While identity is often framed through labels such as parent, teacher, or gender (Kanno, 2000), it is our lived and linguistic experiences that truly shape our sense of self. Identity is socially constructed over time through interaction and context (Block, 2007; Fielding, 2016; Tajfel, 1978). For bilingual individuals, code-switching reveals the dynamic and fluid nature of identity (Auer, 2000), as speakers express different facets of the self aligned with specific linguistic and cultural settings. This study explores how bilingual speakers construct and negotiate their identities across different linguistic and cultural environments. The primary objective is to identify the key factors that shape identity in individuals who use more than one language in distinct social settings. Specifically, the study asks: How do bilingual individuals perceive their sense of self in each language? What social or contextual elements influence these perceptions?

Six participants— early bilinguals in combinations of Turkish-English, Turkish-German, and Arabic-English—were selected to represent a variety of acquisition histories and contexts of migration. Data were collected via semi-structured face-to-face interviews, focusing on language background, bilingualism, code-switching, and perceptions of identity. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. Themes were derived inductively and cross-checked by both researchers to mitigate subjective bias.

The findings suggest that bilingual identity is shaped by multiple factors, including the age and context of second language acquisition, access to a community of speakers, patterns of language separation or integration, and attitudes of the second language community. These findings highlight the complexity of bilingual identity construction and emphasize the importance of considering individual experiences and sociocultural environments. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how language use intersects with personal and social identity, challenging simplified views of bilingualism as a uniform experience.

Key words: bilingualism, bilingual identity, code-switching, socialization

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