

INVESTIGATING AGENCY IN DISCOURSE: MULTILINGUAL IRANIAN
IMMIGRANTS IN ISTANBUL

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Elanur Sönmez, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
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ABSTRACT

Investigating Agency in Discourse: Multilingual Iranian Immigrants in Istanbul

This thesis aims to provide a detailed examination of the agency construction of multilingual Iranian migrants living in Istanbul. Focusing on three Iranian women's multilingual practices and daily experiences for one year, this linguistic ethnographic study explores the effect of different socio-political and personal factors in the agency construction of young Iranian women whose migratory movement is defined as lifestyle migration. The study investigates the concept of lifestyle migration in a relatively novel, non-Western context by comparing the experiences of the participants with the experiences of other lifestyle migrants. Participants observation supplemented with detailed fieldnotes along with the recordings of naturally occurring interactions and semi-structured interviews constituted the data set analyzed in this study. The findings suggest that the construction of agentive identities occur throughout different time spans and life events and these time spans expand into the past and present experiences and future plans of the individuals in an interlinked manner. All these factors operate hand in hand in order to shape and be shaped by the agentive actions of the individuals.

ÖZET

Söylemde Eylemlilik Araştırması: İstanbul'daki Çok Dilli İranlı Göçmenler

Bu tez, İstanbul'da yaşayan çok dilli İranlı göçmenlerin eylemlilik inşasının ayrıntılı bir incelemesini sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Üç İranlı kadının bir yıl boyunca çok dilli uygulamalarına ve günlük deneyimlerine odaklanan bu dilbilimsel etnografik çalışma, göç hareketi yaşam tarzı göçü olarak tanımlanan genç İranlı kadınların eylemlilik inşasında farklı sosyopolitik ve kişisel faktörlerin etkisini araştırıyor. Çalışma, katılımcıların deneyimlerini diğer yaşam tarzı göçmenlerinin deneyimleriyle karşılaştırarak, yaşam tarzı göçü kavramını nispeten yeni, Batı dışı bir bağlamda incelemektedir. Verilerin analizinde ve yorumlanmasında, kendiliğinden gelişen, spontane etkileşimlerin kayıtları ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin yanı sıra ayrıntılı alan notları ile desteklenen katılımcı gözlemleri kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, aktif işleyen kimliklerin inşasının farklı zaman dilimleri ve yaşam olayları boyunca gerçekleştiğini ve bu zaman dilimlerinin bireylerin geçmiş ve şimdiki deneyimleriyle ve gelecek planlarıyla iç içe geçmiş bir şekilde geliştiğini göstermektedir. Bütün bu faktörler, bireylerin kılıcı eylemlerini şekillendirmek ve bu eylemler tarafından şekillendirilmek için el ele işlemektedir.

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, I started teaching English at a private university. I was working at a very multicultural workplace with colleagues from all around the world. In this multicultural setting, I could observe and listen to different migration stories of my colleagues and learn about their experiences in a new country. During these interactions, I heard stories of running away from poverty or even from safety concerns. However, when it came to my Iranian co-workers, who were many, they never stated such troubles. Instead, they reported how they wanted to live in a better country or live more freely than their peers in Iran. They seemed to find Turkey a comfortable space for themselves and always stated how they enjoyed their lives in the country. During the same time period, I was living in Şişli, a populous and lively part of Istanbul, and seeing a lot of Iranians at the malls, restaurants, or even business centers. Everywhere I went, I could hear someone speaking Persian. The fact that these individuals did not resemble to other migrants in terms of their living conditions or migration experiences made me very curious about the scope of their movement. Thus, I started asking some questions to my Iranian colleagues and searching for more information about the topic. In April 2019, upon hearing my advisor's project plans which aimed to investigate the multilingual experiences of different migrant groups, I decided to take part in the study and explore the migration trajectory and multilingual experiences of Iranian migrants in Istanbul. To this end, I started searching for and meeting Iranian migrants in different parts of Istanbul in order to gather more information about the details of their movement. This

preliminary research provided me with an insight into the migratory movement of Iranians.

To begin with, the aims, motivations, and the living conditions of the Iranian migrants who had recently moved to Turkey were very distinct from the traditional understanding of migration and previous movements from Iran to Turkey. The primary motivation for these individuals was not looking for a safe place to live or obtaining better economic opportunities in their new residence. Rather, as I was told by my initial informants, they were searching for a place where they could enjoy the secular lifestyle without fearing their government's enforcements. Especially consisting of young adults, this group was living in the livelier parts of Istanbul and spending their time by joining parties, travelling, or pursuing other leisure activities. Consequently, these people were all wealthy individuals whose primary concern was not work, but some of them preferred to work in prestigious sectors out of choice as well.

Another insight my informants shared with me was why these people opted for Turkey out of various other options. Firstly, the bureaucratic process was much easier for them because they could stay in the country even with a touristic visa and acquire estates here. Contrarily, Western destinations were very problematic either because they did not give visa to Iranians due to the political tension with the country or because the currency difference was too much to afford for Iranians. Another reason was the fact that Turkey was closer to their homeland which made it easier for them to go back and forth, see their families or handle their businesses. Therefore, Turkey was a more optimal choice in these people's efforts to establish a more secular lifestyle.

Seeing that these individuals' migration trajectory was very different from the known migratory movements, I decided to investigate the underlying motivations and insights of this mobility. A search of the existing literature was pointing out to the concept of lifestyle migration, which was a move in search of better life conditions that was mostly common among Westerners. However, my preliminary observations of my informants and my prospective participants revealed that the context of lifestyle migration seemed to be shifting to the non-Western contexts as well. This preliminary research showed me that although the reasons for mobility all changed among my participants, the underlying motivation could still be interpreted as a lifestyle movement since it was also a move for better life conditions. They wanted to run their life in a more secular surrounding, away from the Iranian government's and society's traditional, Islamic living style. They were affluent individuals from well-to-do families who meet their expenses either from their savings or from some temporal jobs. Therefore, they were actually fitting the definition. Realizing that, I revolved my first meetings around the theme of lifestyle migration by questioning their motivations for moving to Turkey and current living conditions here. They all shared similar accounts in this sense, which motivated me to investigate the lifestyle migration movement from a non-Western context. In time, I also noticed that these women's mobility and narrations also reflected a move of and search for agency. This shifted my focus from solely lifestyle migration and made me question how these women as lifestylers constructed their agency in different time spans and whether or how their mobility influenced their agency construction.

Therefore, in this study my aim is to discuss this lifestyle movement from the perspective of three young women who are searching for a better life in Turkey while

also shaping their agentive identities. Through their accounts of the past and present experiences and their prospective plans for the future, I aim to investigate how these women, as lifestyle migrants, have negotiated their agentive roles through different time spans against different power figures. Throughout the analysis chapters, I will attempt to interpret the participants' language use in interactions and interviews in order to bring an explanation to the research questions shaping this study:

1. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their past?
2. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their migration experiences?
3. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their future plans?

In the following sections, I will present my reasons for choosing Istanbul as my research site and present an overview of the migration history between Iran and Turkey. The final section of this chapter will provide a plan of the thesis.

