to the unequal power position between the members of the different groups (Norton Peirce, 1995; Halstead, n.d; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). As stated in Block (2007), although negotiation of meaning is a crucial factor during an interaction, since the common aim of the interlocutors is mutual understanding, immigrants, however, are often held responsible for monitoring the negotiation of understanding. Not being able to manage the interactive exchange might lead to reducing or even avoiding the interactive episodes. If instead the outcomes are positive and the social identity of the individuals is not threatened, they will tend to repeat the experience, deriving from it the resources for the more successful intercultural integration and for the enhancement of the second language competence.

Hence the goal of this analysis is to determine the general attitude of the adult immigrants in Italy toward the host society and, in particular, the interacting situation with the members of the host community and to get an insight into what actually might affect the desire of immigrants to interact with natives.

Immigrants are not a homogeneous group: they might drastically change in terms of ethnic origins, cultural and linguistic distance, educational background, age of arrival, length of permanence, type of residence, immigration goals, family situation, financial circumstances, etc. All these factors might affect their attitude towards the host society and the extent to which they are ready or desire to enter into interaction with the members of the host community.

The social nature of the individuals leads them to a need for affiliation, namely in order to feel safe and have good self-esteem, they need to feel that they belong to and that they are valued by the group of significant others. The reasons behind this tendency might regard the need to feel less vulnerable and more worthy, which is also referred to as a self-esteem

motive (Stets & Burke, 2000). This should constitute a strong motivation to better integrate with the members of the host community, and hence - consciously or not - search for the occasion to participate in the interactive episodes, despite their challenging nature. However, in those cases in which the individuals' ethnolinguistic group is characterized by the significant number of members present in the host society, this might constitute an attractive solution for the immigrants to identify with this group, and not have any need to establish social relations with the members of the host society, if not to the extent required for satisfying their needs of the practical nature. Allegedly, this will affect their desire to participate in interactive episodes with members of the host community, leading them to limit the interaction unless it is strictly necessary. However, the interpersonal or social relationships with the members of the same or similar ethnic background might have a positive effect on the psychological state of the individual, since they might share their overwhelming experiences with someone able to fully understand it. This, in turn, might give a certain sense of security to the immigrants to deal with more complex social situations (Ting-Toomy, 1999).

Having a strong cultural identity might constitute an obstacle for the desire to search for interaction opportunities, due to the difficulties concerning the adaptation to the different interactive patterns, affected by the norms and values of the different cultural communities. Cultural distance, or at least the perceived cultural distance, might constitute a factor responsible for avoiding or limiting intergroup interaction opportunities, due to psychological adjustments the immigrants need to undergo in order to overcome the dissimilarities between the culture of origin and the culture of the host community (Ting-Toomey, 1999). This factor is controversial in nature since, on the one hand, the high degree of cultural distance is correlated to the identity vulnerability that the individuals might experience in the new culture, consequently leading them to avoid the interactive situation, on the other hand, by interacting with the individuals of the different cultural group and establishing significant relations with them might reduce the perceived cultural difference. This, in turn, might positively influence the desire of the immigrants to participate in interactive episodes.

Second language learning, above all, is considered as the social practice whereby the individuals become aware of the relative power among individuals in certain social situations and learn to claim their right to speak aiming to achieve true equality and integration (Norton Peirce, 1995; Halstead, n.d; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). Although the acquisition of the

second language is hardly sufficient for full social integration of the immigrants, it still offers major opportunities for individuals in terms of employment and enhancement of interpersonal relations with the members of the host community. Thus, the belief that good language competence might contribute to the achievement of economic and social equality, might lead the immigrants to search for opportunities to interact with the members of the receiving society. In this sense, acquiring and enhancing L2 competence represents the key to escape the situation of social inequality. Although social interaction is not the only channel for second language acquisition, it provides the individuals with the opportunity to recognize and learn the pattern of the appropriate interactive behavior required to reach the desired social and financial goals. Thus, despite the challenging nature of intercultural interactive episodes, the desire to be recognized as the legitimate members of the host society and to enhance their social position will allegedly encourage the immigrant to search for the opportunity to interact with the natives.

The socio-economic situation of the host community might also to some degree affect the desire of the immigrants to enter in the interactive exchange with the members. Due to the unstable socio-economic conditions in the receiving country, politicians often use immigration as a tool for justifying such circumstances, instead of searching for the internal sources of malfunctioning of the system. Regardless of the true motives of such allegations, either they reflect the real concern of the politicians or are just a way to gain consensus of the unrest citizens (with the right to vote), they might affect the general mood of the population concerning immigration. Besides, it influences not only the opinion of the natives but also the perception of immigrants concerning the discriminating attitude of the members of the receiving society. Hence, if the immigrants perceive themselves as unwanted, they might avoid getting closer to the members of the host community, regardless of the real discriminating experience toward them. The sociolinguistic situation in the host society might also be influential in forming the will of the immigrants to participate in the interactive episodes. The individuals while interacting want to be perceived by others as competent and effective, according to the self-efficacy motive (Stets & Burke, 2000). Therefore, the perceived degree of tolerance of the members of the native group toward the linguistic imperfections or differences might also be significant in terms of participation in the interactive episodes.

Moreover, participating in various host community activities and having supportive networks of friendship are claimed to be of great importance in terms of emotional and identity support, leading to a more positive attitude towards the host society (Ting Toomey, 1999). Hence, having deep personal relations even with the restricted number of members of the host society will reduce the acculturative stress, which in turn might boost the immigrants' desire to extend their interactive episodes to other members of the receiving community outside their circle of friends (Berry, 1992).

Finally, the local media dedicated to both information and entertainment might constitute a safe environment for immigrants. In addition to learning the host language, they might recognize the specific interactive patterns and other communication skills that they could acquire and, subsequently, enact in the real-life interactive situation. Besides, local media provides the immigrants with different types of information concerning the national topics that might be discussed with the members of the host society which might help the individuals to feel more like a part of the new community (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

#### *4.2. The research project*

The object of this analysis is to detect the general attitude of the adult immigrants in Italy toward the host society and the interaction situation with their members. Besides, the correlation between the 3 categories of factors (social, cultural, contextual), allegedly affecting the desire of the participants to enter the interactive situation with the members of the host society, will be determined. Utilizing the structured questionnaire, the quantitative research was conducted in order to measure the immigrants' general attitude toward the host society, in particular, toward the interactive situation with the members of the host community. Besides, the opinion of the participant concerning the role of the L2 as a key for integration will be detected. After that, the attitude of the participants will be measured according to various characteristics of the participants, namely: educational level reached in Italy, relationship status, length of permanence, L2 competence (obtained through self-assessment), and type of residence. Finally, 21 items (grouped in 3 general categories of factors: social, cultural, contextual) will be correlated with the items indicating the degree of participation of the immigrants in the interactive situation with the members of the host community, in order to determine what factors are mostly affecting the desire of the immigrants to enter in the interactive situation with the natives. Social factors include

relations with the original ethnic group, relations with the host group, participation in the host community. Cultural factors involve cultural inflexibility, cultural (and linguistic) distance, familiarity with the host culture. Contextual factors involve socio-economic and socio-linguistic factors.

#### *4.2.1. The hypotheses*

The first hypothesis: if the characteristics of the participants correspond to those generally associated with the positive social integration, namely good L2 competence (obtained through the self-assessment), level of education achieved in Italy, substantial relationships with the members of the host community, intention to remain in Italy, their answers will show a positive attitude toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community.

The second hypothesis: the answers of the participants will show their acknowledgment of the second language as the key to social integration.

The third hypothesis: the answers of the participants will show a certain degree of correlation between the factors grouped in 3 main categories (social, cultural, contextual) and the desire of the immigrants to enter into verbal interaction with the members of the host community.

#### *4.2.2. Method*

*Participants:* 48 participants are adult immigrants who arrived in Italy in adolescence or adult age (with 3 exceptions of subjects arriving at age of 8, 10, and 11). The participants are 42 (87,5%) of females and 6 (12,5%) of males. The age of participants is ranging between 26 and 57 (35 participants, corresponding to the 73% are under 40 y.o.). The age of arrival is ranging from 8 to 37, with 28 subjects (corresponding to 58%) under 20 y.o and 20 subjects (42%) arriving at age over 20. The main part of the subjects arrived in Italy between the age of 14 and 25 (corresponding to 73%). The length of permanence of the participants is between 3 and 37 years. The length of permanence of 75 % of the participants is between 10 and 20 years. Nationality of the participants: Ukraine - 28 (53,3%), Russia - 5 (10,4 %), Rumania - 5 (10,4%), Germany - 2 (4,2%), Perù - 2 (4,2%), Moldavia - 1 (2,1%), Poland - 1 (2,1%), Latvia - 1 (2,1%), Israel - 1 (2,1%), China - 1 (2,1%). The self-assessment of the L2

competence: 45 (93%) out of 48 participants assigned to themselves from 6 out of 10 (maximum) points, from which 25 (52%) subjects assigned to themselves 8 out of 10 points. Level of education reached in the Country of origin: elementary school 3 (6,3%), middle school 12 (25%), high school 13 (27,1%), bachelor's degree 10 (20,8%), master's degree 10 (20,8%). Level of education reached in Italy: no education 15 (31,3%), middle school 3(6,3%), high school 14 (29,2%), bachelor's degree 11 (22,9%), master's degree 5 (10,4%). Total 68% with one level of education in Italy. Relationship status: not in a relationship 14 (29,2%), in relationship with the member of the same ethnic group 16 (33,3%), in relationship with the member of the host community 17 (35,4%), in relationship with the member of a different ethnic group 1 (2,1%)

*Instrument:* the instrument to obtain the required data is the anonymous structured questionnaire created in a Google form. It consists of 35 items, and it is divided into 4 main sections. In the first part, the participants are asked to insert their generics (age, gender, nationality, age of arrival). The second part is reserved to the self-assessment of their L2 competence. In the third part, the participants are required to answer the questions by choosing one of the given options concerning their level of education reached in their country of origin, the level of education reached in Italy, what majorly contributed to their L2 enhancement, relationship status, intentions concerning their permanence in Italy. The fourth part consists of 22 statements: the participants are asked to indicate to what extent they agree with the statements from 1 to 6 on the Likert scale. The object of the items is to determine the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and the interactive situation with the natives and the degree of participation of the immigrants to their ethnic groups. Among the items proposed, one statement **cerco tutte le occasioni possibili di parlare in italiano con gli italiani** was inserted in order to determine the correlation between the degree of participation of individuals in interaction with the members of the host community and other factors allegedly affecting their desire to interact, corresponding to the 3 main categories of factors.

*Design:* the structured questionnaire was posted online and the participants who met the main requirements of the sample 'adult immigrants arriving in Italy in adolescence or in adult age' were contacted personally or through my direct contacts who volunteered to share the questionnaire in order to reach a major number of the participants. Then, all the answers were



collected and added to a Google sheet file for analysis. All the items are grouped according to 3 main categories of factors proposed, namely social, cultural, contextual factors.

First, the answers to the questions that aimed to detect the general attitude toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the local community were observed, and the percentages of the positive and negative answers were calculated and summed.

- L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche
- Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani
- Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati
- A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici
- Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici
- Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me
- Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani

Then the answers to the questions that aimed to detect the perceived importance of good L2 knowledge for integration were observed and the percentage of the positive and the negative answers were calculated and summed.

- Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi
- Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani
- Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani

The generics of the participants and the circumstantial factors were observed in order to establish the general integration level of the participants, according to various parameters associated with the more positive intercultural adaptation outcome and the minor acculturative stress (Berry, 1992; Ting-Toomey 1999).

Then it has observed whether there is any difference in attitude and the perceived importance of the language acquisition according to several circumstantial factors and the generics of the immigrants such as age, the age of arrival, length of permanence, education level, personal

relationships, the self-assessment of the L2 competence and the intentions concerning their future permanence.

Item x: **cerco tutte le occasioni possibili di parlare con gli italiani in italiano** was associated with the other 21 statements in the questionnaire in order to detect whether there is a correlation between the key item (x-axis) and all the other items (y-axis) on the Likert scale. In order to assess the linear correlation, the Pearson correlation coefficient was applied. The data, the Likert scale values, of item 1 (x-axes) was correlated with the values of the other items (y-axes). The Pearson correlation index was obtained by crossing the answers of all the participants in the questionnaire between item 1 and all the others according to the covariance formula:  $\rho_{X,Y} = \text{cov}(X,Y) / \sigma_X \sigma_Y$ . For practical purposes in data analysis, the formula was created with the Google Spreadsheets function for each comparison between question 1 and the other questions. The formula used is =CORRELAZIONE(DATI COLONNA 1; DATI COLONNA 2). The results of the correlation analysis have been collected in a chart that links all the results in descending order (corresponding to the Pearson correlation coefficient) in order to detect where there is more or less correlation between x and y.