1.1 Selecting the research site

In this section, I will briefly explain my reasons for choosing Istanbul as my research site for my thesis project. Istanbul is the most populous city of Turkey with 15 million people (TÜİK, 2019). It is the biggest metropolitan of the country and a destination for both internal (Özkul, 2015) and international mobility (Biehl, 2014; 2015). These migration movements have enriched the city with an intersection of different cultural and linguistic practices, beliefs, and lifestyles. My primary reason for choosing Istanbul as my research site was this richness and centrality of the city

in migration. Although there have been various migration studies conducted in Istanbul before because of its position as a hub for migration (Biehl, 2014); these studies have mainly centered on socio-political aspects of the issue and lacked sociolinguistic lenses. Therefore, I aimed to approach the issue from a new perspective in migration studies with a study investigating the daily interactions, linguistic repertoires, and linguistic practices of an immigrant group as well.

Another motivation for me to conduct my fieldwork in Istanbul was the fact that I was living in Istanbul at the time of my master's study. It was a familiar site for me, and I was able to observe the daily interactions of various ethnic groups in a variety of contexts from public transportation to social events. I assumed that the dense population of Iranian migrants in Istanbul could make it easier for me to reach out to a number of Iranians easily and contact them. I knew the parts of the city where most Iranians resided, and I could visit those districts easily from where I lived. With this in mind, I decided to get in touch with as many Iranians as possible in order to get access into their community and lives.

1.2 Iranian migrants in Turkey

Since the early 1980s, Turkey's position as an immigrant sending country has seen a radical shift as the mobility towards the country has gained momentum and it has become a hub for asylum seekers, refugees, and transit migrants (İçduygu & Keyman, 2000). More recently, specifically in the last two decades, mobility towards Istanbul as a point for destination or transit has increased and the growing number of migrants and refugees has arrived through various channels and with different purposes (İçduygu & Biehl, 2013; Biehl, 2014; 2015).

Some of the historical events and socio-political forces that have contributed to Turkey's turn as a popular destination are explained as "The Iranian Revolution, political turmoil in the Middle East, the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War, and Turkey's geographical location as a transit zone between the West and the rest" (İçduygu & Keyman, 2000, p. 385). Specifically for Iran, the initial intensive migration movements to Turkey date back to the Iranian Revolution in 1979; with the opponents of the new regime fleeing the country and seeking asylum in Turkey (Kirişçi, 2000). While some of these asylum-seekers returned to Iran over time, some chose to settle in Turkey, and a final group migrated to other destinations (Kirişçi, 2000). Those who stayed in Turkey were mostly educated, professional, middle-class Iranians who generally acquired Turkish nationality or long-term residence and work permits, and settled in Istanbul (Danış, 2005). Danış describes the life in Istanbul for these migrants as quite comfortable and without serious problems in their socio-economic incorporation.

According to the latest data from the Turkish Directorate General of Migration Management, as of 2018, there are 44.313 Iranians with residence permit and 2565 with work permit in Turkey. Of these documented Iranians, 22.837 reside in Istanbul; mainly in Esenyurt (5.630), Şişli (1.939), and Küçükçekmece (1368). Among this population, there is a specific group that has attracted attention even in the general society due to their living conditions. This group consists of individuals who have migrated to the country in order to maintain their idealistic lifestyles away from their government's impositions. They mainly consist of young wealthy adults, aiming to enjoy the metropolis while also creating new networks for themselves. Accounts of this novel mobility from Iran towards Turkey report students and transit migrants in search of a better, freer, and more secular life while also aiming to reach

the Western paradise (Köşer-Akçapar, 2004). It is this group of Iranian migrants that I will focus on in this thesis.

In this section, I attempted to summarize the migration history of Turkey as a receiving country, specifically in the Iranian context. The next chapter will be a discussion of the theoretical and academic overview of the relevant concepts of the study.

1.3 Plan of the study

This study consists of 7 chapters. After this introductory chapter, I aim to present the theoretical and empirical information about the key concepts of the study. Chapter 3 will present the methodological processes and concerns of the study beginning with gaining access. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I will attempt to analyze the linguistic data in order to provide answers for the research questions of the study. Finally, Chapter 7 will be the summary and theoretical discussion of the research findings based on the data presented in the analytical chapters. The chapter will be concluded with the discussion of limitations and implications for further research in this area.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I aim to introduce the relevant work on the key concepts of this study. The first section will revolve around the conceptualization of lifestyle migration and its relevance to ongoing mobility acts in respective order. The consequent section will be a discussion of agency specifically in the field of Applied Linguistics. I will also attempt to review empirical research on agency in the context of migration.

2.1 Lifestyle migration

2.1.1 Understanding lifestyle migration

While much of the existing literature on migration focuses on people's move abroad for economic reasons or as an escape from safety concerns in the homeland, recent years have witnessed an emerging focus on a novel form of contemporary migration where people move away to pursue different life experiences (Torkington, 2010; Korpela, 2020). Attributed primarily to wealthy, Western individuals who travel abroad (Fechter & Walsh, 2010), lifestyle migration is defined by O'Reilly and Benson (2009) as "...the migration of relatively affluent individuals, moving either part-time or full-time, permanently or temporarily, to places which, for various reasons, signify for the migrants something loosely defined as the quality of life." (p.621).

This movement is reported to result from any reason ranging from an adventurous feeling to bohemian ideals such as more spiritual or creative aspirations; from a more fulfilling working life or to an escape from real experiences such as rising levels of unemployment, divorce, or crime (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Howey,

2009; Korpela, 2009; Lawson, 2016). Regardless of the nature of these reasons, the underlying motivation behind this move is the individuals' aspiration for an imagined life that is better or more fulfilling than the current one. Research shows that this fulfilling way of life is generally associated with affordable or stress-free living, or even more agreeable climate (O'Reilly, 2007b; Sriskandarajah & Drew, 2006). Additionally, O'Reilly (2007a) mentions business opportunities, better conditions for families with children, the desire for self-realization, and even the more favorable culture as factors that are associated with lifestyle mobility. Therefore, as previously stated, while the reasons or attractions for lifestyle migration are abundant, the most unifying or comprehensive description of this mobility is the desire for a better life; whatever better means for the individuals.

Among the reasons cited above, the most commonly encountered seems to be the attractiveness of aggregable climate conditions, especially among retirees who are seeking less stressful pace in their lives (see Casado-Diaz, et al., 2004). These individuals generally migrate to the touristic sites of Mediterranean and Southern United States in order to pursue a life experience in a calmer environment where they can generally experience the Mediterranean way of life with its cuisine and outdoor lifestyle. Considered from this point of view, their movement can be taken as a purely amenity oriented act rather than an economic or political one; they only want to spend their years in a healthier and sunnier environment. Casado-Diaz, et al. (2004) and Gustafson (2009) report that these individuals generally travel as couples and prefer to buy a second home in their new country of residence both as an investment and for the feeling of being at home. They either settle in the new residence or stay there temporarily during the warmer months and return to their home countries at least for a few months in a year. Since most of these individuals

are retirees, they generally do not need to work. However, some still prefer to do so and those who work prefer to be small business owners so as to have more flexible working conditions and be their own bosses (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009).