#### 4.2.4. Results

The answers of the participants concerning their general attitude toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community are divided depending on the score on the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree with the statements and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3	Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6
L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	72,9%	27,1%
Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	23,0%	77,0%
Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	35,5%	64,5%
A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	6,3%	93,7%

Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	16,7%	83,3%
Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	5,3%	94,7%
Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	5,3%	94,7%

The answers of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration divided depending on the score on the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3	Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	0%	100%
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	22,9%	77,1%
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	4,2%	95,8%

The participants were divided according to their education level into two main groups the first group (Group 1) is composed by those with no education level or with just a middle school (compulsory education), the second group (Group 2) is composed by who reached a higher level of education in Italy, in order to determine whether the educational level in Italy might affect the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community, and the opinion of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration. The answers of the participants were divided depending on the score on the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on level of	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on level of	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on level of	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on level of

	instruction (from “nessuna istruzione” to “scuola media”)	instruction (from “nessuna istruzione” to “scuola media”)	instruction (from “scuola superiore” to “laurea magistrale”)	instruction (from “scuola superiore” to “laurea magistrale”)
1. L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	94,4%	5,6%	70%	30%
2. Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	16,7%	83,3%	26,7%	73,3%
3. Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	33,3%	66,7%	36,7%	63,3%
4. A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	5,6%	94,4%	6,7%	93,3%
5. Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	11,1%	88,9%	20,0%	80,0%
6. Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	6,3%	93,7%	3,2%	96,8%
7. Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	22,2%	77,8%	0%	100%
8. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	0%	100%	0%	100%
9. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	38,9%	61,1%	13,3%	86,7%
10. Conoscere bene la lingua Italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	11,1%	88,9%	0%	100%

The participants were divided according to their relationship status into 3 main groups: in the first group those with no relationship; in the second group those in a relationship with a member of the same or a different ethnic group; in the third group, those in a relationship with a member of the host society. This will determine whether establishing a close relationship with the member of the host community affects the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society, the interactive situation with the members of the host community, and the opinion of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration. The answers of the participants are divided depending on the score on the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on relationship status ("no relationship")	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on relationship status ("no relationship")	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on relationship status ("In a relationship with an immigrant")	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on relationship status (In a relationship with an immigrant")	Group 3: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on relationship status ("In a relationship with an Italian")	Group 3: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on relationship status ("In a relationship with an Italian")
1. L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	78,6%	21,4%	58,8%	41,2%	82,4%	17,6%
2. Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	21,4%	78,6%	35,3%	64,7%	11,2%	88,8%
3. Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	42,9%	57,1%	35,3%	64,7%	29,4%	70,6%
4. A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	0%	100%	5,9%	94,1%	11,8%	88,2%
5. Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	7,1%	92,9%	5,9%	94,1%	35,3%	64,7%
6. Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	14,3%	85,7%	5,9%	94,1%	0%	100%

7. Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	7,1%	92,9%	11,8%	88,2%	0%	100%
8. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
9. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	50,0%	50,0%	11,8%	88,2%	11,8%	88,2%
10. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	0%	100%	7,1%	92,9%	7,1%	92,9%

The participants were divided into 2 main groups according to their length of permanence in Italy: in the first group, those staying in Italy less than 14 years, in the second group those staying in Italy more than 15 years<sup>1</sup>, in order to determine whether the length of permanence affects the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community, and the opinion of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration. The answers of the participants are divided depending on the score on the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on length of permanence (0 to 14 years)	Group1: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on length of permanence (0 to 14 years)	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on length of permanence (15 years or more)	Group:2 Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on length of permanence (15 years or more)
L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	81,3%	18,7%	68,8%	31,2%
Per me è molto importante avere relazioni	12,5%	87,5%	28,1%	71,9%

<sup>1</sup> The number of the years was selected considering the average length of the permanence of the sample.

interpersonali con gli italiani				
Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	50,0%	50,0%	28,1%	71,9%
A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	0%	100%	9,4%	90,6%
Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	6,2%	93,8%	21,9%	78,1%
Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	6,2%	93,8%	6,2%	93,8%
Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	6,2%	93,8%	6,2%	93,8%
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	0%	100%	0%	100%
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	31,3%	68,7%	18,8%	81,2%
Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	0%	100%	6,2%	93,8%

The participants were divided in 2 main groups according to the average self-assessment score concerning their L2 competence: namely of those who gave themselves the average score from 0 to 7,9 out of 10 (maximum) and of those who self-evaluated higher than 8 out of 10 points, in order to determine whether the L2 competence affects the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community, and the opinion of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration. The answers of the participants are divided depending on the score on

the Likert scale, in order to determine the percentage of the participants who agree and of those who do not agree with the statements.

Items	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on Italian knowledge auto-evaluation (0 to 7,9 on average)	Group1:Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on Italian knowledge auto-evaluation (0 to 7,9 on average)	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 1 to value 3 based on Italian knowledge auto-evaluation (average of 8,0 or above)	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 based on Italian knowledge auto-evaluation (average of 8,0 or above)
1. L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	78,3%	21,7%	68,0%	32,0%
2. Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	17,4%	82,6%	28,0%	72,0%
3. Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	34,8%	65,2%	36,0%	64,0%
4. A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	8,7%	91,3%	4,0%	96,0%
5. Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	13,0%	87,0%	20,0%	80,0%
6. Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	8,7%	91,3%	4,0%	96,0%
7. Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	8,7%	91,3%	4,0%	96,0%
8. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	0	100%	0	100%
9. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità	26,1%	73,9%	20,0%	80,0%



economiche degli italiani				
10. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	8,7%	91,3%	0%	100%

Based on the immigrants' intentions concerning their type of permanence in the host country (those who want to stay in Italy and those who do not are unsure), from the whole sample the attitudes of those who have no intention to leave the host community were measured. In order to determine whether the intentions concerning the permanence in the host society affects the general attitude of the immigrants toward the host society and the interactive situation with the members of the host community, and the opinion of the participants concerning the key role of the L2 for the more successful integration