Another common reason for this amenity movement is bohemian or spiritual lifestyle pursuits. The destinations of these individuals and families are more diverse, ranging from Greece and Italy to more exotic parts of the world such as India (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). These groups generally prefer temporary settlement and spend their time in the new country by doing yoga or meditation or studying music. Although these Westerners are seeking more authentic lifestyles where they can pursue their artistic dreams and alternative lifestyles away from the chaos of the world, they are still engaged with their Western style of living as well (see Korpela, 2009). For example, they visit the Mykonos Island periodically but for a short-term, later returning back to their regular lives in their homelands (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). In India, too, although these new residents praise the traditional lifestyle in the region that reminds them of the past, they still benefit from the modern life and its luxury. They still use modern transportation or modern technologies rather than fully engaging with the traditional living of their new residential country.

By definition, lifestyle migration is an act of privilege, the actors are at least relatively wealthy people who can travel easily and whose driving force behind this movement is purely personal rather than seeking income or safety (Croucher, 2012). Thus, although this movement can be seen everywhere around the world, the fact that it mostly applies to white Westerners and families who have the necessary social and economic capital to afford such an act cannot be denied. Consequently, the empirical work on lifestyle migration in social disciplines has generally revolved around the experiences of wealthy Westerners who migrate to rural, stress-free regions where

they can pursue their alternative lives. (e.g., Casado-Diaz, et al., 2010; Lawson, 2016). As Korpela (2020) reports, many lifestyle migrants in India have the resources to live in big houses and hire household help; privileges they could not afford in their home countries. Because their income from the homeland has more value in the new residence or the living costs are less expensive, they can afford more luxurious living standards. Moreover, many Westerners are more advantageous than other groups when it comes to visa regulations (O'Reilly & Benson, 2016). Fechter and Walsh (2010) bring a postcolonial theoretical perspective to this discussion and states that most of the destinations preferred by these migrants are once-colonized or occupied countries by the West. Therefore, these people cannot only obtain visas more easily in these destinations, but they also have a more privileged hierarchical status in the society due to their past racialized status.

Because lifestyle migrants are seeking opportunities for a good life and an escape from their community histories, they often have to re-negotiate their work and life balance after their mobility and try to maintain a quality of life in which they are free from prior constraints (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). They still have to generate income in the new destination in order to maintain their preferable living conditions, thus they still have to work. To this end, it is often reported that they refer to self-employment since they prefer to have a degree of control over their work life (Stone and Stubbs, 2007). What is worthy of notice is that even working, lifestyle aspirations are still accepted as the priority for these migrants (Madden, 1999); they use their jobs as a means to fund their new lifestyles. For instance, when small business owners on the Costa del Sol were asked why they moved, climate, quality of life, and lifestyle reasons came ahead of business opportunities (Madden, 1999). In addition, Korpela (2020) reports how the individuals she observed in Goa work as

touristic business owners or artisans in order to afford their life in the new residence. They even buy some artifacts from the East and sell them in their homeland in order to earn a living and fund their new lifestyle.

One of the primary studies conducted on lifestyle migration as a conceptual framework in social sciences belongs to Benson (2011). In an ethnographic investigation of lifestyle migrants living in rural France, Benson observed the daily experiences of the British in the French Lot and questioned their motives for moving to the area. She also observed the interactions of the new residents with the locals and questioned whether their previous expectations and real-life experiences of the rural idyll matched each other. Based on her observations and the interview accounts, Benson concluded that lifestyle migration for these people was an ongoing process as they engaged in a continuous self-realization process through reflecting on their past expectations and current experiences. They were still pursuing their imagined better life conditions as they were trying to live the authentic rural life by growing their own food and aiming to build strong ties with the locals. In another study, Korpela (2010) narrates how Western backpackers decided to become residents in Varanasi, India upon their travels into the region. The interview accounts of the study demonstrate that these individuals' movement to another country have changed their understanding of the self and urged them to distinguish themselves from both the Western and Indian individuals. With their new life, they started to define themselves as more individualistic and courageous people compared to their Western and Indian others. They also started to consider themselves as more agentive individuals who had done something to change their lives as opposed to the passive others who accepted the life that was presented to them.

In the context of retirees moving to warm climates, Gustafson's work on Swedish retirees living in different parts of Spain is noteworthy. He interviewed 44 retirees who obtained homes in both Spain and Sweden. In the interviews, he questioned the motives for the individuals' moves and their sense of local and national belongings along with more general questions such as the life in both countries. The focus of his publication in 2009 was how these individuals managed transnational lifestyles in-between the two countries. Since they resided in temporal durations in both of the countries, these individuals seemed to have developed some strategies in order to manage their transnational living styles. Among these strategies, most include managing easier and more affordable trips between their destinations and keeping their homes safe while they were away. Moreover, it was reported that compared to the group in Benson's (2011) study, these individuals approach the locals with more caution; not trusting the Spanish mindset in work ethics and choosing Swedish firms in their estate renovations or settling in sites where there are other Swedes as well. Some of these individuals also prefer to rent their homes instead of buying them in order to have more independence in their residential choices. Gustafson claims that these findings also address the need for investigating not only these transnational lifestyle movements but also the ambivalences and contradictions that may come with these moves.

When it comes to the Turkish context, especially the Britons living in Didim on the Southwestern coast have attracted academic attention. In a longitudinal ethnographic study, Nudrali and O'Reilly (2016) described the demographic profile of the new residents of Didim and investigated their driving forces for the movement, the comparison of their past lives and current experiences, and the reception of these new residents by the host community. Nudrali's fieldwork showed that the

demographic profile of the British migrants in Didim were more diverse than other lifestyle destinations. Their ages, occupations, and living conditions all differed from each other extensively. However, the motivation behind the move of these individuals was again very common: to have better living conditions in a more agreeable climate. In Didim, they bought houses or flats and resumed settled lives, with some working in part-time jobs only to afford their living style. Nudrali and O'Reilly's accounts also reveal the blurred lines between tourism and lifestyle migration in that these individuals or families were all pursuing very tranquil lives, enjoying the sunny weather and the cafes and restaurants of the city. Moreover, most of these residents were once only tourists in the city who decided to settle after seeing the place. One final issue touched upon in this study is the privileged status of the British migrants in the city compared with the locals. The fact that they have more economic capital and prestigious status seemed to bother the locals and make them hesitant to accept the new residents easily.

In short, while the concept of lifestyle migration can be observed anywhere among diverse groups of individuals, the most common context where this novel movement form of human mobility can be observed are the context of Western affluent individuals in the warm climates or authentic cultural areas. While their type or duration of residence or reasons for the move may also vary, the underlying motivation behind these mobilities can be commonly referred as the search for a better life.

In this sub-section, I introduced the concept of lifestyle migration and, drawing from existing literature, provided a detailed description of the phenomenon. The next sub-section will be a review of lifestyle migration movement as an increasing phenomena and its relation to other growing mobilities.

2.1.2 Lifestyle migrants as highly mobile individuals

Based on the working definition by Benson and O'Reilly (2009), lifestyle migration does not only involve permanent move, nor does it refer to only temporary movement abroad. While some can prefer to settle and become permanent residents in their new destinations, studies show that other individuals circulate through transnational spaces (Bantman-Masum, 2015), spending the winter in a more agreeable climate and returning home for the rest of the year, or becoming hypermobile professionals for work (see Van Riemsdijk, 2014). In a case study by in Varanasi, India, Korpela demonstrates how the Westerners in the city return to their homelands in regular intervals in order to generate income for their stay in India where they can pursue their preferred lifestyles (2020). Therefore, migration for these individuals is not conceptualized as a "one-off event," but rather it operates as "a continuation of broader life course experiences" (Botterill, 2017, p.2).

Although there have been other forms of privileged migrations, the recent rise in lifestyle migration can be related to late modernity and globalization. As Torkington (2010) elaborates, lifestyle migration has emerged due to a series of social transformations over the last 50 or 60 years including globalization; ease of movement, cheaper forms of transportation, the rise in living standards, and commitment to leisure time. Increasing opportunities for more flexible work life and early retirement have also enabled Westerners to travel more easily beyond transnational borders. In the same vein, Giddens (1994) claims that self-identity of the individuals are no longer bound to the traditional or cultural positionings, instead individuals construct their identities in a self-reflective fashion, which urges them to seek for self-realization in different destinations. Therefore, the luxuries and the

mindset brought upon by the modern age have enabled the increase in lifestyle migration movements.

The fact that lifestyle migrants are highly mobile individuals have caused academics to link this phenomenon to other concepts in migration studies. Among such concepts, one of the most mentioned is hypermobility (see Bantman-Masum, 2015). This group of hypermobile migrants or transmigrants are similar to lifestyle migration in that they, too, prefer to move to touristic areas and enjoy the warm weather and tranquil living. Their age or occupational status and nationalities are very diverse although Westerners still being the more commonly encountered group. Additionally, they too, commit to alternative occupations and these jobs are generally ones that can enable them to travel more easily. Thus, their occupational choices are highly influenced by their lifestyle choices as well. Contrary to lifestyle migrants, the definition of better life for these hypermobile individuals is travel itself and what sets these people apart from the general lifestyle migrant groups is the duration of their residence. While lifestyle migrants can choose to settle in their new country of residence or migrate seasonally, for these individuals, better life is one where they can keep travelling. This travel is not something that occurs every few months, rather it is a hypermobility that can be observed in a lifetime when individuals pass through transnational borders every few years or so. They can still experience long periods of residence in different countries, but this does not mean that they have stopped travelling all together.

In his book investigating the global nomads in Ibiza, Spain and Goa, India, D'Andrea (2007) narrates the experiences of hypermobile travelers in these sites. For the residents of Ibiza, he states that these travelers reside in the island either individually or with their families. Their occupational choices also reflect their free-

spirited lifestyles since they work in informal and seasonal jobs and generally interested in areas such as yoga, handcrafts, or massaging in order to afford their expenses. D'Andrea also reflects on the experiences of children who are subject to this hypermobile lifestyle due to their parents' mobility to the island. He states that children have also become accustomed to this standard of living and they also resume their parents' tranquil, expressive lifestyles. Living hypermobile has also affected the linguistic repertoire of these children; they are multilingual speakers with transnational ties to different regions in the world, having multiple citizenships at the same time and being enrolled to international schools. Although these accounts may indicate that these travelers are actually leading very settled lives remaining on the island with their children and working at the same time, come winter, these families engage in yet another act of migration. This time, they migrate to South Asia or Latin America where the tourism season starts in order to pursue their tranquil lifestyles and earn their livelihood through similar expressive occupations mentioned above.

Another concept that is both linked and differentiated from lifestyle migration is lifestyle mobilities (Cohen, et al., 2015). According to Cohen et al., while lifestyle migration refers to only permanent residence or seasonal travels, the concept of lifestyle mobilities applies to a more ongoing process that can integrate into the everyday practice of individuals. In lifestyle mobilities, rather than travelling to one specific area, individuals have more than one fixed location that they accept as their destinations. As with transmigration, lifestyle mobilities extend to a lifetime and can be observed as a life-course development instead of a one-off event. With so many destinations and dwellings, the questions of home and belonging also arise in such a transnational lifestyle. On this matter, Germann Molz (2008) argue that within the

notion of global abode, travelers can be at home anywhere as long as they feel at home with the concept of travelling. Therefore, as with their destinations, the feeling of belonging of these travelers do not need to be fixed, either.

Cohen's (2011) interview study with backpackers in India and Thailand can be an example for the act of lifestyle mobilities. Despite having a residence and a settled life in their home country, these travelers consider travelling as their lifestyle choice. They use every chance they can find to pursue their dreams of travelling. Most of these individuals are generally affluent people who also have childhood tourism experiences. They vary in age and also years of travelling, with some of them having been travelling for even 17 years. Cohen also investigates the future aspirations of these individuals and discovers that some of them aim to integrate travelling into their everyday lives or at least take on jobs that can allow them to travel. The participants of the study also shared a common desire to find a new place to call home, upon which Cohen concludes that this form of mobility also comes with its tensions since home for these individuals cannot be a certain destination, but rather can only be being on the road.

To sum up, while lifestyle migrants can choose a settled life in their new destinations in order to achieve and pursue their imagined lifestyles, they can also choose to act as transnational travelers without focusing on just one better destination. Although this movement has been referred differently by different scholars, they still have close ties to lifestyle migration due to the shared nature of the individuals' expectations from these mobilities: seeking a better life for themselves in which they can pursue a stress-free lifestyle while also travelling. Although some scholars claim that these migration types differ from lifestyle migration because they project a more ongoing process of mobility, lifestyle

migration, too, by definition, is an ongoing process rather than one-off event (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Botterill, 2017). Consequently, the difference between these mobilities is a very slight and blurry one, and in most cases, lifestyle migration is used interchangeably with these concepts. Therefore, within the framework of this study, any act of mobility towards better living conditions will be addressed as lifestyle migration.

Section 2.1 introduced lifestyle migration as a conceptual framework and reviewed the existing literature and related concepts on it. In the next section, I will attempt to review the concept of agency with a focus on its reflections on Applied Linguistics and migration studies.

2.2 Agency

2.2.1 Construction of agency in applied linguistics research

Despite having been the center of attention in psychological anthropology for a long time, the concept of agency has only recently started to be discussed in social sciences with the works of notable post-structuralist social theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu (1977) or Anthony Giddens (1979). Although these scholars aimed to present a theory of social action that could recognize and study the role of social actors, or agents, in the production of social systems, there has not been an elaborate explanation on the linguistic implications of these theories (Duranti, 2004). In linguistics, on the other hand, especially among grammarians, not much attention was given to social implications of the topic, rather the focus has been on agency as a semantic notion in the form of thematic roles in a sentence. Therefore, until recently, not much work focused on the relationship between language and agency from a sociolinguistic perspective. In applied linguistics research, defining the term agency

proved to be difficult and existing accounts were even claimed to be theorized insufficiently (Block, 2009) because the definitions were not conclusive. Although there have been various attempts at the definition of the term, in this study, I adopt Ahearn's definition of agency, that is, "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (2001, p112).