Items	Group 1: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 (overall sample)	Group 2: Percentage of respondents from value 4 to value 6 (people not intentioned to come back to their country of origin)
1. L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	27,1%	12,5%
2. Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	77,0%	75,0%
3. Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	64,5%	68,8%
4. A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	93,7%	87,5%
5. Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	83,3%	81,2%
6. Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	94,7%	100%
7. Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	94,7%	100%
8. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	100%	100%
9. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	77,1%	58,2%
10. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	95,8%	93,8%

The 21 associations between Item X **cerco tutte le occasioni possibili di parlare con gli italiani** and the other questions led to different results in terms of correlation. Given possible values of the Pearson correlation index between -1 and 1, the values between -0.273 and 0.547 were obtained. The four questions referring to social and contextual factors displayed the major correlation. Namely, item X showed a correlation index between 0.364 and 0.547 for those factors. Conversely, at least two items referring to cultural factors have shown a negative correlation with respect to the above statement. In particular, *I am very attached to my culture of origin* and *The culture of my country is very different from the Italian one* are negatively correlated with values of -0.224 and -0.273 respectively. Comparisons with other questions displayed weaker correlations or no correlation. Thus, among the 21 combinations between item X and the other items of the questionnaire, it is possible to identify positive and negative correlations through the Likert scale values of the respondents' answers.

Item Y	Factors	Pearson correlation coefficient (ρ)
1. Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani	Social factors - affiliation	0,547
2. Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati	Contextual factors - socio-political factors	0,446
3. Passo più tempo con gli italiani rispetto a persone del mio Paese di origine	Social factors - relationship with the ethnic group	0,384
4. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani	Social factors	0,364
5. Gli italiani mi informano molto sulle notizie locali	Social factors - relations with the host group	0,307
6. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana migliora la qualità dei rapporti con gli italiani	Social factors	0,296
7. Nel tempo libero faccio le stesse cose che fanno gli italiani	Social factors - participation to the host culture	0,275
8. L'Italia è in ottime condizioni economiche	Contextual factor - economical factors	0,247
9. Ho molti rapporti di amicizia con italiani	Social factors - relations with the host group	0,217

10. L'italiano è la lingua che uso per navigare su internet, guardare film, leggere libri e altro	Cultural factors	0,158
11. Gli italiani sono molto disponibili e aperti nell'interagire con me	Contextual factors - sociolinguistic factor	0,101
12. Mi sento molto a mio agio a parlare con gli italiani	Contextual factors - sociolinguistic factor	0,078
13. Conosco molto bene la cultura italiana	Cultural factors - familiarity with the host culture	0,069
14. Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta a difendere i miei interessi	Social factors	0,046
15. A casa e tra gli amici, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	Contextual factors - sociolinguistic factor	0,045
16. La lingua del mio Paese è molto diversa dall'italiano	Cultural factors - linguistic distance	0,032
17. Sul lavoro e nel pubblico, gli italiani sono molto tolleranti in caso di errori linguistici	Contextual factors - sociolinguistic factor	-0,076
18. In Italia frequento tante persone del mio Paese di origine	Social factors - relations with the host group	-0,091
19. Per interagire facilmente con gli italiani non serve adattarsi a loro	Cultural factors - social distance	-0,153
20. Sono molto legato alla mia cultura di origine	Cultural factors - cultural rigidity	-0,224
21. La cultura del mio Paese è molto diversa da quella italiana	Cultural factors - cultural distance	-0,273

#### 4.2.4. Analysis

In the following section, the data will be analysed according to three levels of analysis.

##### 4.2.4.1. The first level of analysis

The self-assessment of the L2 competence of the participants reveals that 93% participants assigned to themselves the score equal to or more than 6 points out of 10 points (maximum), from which 25% assigned to themselves equal to or more than 8 points out of 10 points.

These results reflect a good L2 competence of the participants which is associated with the positive intercultural adaptation outcomes and reduced acculturative stress of the immigrants since the good language knowledge allows the immigrants more active participation in the

host society and fewer difficulties during the interactive situation with the members of the host community. The length of permanence of the 75% of the sample is between 10 to 20 years, which is associated with the better integration level since it implies a higher number of occasions to participate in the various social activities of the host society, as well in the interactive situations with the members of the host community. Concerning the level of education reached in Italy, 69% of the participants declared to have at least the high school education level reached in Italy, which is also an indicator of the positive intercultural adaptation outcomes. Besides, 36% of the participants also declared to be in a relationship with the member of the host community, which implies certain social support from the members of the host community which, in turn, might lead to a better level of acculturation and less stress during the interactive situation with the other members of the local social group. Finally, concerning the permanence in the host community, only 15% of the participants expressed their desire to return to their Country of origin. All these parameters show a generally integrated sample based on the parameters associated with positive intercultural adaptation outcomes, good acculturation level and relatively low acculturative stress.

In fact, although in expressing their opinion concerning the economic conditions in Italy, 72% did not agree with the statement, which might imply some economic difficulties that the subjects undergo, the majority, however, expressed a positive attitude towards the host society and, in particular, toward the interactive situation with the members of the host community. Namely, 77% answered that for them is very important to establish personal relationships with the members of the host community; 64% think that Italians display a very good attitude toward the immigrants; 93% consider Italians to be very tolerant in case of language errors in family settings and 83% agreed with that Italians are tolerant in case of linguistic errors in public settings; 95% declared that the Italians are very open and friendly during the interactive episodes, and 95% said to feel very comfortable in interacting with the Italians. Based on this data, the participants show a positive attitude toward the host society and the interactive situation with their members.

Regarding the role of the L2, the majority of the participants recognize the crucial role of the language for social integration. Namely, 100% of the participants are aware that good language competence helps them to defend their interests; 96% of the participants agreed that good language competence is required in order to enhance the social relationships with the

members of the host community, and 77% agreed that the good language knowledge will allow them to reach the same economic condition of the natives. Based on this data, generally, the participants are aware of the crucial role of the language in social participation and for equal rights achievement.

#### 4.2.4.2. *The second level of analysis*

*Level of education:* The participants are divided into two groups based on their education level, in order to determine whether the level of education of the participants will affect their general attitude concerning the interactive situation with the members of the host society. Group 1 consists of participants with no instruction and middle school level of instruction, and Group 2 includes participants with at least the high school level of education.

Generally, being a well-integrated sample (first level of analysis), both groups gave similar results, generally showing a good attitude toward the host community and the interactive situation with the natives. Nevertheless, there are slight differences in their answers that will be analyzed. Similarly, concerning their awareness of the role of the L2 for the integration, the two groups express different degrees of agreement.

Although both groups generally did not agree with the statement in Item 1, the participants from Group 1 (no education and middle school education) have a worse perception of the economic situation in Italy than the participants from Group 2 (5,6% vs 30%). No education provides the immigrants with fewer job options and lower-income opportunities. Thus, the general perception of the economic situation in the host community might be affected by this personal condition. Generally, both groups showed similar scores in agreeing that the natives have a very good attitude toward the immigrants in Item 3 (66,7% and 63,3%). Concerning their desire to establish personal relationships with the members of the host community, participants from Group 1 have a higher score than Group 2 (83,3% vs 73,3%). As was observed in the first level of analysis, generally the sample expresses a positive attitude toward the host group, the slight difference in attitude might be caused by other factors. For instance, the participants who did not attend educational institutions in Italy had fewer opportunities to establish significant relationships with the natives, which might be the reason why they express a stronger need for affiliation. For Item 4 and especially for Item 5 (concerning the perceived tolerance of the natives toward the language imperfections), the

participants from Group 1 have a higher score. Having achieved a higher level of education implies a wider range of professional opportunities and, therefore, it can be assumed that in some of these settings a higher language accuracy is required. This allegation is partly confirmed by the nearly equal score for Item 4 (94,4% vs 93,3%), implying that generally the natives are perceived by the immigrants from this (well-integrated) sample as tolerant toward the potential linguistic imperfections. For the Items aiming to determine how positive is the participants' experience of the interactive episodes with the natives, Group 2 gave a higher score. Generally, both groups agree that the members of the host community are open and friendly during the interaction (94% vs 97%), however, the subjects from the Group 2 declared to feel much more comfortable during the interaction with the natives (78% vs 100%). A higher level of education allegedly contributes to a higher level of control over the interaction, making the interactants feel more secure during interactive episodes and, as a result, more comfortable. Both groups 100% percent agree that good language knowledge helps them to defend their interests in the host society, giving them a major degree of control over their existence. However, Group 2 gave a higher score concerning the opportunity to achieve the same economic conditions as the natives (61% vs 87%). Similarly, for Item 10, Group 2 gave a higher score (89% vs 100%). The participants who achieved at least the high school level of education, not only agree that good L2 competence helps you in enhancing the relationships with the members of the host community, but that it also gives them equal opportunities for financial success in the host society.

*Relationship status:* The participants were divided into 3 different groups concerning their relation status: Group 1 (no relationship); Group 2 (in a relationship with the members of the same ethnic group or a different ethnic group); Group 3 (in relationship with the member of the host community).

For Item 1, Group 2 in a relationship with the members of the same ethnic group or a different ethnic group, gave the highest score: 41,2% agree with the statement, against 22% and 17, 6% of Group 1 and Group 3 respectively. Being in a relationship with the members of the same (or a different ethnic group), enhances the perception of the immigrants concerning the economic conditions in the host community since they are allegedly more conscious of the struggling economic conditions of their original societies that they both had to leave. Being in a relationship with the member of the host community (Group 3) corresponds to the higher need in establishing personal relationships with the members of the

host community (88,8%), while being in a relationship with the members of a different ethnic group (Group 2) reduces this need (64,7%). Participants in no relationship also express a relatively high degree of agreement with this statement (78,6%). Although Group 3 showed the higher score for Item concerning their perceived attitude toward the immigrants (70,6% against 57% - Group 1 and 64% Group2), they perceive the members of the host community as less tolerant toward the linguistic imperfections in Item 4 and in Item 5. While the middle score of the level of agreement for both items of Group 1 and Group 2 is 95%, the middle score of Group 3 for both items is 76%, especially for what concerns the public settings. The reason for the lower score might be due to the fact that being in a relationship with the members of the host community implies a major number of unintentional participation in several interactive situations (meeting with the colleagues or distant relatives of the native partner), which might be perceived as less pleasant affecting the overall perception of the subjects. The general perception of the interactive situation is better for Group 3, for both the perceived attitude of the natives (Item 6) and for their own emotional reaction to the interactive experience (Item 7), 100% of the agreement for both items. For Items 8, 9, and 10 concerning the role of the language for integration, the participants show a similar level of agreement, except for Group 1 in Item 9, concerning having the same economic opportunities: 50% of agreement against 88,2% of agreement of Group 2 and 3. Allegedly not being in a relationship affects the general view of the immigrants concerning their financial prospects regardless of their language competence.

*Length of permanence:* Considering the nature of the sample (the first level of analysis), the length of permanence of those who stay in Italy is less than 15 years (Group 1) and of those who stay more than 15 years (Group 2) is not very different. The contrast in attitude would be more visible if comparing the immigrants of long-term permanence and of those who spend from 1 to 2 years in Italy. The difference concerns Item 1: the immigrants who stay longer, have a better opinion about the economic condition of the host community (Group 1 - 18,7% vs Group 2 - 31,2%). The perceived attitude towards the immigrants is also enhanced (Group 1 - 50 % vs Group 2 - 72 %). Finally, Group 2 showed a higher degree of agreement with Item 9. Hence, generally, the participants who spent a longer period of time in Italy, have a better perception of the socio-economic situation in the country, and they are also more convinced that through good language competence is possible to reach equal socio-economic conditions.

*Self-assessment of the L2 competence:* The participants were divided into 2 main groups according to the average self-assessment score concerning their L2 competence: namely those who gave themselves the average score from 0 to 7,9 out of 10 (maximum) (Group 1) and those who self-evaluated higher than 8 out of 10 points (Group 2).

On average, Group 2 expressed an equal or a higher degree of agreement for the majority of the items. The two exceptions concern Item 2 and Item 5. Participants who assigned themselves a higher score in L2 competence, allegedly establish more easily the relationships with the members of the host community, and therefore they perceive a slightly lower need for the relationships. Concerning Item 5, allegedly by considering the members of the host community as less tolerant toward the linguistic imperfections are more strongly motivated in enhancing their competence, in order to better face the interactive situations in the public domain.