There have been multiple accounts in applied linguistics attempting to explain how language use entails agency. One of the prominent theories was introduced by Austin (1962) whose ideas were also the foundation for the Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1965). Austin claims that all utterances are performative in nature, meaning that each time we utter a sentence we are performing a certain kind of action. Consequently, all utterances are, in fact acts and words that/which always do things. Duranti (2004) elaborates on this act-constituting aspect of language, arguing that because utterances entail actions, they also entail the accountability of language users for those actions. Therefore, to say is to act and be accountable for what one says. Additionally, Bakhtin (1981) argues that words are never neutral, they all reflect a genre, tendency, a particular work or person, and a social context. As Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001) adds, agency covers more than just performative actions or doings, it is also linked to how individuals choose to "assign relevance and significance to things and events" around them (cited in Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 143). Joseph (2006) on the other hand, describes agency to be a paradox; individuals have it and do not have it and some individuals have it more than the others. Yet one thing is clear; no one has or lacks agency in absolute terms.

Specifically in second language acquisition (SLA) studies, learner agency has started to be accepted as a necessary construct in investigating language learning (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). Recent studies on identity have presented language

learners as individuals who can exercise their agency in their identity choices and also in their positioning of themselves within and in response to social constraints (Norton, 2000). Making a distinction from the psychological views of L2 learning in which L2 learners are regarded as passive recipients of input, and in line with the poststructuralist views, Ros i Solé (2007) describes L2 users as dynamic agents because they can take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. She also adds that agency is a co-constructed notion, both the sociocultural environment and people around the L2 user help construct learner agency. For Ros i Solé (2007), agency represents the will, the amount of control and choice of the self that one exercises over one's actions through language use, and learners exercise their agency with their identity choices and positioning of themselves in relation to their context and the other interlocutors. However, L2 learners' agency to learn the language does not entail a direct legitimacy to speak that language. Instead, L2 learners must negotiate their right to speech (Bourdieu, 1977; Miller, 2004) because the target language community may not grant them that legitimacy immediately. On this matter, Bourdieu (1977) emphasizes that if the speakers of a language would like to have the reception of the community, that is if they would like to be listened, believed or respected, and take part in the target speech community, then they must negotiate their acceptance by gaining "the right to speak" (648). Thus, agency to learn a language does not work by itself, the learners must still mediate and negotiate the right to speak with their environment and other discourse participants.

Miller (2010) too, stresses the importance of investigating agency for L2 researchers. However, she also draws attention to the fact that locating agency is very challenging. In naturally occurring speech, the relevant mediating factors to locate agency in our sociocultural or historical contexts cannot be identified immediately or

they can be located only ambiguously (Van Lier, 2008). Yet, there have been many attempts at analyzing language in order to locate agency in naturally occurring discourse, especially in the fields of pragmatics and functional linguistics (Duranti, 2004). These studies not only focused on the existence of agency, rather they also investigated the absence or mitigation of the concept reflected in language in interaction. To exemplify, the use of passive voice in many languages indicate an agent-less action (Schlesinger, 1989 cited in Duranti, 2004), which can be interpreted as either the speaker does not know the agent of the action or does not want to mention it, or in another case, the speaker may indicate the absence of agency in the situation at hand. Based on this view, in his study of newspaper headlines covering ethnic minorities in the Netherlands, Van Dijk (1988) investigated the use of verb voice in the newspaper stories and revealed that minority groups had very little agency and when they were represented as agents, they were generally portrayed as the agents of negative acts. Another tool to locate agency in language can be the use of modals. According to Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994, p.177), there are four types of “agent-oriented modality” which are obligation, necessity, ability, and desire. The use of these modality types can indicate the existence or absence of agency in language in use. For instance, the use of modal verbs such as ‘must’ or ‘should’ can provide an understanding about how speakers represent the obligations of themselves or others. Consequently, the use of the modal ‘must’ can indicate the mitigation of agency of the speaker or the other subjects mentioned in speech.

On the topic of learner agency and the effect of social context in gaining the right to speak, Toohey and Norton (2003) share the results of their independently conducted studies. While Norton reported the language learning experience of one of her previous research participants, Eva who was an immigrant woman worker in

Canada, Toohey recounted how one young learner, Julie, negotiated her identity in classroom. Initially, both Eva and Julie had experienced difficulty in getting accepted by their social contexts, workplace and classroom because they did not have the necessary linguistic resources and were outcasted by their peers from time to time. The fact that their peers did not engage in a discussion with them would have normally hindered their chances of practicing their English. However, both these learners made use of their social resources in order to be accepted by their communities of practice. Eva met with her coworkers outside work and showed them how smart and fun person she was while Julie resisted her classmate's efforts to keep her out of the playground with the additional help of her close friends. This way, by struggling to claim more powerful identities and practicing agentic efforts to learn and use their second language, both these learners gained the respect and recognition of their peers as legitimate speakers of English. Toohey and Norton explain that the language learning experiences of Eva and Julie demonstrate the importance of investigating how learners exercise agency in the formation and reformation of their identities. This study also shows how the acceptance or rejection of a speech community of the new member can influence the language learning and practicing experiences of that member and how the attitude of the speech community can mediate or hinder learner agency.

Turning the focus on solely workplaces rather than classroom settings and making use of the modalities of obligation in investigating the experiences of language learning and use of her interviewees, Miller (2010) reports her findings on the relationship between agency, positioning, and ideologically informed spaces. Her participants are adult immigrants in the United States who ran their own businesses. Based on Scheibman's (2002) claim that speakers generally position themselves as

the agent of their actions in narrative accounts, especially with the use of active verbs, Miller analyzes whether the accounts of her participants reflect the agentive role of their English learning. Asking about how and when they started to learn English, Miller reveals how her interviewees position themselves differently in speech as learners, immigrants or business owners. She also reports that while the interviewees' accounts did not indicate an obligation in using English in workplace, when it came to running their businesses, they made use of obligation markers because they felt obliged to use English in order to be able to operate their businesses. Miller links her findings to the importance of space because the experiences of her participants are only relevant to their own social context. As immigrants living in the United States, their agentive capacities were shaped by the space since it is accepted normal for immigrants to run immigrant businesses or take English courses. Thus, Miller's study indicates that experiences of learners in learning and practicing a language can depend on how they position themselves in different spaces and how this positioning mediates their agentive actions.

In another study, Miller (2016) focuses on one learner, an Indonesian adult individual, Adang, whose struggles to make a living resulted in him learning new languages. In a one-hour interview with her participant, Miller learns that Adang could not go to high school because of poverty and had to find employment in the navy. After being forced to leave the military, his search for employment resulted in him working at Greek merchant marines and then in New York. Throughout these years, Adang first encountered English coincidentally at her friend's high school when he tried to attend the school without registering. Later, in the Greek marines, he learned both Greek and English to some extent but his actual effort in learning English occurred in New York when he noticed his level of knowledge was not

enough for him to find decent employment. Based on his accounts, Miller investigates the existence and absence of agency in Adang's discourse. She reports that while Adang exercised agency in attending high school secretly or finding employment in the navy, his agentic actions were also shaped by the circumstances or certain situations. The fact that he could not attend high school also shows the absence of his agentic role because of economic reasons. The start of his English learning experiences occurs coincidentally without his efforts and agentic actions, yet with his move to New York, he starts exercising agency and attempts to learn the language voluntarily. Therefore, Miller argues that for Adang, learning English and mediating his agency were influenced by broader socio-economic practices across people, complex global or local spaces, and short or long spans of time. Her investigation of Adang's life and language learning practice demonstrates once again how the investigation of the existence or absence of agency in language learning should focus on broader factors and social contexts, other people, and also spaces.

To sum up, although the investigation of agency in the field of applied linguistics is a relatively new area of focus, there have been a range of theories and explanations that aimed to account for the relationship of agency with language use and language learning. While analyzing whether individuals exercise agency, scholars also focused on the absence or mitigation of the concept along with the effect of other factors on agency such as space, social context, other interlocutors, or speech communities. The next sub-section will investigate how the concept of agency is approached in migration studies.

2.2.2 Construction of agency in migration studies

Although there are still prevailing nationalist views that migration is a harmful phenomenon that should be monitored through border controls, Castles (2010) argues that migration has long been a normal part of social life and social changes. In fact, on this issue, Urry (2007) even claims that with the developments and changes in transportation, technology, and the understanding of culture, the 21st first century has seen a normalization of frequent mobilities beyond transnational borders. Recent decades have seen a growth in migratory movements with the increased pace of globalization, so much so that some researchers even suggested that the current migratory movements stay beyond the scope of the typical 19th and 20th century migration patterns of labor and settlement (Castles, 2010). Instead, current studies on migration are focusing on movements for the purposes of education, professional advancements, retirement, marriage or lifestyle rather than the traditional migratory movements for safety or income purposes.

Collinson (2009) argues that new approaches to migration have diverged from the framework of single level of analysis and instead have started to emphasize the inter-connectedness between different migratory foci such as the significance of agency, autonomy, cultural or historical factors, institutional constraints or transnational nature of migration. Specifically on agency, migration studies have been based on Giddens' (1984) structuration theory which attempts to understand and account for the historical processes of society by resorting to the intersection of structure and agency. According to Giddens, based on the view that society and individuals influence and are influenced by each other (cited in Morawska, 2007), in the shaping of historical processes, neither agency nor structure is the determining factor solely, rather these two phenomena are always interdependent and interrelated.

Referred as the 'duality of structure' this view suggests that structures are both the limits and results of agency. "Structures are constituted through action and [...] action is constituted structurally" (Giddens,1976, p.161). Thus, it can be said that agency and structure both shape and are shaped by each other, and the investigation of sociohistorical processes should depend on both.

To elaborate on this theory and its relation to migration, O'Reilly (2013) suggests that there are various external and internal structures in an individual's life; the first being institutions, rules or norms and the latter being the individual's understanding and interpretation of these external structures. Thus, social structures are a consequence of agency as agents understand and practice roles, norms, or other social phenomena in their daily lives. To exemplify, even if the governments implement specific migration policies that may constrain the subjects of migration, these policies are still bounded by the limitations of how and to what extent a migrant understands and interprets them. The outcome, that is the result of the migrant's action, on the other hand, will depend on the malleability or the flexibility of these policies. In line with these ideas, it can be claimed that immigrants' actions should not be interpreted solely as the products of structures nor of their agentic decisions, rather they are dependent on the interactions between these two in time and place specific contexts (Morawska, 2007). The reasons for their mobility, the outcomes of their move or how they are received in the host community must all be examined and evaluated from this point of view.

Relevant to the discussion of migration and agency is also Bourdieu's (1977) views on habitus which are defined as systems of practices that are conditioned by the "structuring structures" from which they emerge (p. 78). Habitus produce an infinite number of actions or thoughts that are constituted of culturally constructed

meanings and values. These meanings and values are also in turn recreated or challenged by these actions and thoughts in a recursive manner (O'Reilly, 2013). To simplify, habitus are the various ways of thinking or doing that individuals acquire in groups or by themselves through socialization. This acquisition comes from generations of past practices and our own repeated actions. Habitus can be the habits, norms, internalized social structures or the outcomes of our experiences. They are individuals' social and cultural capital that provide them with the power and resources to change their surroundings. Taken from this point of view, habitus are what shapes and at the same time is shaped by individuals' actions with the influence of their past experiences, habits, the group they are affiliated with, and its norms. In the investigation of agency, Stones (2005) suggests, habitus should be approached both from the individuals' perspective and the groups within which the individual is located (cited in O'Reilly, 2013).

Empirical studies on agency under the framework of migration generally focus on the motivating factors that mediate migration movements or draw attention to the discrepancy between different migratory groups on the basis of their (un)privileged status in the host communities. On this issue, Bauman (1998) points out to the now even more class-specific and selective nature of transnational mobilities. Most people lack the necessary economic resources and/or political rights needed for their easy movement across transnational borders. Thus, while some can travel across these borders easily, some have to deal with bureaucratic or economic challenges in order to be able to mediate their movement. In fact, this situation has led to a distinction in the definition, reception, and representation of the terms migration and mobility, especially in political discourse (Castles, 2010). While the first is attributed to lower-skilled workers or undocumented individuals, the latter is

celebrated as a professional movement of the highly-skilled individuals. Whereas migration is recognized as an invasion and an act of displacement, mobility is regarded as a positive outcome of modernity. On this issue, Georgiou (2018) draws attention to how refugees and migrants are misrepresented on the media as agentless individuals without any voice. Despite their highly visible representation, they are only described as powerless subjects without any voice or political agency. Their decision-making on their move, or their life in the new destinations are all represented as the outcome of agentless processes or external factors.

Contrary to the migrants described above, some scholars elaborate on how privileged and wealthy individuals such as lifestyle migrants have been strongly associated with individual agency and choice (see D'Andrea, 2007; Korpela, 2009b). As O'Reilly (2000) suggests, many lifestyle migrants see their move as an opportunity to run away from their past and start a fresh life. By doing so, they transform their lives through their own action taking (Benson, 2007). Moreover, because they are focused on their prospective lives, lifestyle migrants are generally reported to be not willing to talk about their past experiences which they associate with a lack of agency (Korpela, 2009). Instead of being absorbed in their past achievements or experiences, they prefer to emphasize their current agency and future imaginations.

Challenging the claims and views that working class migrants are agentless and powerless subjects, Rodríguez (1996) discusses how autonomous international migrants in the United States have exercised agency through their move to a new destination and through their following actions. Autonomous migrants are those, especially from the working class, who migrate to a space without any governmental or international regulation sometimes individually and sometimes with their families

or as a community. As undocumented migrants, they develop their own policies of employment without being dependent on any formal regularities. Challenging the conception of undocumented migrants as docile and helpless communities, as Rodríguez explains, these people actually demonstrate a series of agentive actions by challenging the organizational labor hierarchies and the state's plans. They can move with ease across spaces, find employment without the applying process and even refrain from the tax regulations which can help them keep their low income. Although these can be regarded as immoral and even illegal, they do not consider themselves as criminals. Rather, making use of their self-activity, these individuals seek to express their own voice and, contrary to privileged groups of migrants, seek survival. Rodríguez concludes that by doing so, these individuals also become historical actors who can restructure socio-spatial contours across transnational borders.

Additionally, Rodríguez (1996) discusses the concept of transnational communities which span between the migrants' new destinations and communities of origin. These communities maintain a constant interaction across the boundaries of nation-states and they play a leading role in the facilitation of migration, settlement, and the survival of undocumented groups and individuals. In this respect, transnational communities are regarded as the products and mediators of human agency as well.