*Type of permanence:* In this section, the level of agreement of the totality of the answers were compared with the answers of those who declared to have no intention to leave the host community.

Generally, since the majority of the participants expressed their uncertainty concerning their permanence, the answers of the 2 groups did not show any important difference. The conclusion concerning this factor might be that despite a slightly worse impression of the economic conditions of the host community, and the opportunities for reaching the same economic possibility of the natives, it does not constitute a reason for leaving the host community.

#### 4.2.4.3. *The third level of analysis*

In the third level of analysis, 21 items in the questionnaire were correlated with the Item X **cerco tutte le occasioni possibili di parlare con gli italiani in italiano** (*I try every possible opportunity to speak with Italians in Italian*), designed specifically in order to determine the level of participation of the subjects in the interactive episodes with the members of the host community and the factors affecting their desire to interact.



The participants who indicated a higher degree of agreement on the Likert scale, concerning their participation in the interactive episodes (Item X), are also those who expressed a higher degree of agreement with the Items Y-1: *Per me è molto importante avere relazioni interpersonali con gli italiani*, which corresponds to the social factor, namely, to the need for affiliation of the participants. That is, those who experience a major need for affiliation, are also those who use every possible opportunity to interact with the members of the host community. The contextual factor, namely the perceived attitude of the Italians toward the immigrants, Item Y-2: *Gli italiani hanno un ottimo atteggiamento verso gli immigrati*, similarly boosts the desire of the immigrants to interact with the natives. Another positive correlation is found with the Item Y-3: *passo più tempo con gli italiani rispetto a persone del mio Paese di origine*, implying that those who spend their time mainly with the members of the host community, rather than with the members of the same ethnic group, are also those who seek the major degree of participation in the interactive situation with the natives. Finally, those who believe that good language competence helps in reaching the same economic condition, Item Y-4: *Conoscere bene la lingua italiana mi aiuta ad avere le stesse possibilità economiche degli italiani*, are also those who express the major degree of agreement with the Item X. This implies a certain degree of awareness in the participants that although the interactive situation with the members of different socio-cultural group is a challenging experience (almost 60% of the participants disagree with the statement: *per interagire facilmente con gli italiani non serve adattarsi a loro*), they recognize the key role of interaction in the achievement of the good L2 competence.

A negative correlation was found with the statements aiming to determine the degree of perceived cultural distance and the degree of closeness to the original cultural identity. Those who showed a high degree of agreement with Items Y-20: *La cultura del mio Paese è molto diversa da quella italiana* and with Item Y-21: *Sono molto legato alla mia cultura di origine*, are also those who express a lower extent of agreement with the Item X. This implies that the strong cultural boundaries and the perceived cultural distance are the main factors negatively affecting the desire of the immigrants to enter in the interactive episodes with the natives.

#### *4.2.5. Discussion*

The answers of the participants on average showed a positive attitude of the immigrants toward the host society. The sample of the participants was divided according to various criteria considered to be relevant for their intercultural adaptation outcomes. The answers of the participants, whose characteristics were deemed to be an indicator for the more positive degree of integration, showed a slight shift in the attitude. All circumstantial factors considered showed equal or more positive answers of the participants. The factors especially responsible for the positive shift in attitude are those referring to the level of education achieved in Italy, relationship status, and the self-assessed L2 competence. This confirms the first hypothesis of this research. In fact, it was assumed that if the characteristics of the participant will be those associated with the good intercultural adaptation outcome, their answers will show a more positive attitude toward the host society and, in particular, toward the interactive episodes with the members of the host community.

The total majority of the participants, regardless of their individual characteristics, expressed their awareness concerning the key role of the language in their social integration process as well as in the achievement of equal social position. This confirms the second hypothesis of this research. Besides, those who achieved a higher level of education and declared a higher L2 competence, are also those who are majorly convinced that good L2 knowledge will guarantee equal economic opportunities with the natives. This implies that since the present sample consists of generally integrated immigrants, they all recognize the importance of the L2 acquisition in social relationships construction, however only those who attended educational institutions in Italy and achieved a higher L2 competence, believe in the possibility of equal economic chances. Besides, the belief that good L2 competence helps in achieving equal economic chances is one of the factors affecting the desire of the participants to interact with the members of the host community.

Another factor correlated with the desire of the participants to interact with the natives is the need for affiliation that coincides with spending less time with the members of the same ethnic group. The socio-political situation in the country is also revealed to be influential on the immigrants' decision to enter the interactive episodes. Conversely, being culturally rigid negatively affects the desire to interact. Having a large ethnic group present on the territory of the host community might constitute an attractive escape from the social issues arising during the intergroup interaction. This confirms the third hypothesis of this research.

In this analysis, it has been determined that positive intercultural adaptation outcome is associated with several factors, that include good language knowledge, access to the educational institution, and significant personal relationships, which are referred to in Norton (2013) as symbolic resources. These factors are interconnected since a good L2 competence depends on interaction with the natives because, as stated in Halstead (nd), in the case of limited interaction between the learner and the native speakers, “the interlanguage of the learner will be of a very rudimentary kind”. At the same time interaction between the L2 learners and the members of the host community occurs in the social context affected by the power relationship among individuals, which consists of an unequal distribution of the symbolic resources mentioned above and material resources which include real estate, money, and other economic goods (Norton Pierce, 1995; Norton, 2013; Northon & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2001). And according to Norton and Toohey (2011), “the individuals differ in their access to participation, according to their social and cultural positioning” (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 416).

Thus, this social dissimilarity might constitute an obstacle for participation in the communicative events, crucial not only for the L2 acquisition but also for acquiring cultural knowledge which is needed in order to be able to achieve the social position which will, in turn, facilitate the participation in social interaction (Noels & Giles, 2016). This results in a complicated dynamic in which immigrants need to interact with the natives in order to acquire the L2, which in turn is required for being able to access the educational institutions, to have better employment options, and for establishing significant connections with the members of the host community, necessary to increase the cultural capital, namely, “the educational resources and assets, necessary to be a fully functioning participant in a particular community of practice” (Block, 2007, p. 30) required, in its turn, to overcome the social inequality by acquiring the symbolic and material resources needed for claiming the desired social position from which to speak and so on.

Besides, as a consequence of intergroup contact resulting in acquiring the L2 and the cultural-based interactive behavior, required to be decoded by the members of the host community and to be acknowledged the desired social identity, the immigrants need to undergo numerous psychological changes. These changes, in cross-cultural psychology, are referred to as the acculturation process (Berry 1992; Ting Toomey, 1999). It consists in the

degree of the abandonment of the native behavioral patterns and in acquiring those deemed more suitable for dealing with the interactive episodes in the new community. The groups and individuals differ in the rigidity of their cultural boundaries (Ting-Toomey, 1999). While for some of them adjusting to the new cultural framework might not constitute any problem, for others, it might be an issue caused by so-called fear of assimilation (Noels & Giles 2016). Thus, the process of acculturation coincides with an overwhelming experience of acculturative stress (Berry, 1992), which implies both - dealing with the unfamiliar cultural and behavioral patterns and becoming aware that the norms and values of the original society are not universal. Besides, the process of self-translation (Pavlenko, 1998; Halstead, nd), which connects the new language with the thoughts reassessing the meaning system of the individuals, is also destabilizing for the individuals' identities. If these processes are not dealt with mindfully, they might affect negatively the intercultural adaptation outcomes of the immigrants (Ting-Toomey, 1999; Berry, 1992), leading to the psychological health issues, such as depression, and, on the social level, the withdrawal of the new society undermining the chances for the successful integration and the second identity development.

Besides, in order to escape the acculturative stress, the immigrants might be tempted to take refuge in their original ethnic communities, especially if those are extensively present in the host society. Finding the community in which the individuals feel accepted and where they share their experiences and do not have to deal with the challenging interactive episodes with the members of the host society, might constitute an attractive alternative for the immigrants in terms of their social needs. In fact, based on the results of the previous analysis, having a strong cultural identity and spending more time with the members of the same ethnic group corresponds to the minor participation in the interactive episodes with the natives. To be in contact with, or even having deep relationships, with the members of the same ethnolinguistic do not constitute an issue per se, since it provides the individuals with psychological support and the original cultural identity vaporization, required for the individuals' self-esteem. However, if participation in the same ethnic group is conceived as the unique social alternative, it might reduce the future identity options of the individuals in the new host community.

### ***4.3. Conclusion***

In this analysis, the interrelatedness between second language acquisition and new social identity formation in the intercultural context was observed. Besides, the various circumstances affecting the interactive situations between the immigrants and the members of the host community were analyzed.

Affected by different cultural scripts, the interactive situations might result in cultural clashes, due to the different referential systems of the interactants. These clashes might lead to misunderstandings in terms of linguistic or other symbolic meanings. In these circumstances, the immigrants might be assigned an inferior social position, due to the unequal relations of power between the newcomers and the members of the host community. In order to overcome this undesirable subject position, the acquisition of the L2 and the relative cultural knowledge, constitute crucial conditions. Namely, since the identity is negotiated through discourse practices, the immigrants need to learn how to be decoded in terms of the local discourses. While engaging in the acculturation process, the immigrants might develop the multimodal package of new linguistic identity.

In addition to the cultural scripts, other factors, such as immigration history and socio-linguistic condition in the host society and several individual factors might determine the attitude of the immigrants toward the intergroup interaction. Especially, the level of education, personal relationships with the members of the host community, and L2 competence seem to be relevant in forming the immigrants' attitude concerning the interactive situation with the natives. Besides, entering the new reality leads the individuals to adjust to the new rules of existence, in order to avoid rejection and marginalization. This implies a constant battle between the original socio-cultural identity and the new one which emerges during the acculturation process and allows to reach the positive integration outcome. This new identity is formed in interaction, thus the negative attitude toward the interaction episodes might compromise a positive intercultural adaptation outcome and the development of the new functional social identity, leading to an even more negative attitude toward the host community and other individual-level issues.

This last assumption highlights the importance of interaction for intercultural integration and for the new social identity formation. Therefore, the main object of this research was to determine to what extent the level of integration of the adult immigrants is interrelated with their attitude toward the interactive episodes with the members of the host community. Since the characteristics of the interactive situations rather than being objective are often perceived, due to the different individual experiences on the interactants, in this analysis the factors majorly affecting the immigrants' attitude toward the host community and the interaction episodes with their members were observed. More positive intercultural adaptation outcomes and the level of acculturation correspond to the better attitude of the participant. Besides, a positive attitude constitutes the main booster for entering the interactive situation, which is essential for the L2 level enhancement and the acquiring of other symbolic resources, required to increase their cultural capital in the new society and to achieve the recognition of the desired social identity.

The positive correlation, between the various factors and the desire of the participants to interact, was found with the need for affiliation, with the perceived positive attitude of the natives toward the immigrants, with spending more time around the members of the host community, and with the idea that good language competence will allow the reaching of the same economic chances. A negative correlation was found with the factors associated with the more rigid cultural boundaries of the immigrants. Besides, the findings of this research, have shown the interrelatedness between the L2 competence, education experience in the receiving context, the establishment of significant relationships with the members of the host society, and the positive attitude of the immigrants toward the interactive situation.

However, as was mentioned above those factors are also mutually affecting each other and at first glance, it might be hard to understand how to initiate this process without an external force. In this sense, the help of the L2 teachers, providing language courses for the adult immigrants is essential.

#### *4.3.1. Pedagogical and social implication*

First of all, in order to avoid the negative consequences of intercultural adaptation, not only do the L2 educators need to be aware of the delicate transitional processes that the

immigrants undergo, but they also should be able to increase the awareness of the L2 learners concerning their internal changes.

Especially in the initial stages of the adaptation process associated with the major degree of acculturative stress and identity dislocation, the transformative processes that the individuals undergo, or will face in the near future, should be explicitly discussed. Generally, as stated in Halstead (n.d), the classrooms “could become places where the manifold issues involved in adapting to a new culture are made explicit [...] and where students’ at times fragile identities are affirmed, and where self-understanding and the understanding of others are advanced”. First, the individuals will handle those changes in a more conscious and peaceful way, which will positively affect their psychological health, self-esteem, and, consequently, their attitude towards the interaction situation with the members of the host community. More generally, the immigrants might become more motivated to better integrate into the host society. Second, if these experiences will be normalized and explained by the experts in L2 education in the classroom, where the individuals might share their feelings and worries with the teachers and colleagues capable of fully understanding them, this will probably reduce their tendency to repair in the original ethnic community deemed to be their unique option for feeling safe and to be understood.