In the context of lifestyle migration, Korpela (2009) again draws data from her investigation of backpackers in Varanasi. Based on her ethnographic participant observations and interviews with the migrants, Korpela explains how these Westerners are constructing their imagined individualistic lifestyles. Originally backpackers who have visited India for a number of times, these individuals settled

in the country after a certain while. All coming from different Western country and regions, these people live in one particular area in Varanasi, all of them within walking distance to each other. Although they have constructed a lifestyle community in the new destination, they all prefer to live alone or with their partners if they have one. Although having a roommate could be much more affordable for them, they prefer to remain dependent only on themselves. Spending most of one year in India, they sometimes go back to their homelands in order to earn a living and afford their life in Varanasi. Korpela argues that their commuting lifestyle between these two destinations allow these individuals to assume a more individualistic agentive identity. Their move, current lifestyle of individuality, and the fact that they have constructed a new community by choice all represent agentive actions on the part of the migrants. It should be noted that despite the emphasis on individuality, the community formed by the Westerners has also its own norms and rules which are expected to be followed by the members, thus their behavior in the community is also monitored by other group members. It can be claimed that this situation also demonstrates the relationship between agency and structure in the lives of these Westerners as was proposed by Giddens (1976). Despite their new individualistic lifestyles, the actions of these individuals still shape and are shaped by a certain social structure.

This subsection focused on the discussion of agency under the framework of migration studies. Focusing on the increasing transnational movements, I reviewed the related views and theories on the interaction of agency and migration. In the next chapter, I aim to review the methodological processes of this study by sharing the relevant resources that have guided in my data collection and analysis and by reviewing my personal experiences in the field.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the research design, methodological approaches and issues that have guided me during the collection and analysis of data. First, I will begin the chapter by explaining how I gained entry and access to the lives of the participants. I will continue the chapter with the introduction of the participants, and this section will be followed by a detailed explanation of how the ethnographic data were collected with an elaboration on main data collection techniques. The subsequent section will focus on how the transcription, analysis, and interpretation of the data were made and then I will provide a description of the ethical issues regarding the study. The penultimate section of the chapter will be a discussion of the validity concerns regarding the findings of the study. Lastly, I will discuss how my presence in the field and relationship with the participants affected the collection of the data.

3.1 Gaining access

Upon my decision to conduct a linguistic ethnographic study with Iranian migrants in Istanbul in April 2019¹, I immediately started to think of ways to approach Iranians in order to gain access to the community before the Fall semester starts. That way, I could have enough time to get better acquainted with the community and recruit participants; and start my data collection at the beginning of the FaHBII semester right away. Because doing fieldwork in one setting would have been more preferable and optimal for me than finding different individuals from different places and

¹ Because the data for this thesis derives out of a start-up project titled “Contemporary Linguistic Diversity in İstanbul” (SUP Project code: 15561), the actual data collection started much earlier, that is in July of 2019, upon obtaining an ethics approval from SBİNAREK.

following them, I planned to conduct the fieldwork at the premises of an organization. Luckily for me, there was actually an association run by Iranians very close to my neighborhood: the Turkish-Iranian Businesspeople Association.

In mid-April, I visited the association upon our first contact on the phone with my thesis advisor who also coordinates this project. The businesspeople that we met at the association were very friendly and tried to help us as much as they could. However, as we were informed, the majority of their members had moved to Turkey for almost 2-3 decades ago, which meant that they had already learnt Turkish and had abandoned the use of Persian in their daily interactions almost completely. Therefore, the association directed me to another Iranian person, Mr. Faysal², who acted as my gatekeeper and referred me to his acquaintances that have recently moved to Istanbul from Iran. This happened through the end of April and this was the first time I experienced the difficulties in gaining entry into a community. Although Mr. Faysal was much respected in his community, and everyone I contacted said they would want to help me for his sake; of the 11 people that I contacted, only 4 could actually meet me. Feldman, Fell, and Berger (2003) believe that one part of the preparatory learning process includes “gathering information from the different individuals or research sites in person” (p.6). Taking this into account, starting from May 2019 until the end of July, I tried to meet as many people as possible in order to gain more information about their lives in Istanbul and to gain their trust. I met with them in various settings; their homes, workplaces, beauty salons, coffee shops, and panels; and through these meetings, I observed their daily routines, social activities, and language use in English, Persian, and Turkish. Upon our meetings, I realized that the majority were very busy people and would not be

² Except the researcher’s name Elanur and her roommate’s name, all the names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

able to commit participating in a long-term research. Some of them were not socializing much; they did not talk much, nor did they want to meet frequently. Of these individuals that Mr. Faysal directed me, only Soraya was willing to continue to meet me in regular intervals.

My initial meeting with Soraya occurred in early July when she invited me to her house. She and her husband told me about their life stories, their move to Istanbul, and their life here. They had a very positive attitude towards my research and accepted to meet me in regular intervals. Although my first meeting with Soraya and her family was promising, I knew that I still had a lot of way to go in terms of gaining access to their lives. A few days after our first meeting, I texted her in order to thank her for her hospitality and told her I was looking forward to our next meeting. Although we got along well and kept in touch, I could not see her again until September. It was the summer- I was out of Istanbul for a few weeks; they were busy with their language courses and other activities, and the fact that they live so away from the central parts of Istanbul made it very difficult for me to just stop by or invite her to meet me somewhere outside.

At our second meeting in September, I learned that Soraya was preparing for the university entrance exams. It was a life-long dream of hers to go to college and she finally decided to fulfill her dream, but she did not know much about the process. She did not know the exam procedures or how to apply for the exam so I promised her I would look it up. A few days later, when I texted her regarding the exam procedures, she was very happy. Upon that point, I realized that she started to trust me more and count on my knowledge in issues she could not resolve. For instance, she started asking me about the meaning of a phrase while online shopping or some test questions from her Turkish courses. I explained some of the grammar rules in

Turkish and she was very happy to finally understand them. I was also getting along with her 10-year old daughter; on my visits, we played some games, I engaged in conversations about her interests, and she and I competed about our knowledge in Persian. I believe that my rapport with her made it easy for me to gain access to their house as well.

One of the difficulties of gaining access to a married woman's life was that she was not always as available as I was. I could not invite her out for a coffee or shopping because she had different and more responsibilities than me; she could not travel easily, she could not leave her housework, and she was a mother so she was occupied with her daughter's school, homework, etc. In time, even though I could not visit her often, I always texted Soraya to keep up with the latest developments in their lives and to remind her of myself. On religious holidays or important events, I texted her to commemorate or to find out her reaction to the event. For instance, on September 26, 2019 there was an earthquake in Istanbul that scared many residents. The following day I texted her to see how they were affected and chatted a little about how they were doing in general. I believe these texts helped me develop a good friendship with Soraya, as well. Moreover, they enabled me to see her conversational skills in reading and writing in Turkish to some extent, too. In his book, Spradley (1997) explains the steps of building rapport in ethnographic interviews. One of these critical steps is called "cooperation" (p.47) which is achieved when there is mutual trust between the informant and the researcher and when they both find their meeting pleasurable. A similar experience to this definition between me and Soraya made me realize that I had managed to gain access to her house. In November, after our third meeting and many conversations, Soraya texted me to catch up and tell me she missed me but could not text before because of her

busy schedule. This text was the first incident that convinced me about the success of the gaining access process because it was the first time I did not need to initiate the conversation or Soraya did not text me because she needed my help; she was considering me as a friend and wanting to talk to me as well. Although I explained Soraya about my research intentions on my first visit; in October, I reminded her about it and asked her if I could start recording. I conducted my first interview with her through the end of October in her house and continued to record our interactions during our following meetings. In short, it can be said that although my gaining access experience with Soraya was not necessarily a challenging one, it still took a lot of effort and a demonstration of candor and it took me more than 4 months to start the data collection process.