Besides, as illustrated by the research, cultural rigidity is one of the factors affecting the desire of participants in interactive situations with the members of the host society. Therefore, the concept of cultural identity needs to be addressed in the classrooms. Generally, the degree of the rigidity of the individuals’ cultural boundaries might depend on their previous intercultural experiences, such as international exchange for educational purposes, working experience abroad, etc. Another influential factor is the socio-cultural framework of the countries of origin. Namely, if the immigrants come from the countries where the national and linguistic identities of the individuals are actively exploited for ideological reasons; or if the society recently underwent the process of national independence or even inter-ethnic conflicts, their cultural identity might be less flexible. These factors need to be taken into account by the language educators while promoting the more successful integration of the L2 learners. For the learners with a strong cultural identity, it might be harder to internalize the new cultural framework and to adapt to the unfamiliar interactive patterns, than for those with more flexible cultural identities.

In addition to the valorization of the cultural identities of the foreigners in terms of intercultural dialogue and mutual enrichment of the groups, the interactive patterns and certain behavioral norms of the receiving community need to be explained in terms of cultural meaning. Namely, the cultural differences should be illustrated not in terms of ‘we behave in such a way because we are different human beings’ but contextualized in terms of certain historic or environmental reasons affecting the interactive behavior of the members of the receiving society. By doing so, the educators should be aware of their own cultural identities and be able to take them as an object for comparative or explanatory purposes. In this way, the adult immigrants might become aware of their cultural boundaries, which, in turn, might lead to their general understanding of acculturation, not in terms of sacrificing of their original cultural norms and values, but more as an additional competence, functional for achieving the desired social position in the new social context. Besides, by understanding the reasons behind certain behavioral norms, it will be easier for immigrants to internalize and reenact them in the appropriate interactive situations, instead of just imitating them unaware of various connotative shades of meaning that certain interactive behaviors entail.

By programming the L2 courses the educators need to be aware of the heterogeneity of the language learners and their different needs. Specifically, the teachers need to identify what communities of practice the students want to become part of, and what social identity they wish to achieve, based on the individuals’ potentials and limits. Thus, teachers should help the students to reach their goals, instead of locking them in finalized identities. Moreover, they need to help the students to understand how education can lead to individual and social change. And based on the poststructuralist approach, conceiving the social identity as multiple and dynamic, the L2 learners have to realize that, despite their initially unequal position in terms of social power, there is no reason for them to be locked in a certain position. Generally, educators should stress the importance of studying and L2 acquisition as access to cultural resources, and how learners might manage those resources for achieving more identity options.

Aware of the power relations in the society and the importance of the interaction in the L2 acquisition, the L2 educators should explore with the learners the better chances for their social engagements and interactions. They might analyze the social context in which the individuals live and help them to understand how they might more effectively seek opportunities to interact.



Besides, by analyzing the attitude of the immigrant toward the members of the host community and the factors affecting their desire to participate in addition to the theoretical analysis, the role of the personal relationship between groups appears to be relevant for more successful integration of the foreigners. In this regard, the various initiatives facilitating social cohesion should be promoted by national institutions. And due to the importance of studying for more successful intercultural adaptation outcomes, access to educational institutions for immigrants needs to be incentivized. Besides, the L2 educators need to be aware of the various psychological issues arising during the transitional period of the immigrants in order to not only help them in enhancing their L2 competence but also to help them in reaching the ideal, accounting to European Council, degree of acculturation, namely the intercultural integration.

A better understanding of the intercultural adaptation processes of the adult immigrants, and of what is affecting their attitude toward the host community not only is important for the immigrants themselves, but also for the host society aiming for more peaceful coexistence with the increasing number of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. Besides, a low degree of integration of the adult immigrants will also affect the future of their kids, even of those born in the receiving society. Although the Italian schools are developing in the direction of social inclusion and valorization of diversity, the attitude of their parents toward the host society will be hardly overlooked. Finally, in those cases in which the kids will successfully integrate or even assimilate to the host society happily identifying themselves with the members of the host community, the different moods in their homes might cause several psychological and identity issues.

#### *4.3.2. Limits of the research*

Based on what has been determined in the first level of analysis, the general characteristics of the individuals in the sample are associated with the positive intercultural adaptation outcome of the participants. This aspect, however, constitutes a limit of the research, since only the attitude of the sufficiently integrated part of the immigrant population is measured. Unfortunately, the part of the population that might undergo a more complex acculturation process is more difficult to reach.

Another limit refers to the factors selected for this analysis, which are far from being the sole factors affecting the acculturation level and the attitude of the immigrants. Such factors as the psychological health of the individuals, their experiences prior to the immigration, their motives for the immigration, and other individual-level factors affecting their adaptation outcomes are out of the scope of this analysis. On the group level the socio-political situation of the countries of origin was not taken into account. This factor might affect the cultural boundaries of the individuals and their perceived cultural and social distance. In this sense, the research constitutes a means to obtain general information concerning what is relevant in forming the immigrants' attitude toward the host community, and what might constitute a booster or an obstacle for their participation in the interactive episodes. In order to obtain a more complete view concerning the immigrants' attitude toward the host community and toward the interactive episodes, further qualitative research is required.

#### *4.3.3. Proposals for the future research*

Due to the heterogeneity of the immigrant population, quantitative research through the structured questionnaire is hardly sufficient in order to determine all the dynamics affecting the immigrants' attitude and their desire to integrate. For this purpose, ethnographic research conducted in various ethnic communities present in Italy might be more effective. In this way, it might be possible to analyze more profoundly the attitude of the immigrants and the affecting factors on different stages of their acculturating process. Dealing with the different members of the same ethnic group might be helpful in order to detect various specific characteristics of individuals responsible for different acculturative options. The comparative analysis of various communities might also be conducive for a better understanding of the nature of the heterogeneous immigrant population and how, on the group level, different communities deal with their intercultural adaptation process. Similarly, by interviewing a large number of individuals, it would be possible to determine the consistent tendencies in their adaptation processes and to determine to what extent the power relation between individuals is affecting their access to practice the L2. Generally, analyzing the nature of the different groups of immigrants might lead to a common understanding of what should be done in order to advance their integration and to avoid the emergence of the separation attitude of the groups and individuals.

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