After September, I took a different approach into recruiting participants, and continued to look for other gatekeepers and possible participants myself. At the same time, I started taking Persian lessons and I decided to open up to my Persian instructor about my thesis project as well. My instructor, a Turkish woman in her late 40s, told me about her ex-student from Iran and his girlfriend who are currently living in Istanbul. She shared their numbers with me and I contacted them in October, Adib and his girlfriend, Laila. I met with both of them the next day in the neighborhood where they lived. We met at a coffee shop and I told them about my research plans. They welcomed my request with a positive attitude and Laila told me she would be willing to help me. It is my belief that the fact that Laila herself is an M.A. student helped me a lot in gaining access to her life. Because she knew the difficulties of coming up with a research question and conducting research, she seemed to understand my concerns and wanted to help me in any possible way. In addition, she was knowledgeable about ethnographic research and interviewing, so

was very comfortable with speaking on-record. In fact, our first meeting was like an interview in itself; both Laila and Adip told me why they came to Istanbul, what they were doing, their interactions, so on and so forth. In fact, Laila even told me she was going to introduce me to her best friend, Firuzeh, who was going to become my third participant in time. Two weeks after our initial meeting, in November, Laila texted me to get help about one of her projects. She wanted to give an English title to the project but could not decide what would be easy for her native Turkish classmates to understand, and she trusted my judgement as a native speaker. She also shared her friend's number with me. In the following week, I contacted Firuzeh and set a meeting with both Laila and Firuzeh separately. In mid-November, I received Laila's consent and conducted my first interview with her and thus started data collection definitely. Although my relationship with Laila started very smoothly; in time, we had to cancel a few meetings because of her schedule. Because she was studying in a very remote part of Istanbul, most of her time was spent on road; so, she did not have much time to spend. When she started a new job, the first weeks were very busy, and at one point; her relatives came to visit her which again led to a postponement of our meeting. As with Soraya, even though there were times we could not meet, I continued to stay in touch with Laila through texting or phone calls in order to follow her life, her experiences, and so on. Furthermore, we got along really well, so she was always texting me and trying to set up meeting dates, too.

In November, with Laila's mediation, I contacted Firuzeh. I explained my purpose for contacting her and told her about my thesis project. When December came, we met for the first time in a coffee shop in Beşiktaş where she also lives. We got along very well from the start, spent a few hours together in the coffee shop and in the neighborhood. She was very friendly and again, just like Laila, she

immediately agreed to be my participant. I even interviewed her that day.

Unfortunately, after our first meeting, we could not meet until March because she always had other excuses. I started to think that she changed her mind and began to search for another participant and to meet with new individuals in the meantime.

This also proved me that even if the researcher can get the consent of the participants for a study, it does not ensure gaining access to their lives. As Atkinson (2009) explains, participation in a study occurs on an individualistic, voluntary basis which means that they have a right to withdraw from the study as much as they have right to enroll on it. Thus, a participant could suddenly change their mind about my research and withdraw from the study or may not consider the consistency in their participation level. Luckily for me, in mid-February, Laila told me she and Firuzeh wanted to come to my place. Of course, I happily invited them and they visited me at the beginning of March. I recorded our conversation with their permission, and thus Firuzeh continued her participation in my research. Laila stayed for 1.5 hours only because she had to leave for a group project but Firuzeh stayed for a little while more. We talked and drank tea; and at some point, I commented on her new hair style and she told me she changed it during a stressful time. This conversation turned out to be my breakthrough moment in our relationship because she suddenly started to tell me about her boyfriend with whom she was having relationship problems. She told me about all her problems with him and I tried to console her. Two days later, Firuzeh texted me. She was in a mall near my house and invited me for tea. During this meeting, she told me about her problems with her boyfriend, and with her flat mates. My comment on her hair seemed to have hit the right note which enabled me to become her close friend. In time, she continued to call me or text me about her problems in her relationship and I became her confidant in such issues. As can be

seen from my recounts, although I met Laila and Firuzeh around the same time period, my gaining access experiences evolved differently for each woman. While gaining access into Laila's life was easier, with Firuzeh, I had to find a common ground, a tender spot in order to gain access into her life and become her confidant.

During the gaining access process, there were many factors that have helped me in improving my rapport with the participants and convincing them to take part in the study. Firstly, I always did my best to show my sincerity to my participants. Madden (2017) emphasizes the importance of reciprocal “exchange in fieldwork” (p.63); assisting your participants in return for their contribution to your study. Taking this into consideration, I tried to listen to the problems of my participants, help them resolve any issues in any way I could, and showed genuine interest in their lives. I tried to arrange my schedule according to theirs and tried my best not to be too insistent while asking them to meet me. I also tried to be honest with them from the beginning; I informed them about my research intentions and reminded them about my researcher identity when necessary. The fact that I started learning Persian, and asking for their help while studying, showed them my devotion to the study (Madden, 2017). I believe all these have acted as a contributor for me to improve my relationship with my participants and convince them to commit to my research.

Even though my relationship with all three of my participants started on good terms, I encountered a number of difficulties in the process of gaining access as well. The first of these difficulties was the dynamicity of my participants' lives. They were always occupied with something -whether it was work, family, or school- so it was challenging to arrange a time to meet with them at times. This also showed me the challenging aspect of carrying out a multi-sited ethnographic study. In addition, for Laila, money was a big problem. I realized that sometimes she was hesitant to meet

outside because it was too expensive for her. I tried to solve this problem by inviting her to my house which would also be more comfortable for all of us.

The most problematic issue in my data collection was the corona virus outbreak that reached Turkey in mid-March. The pandemic forced everyone to lockdown in their homes and made using public transportation very risky which strained me from visiting any of my participants. I had planned to spend Nowruz at Soraya's but because of the pandemic, we had to cancel our plans in order to be safe. Because my relationship with Firuzeh had finally strengthened, I was planning to meet her more often; but the outbreak made it impossible for us to meet. During this time, we decided to continue the study through phone or video calls. We were already texting often and starting from mid-March, we talked on the phone more frequently in order to keep in touch, and exchange news of how we were doing during the quarantine. I can confidently say that social media and these phone calls were great contributors to my research in the quarantine period. They not only enabled me to continue my data collection but also kept us together. Moreover, these calls helped us emotionally as well; we shared our problems with each other, exchanged news, and consoled each other in those troubling times. Finally, considering that I was one of the few Turkish friends they have, I believe that my staying in contact with them must have helped them receive news more elaborately and get the perspective of the Turkish community on the pandemic as well.

This section focused on a detailed recount of how I gained entry to the field and access to the participants' lives chronologically. Because I tried to gain access to each participant in the same time period, I explained how these stages took place for each participant separately in a chronological order. In the following section, I will introduce my key participants in detail.

3.2 Participants

This section will be a detailed description of my core participants and their lives. Also, it will include a brief introduction of the other agents in the study and their effects to the data collection process.

3.2.1 Soraya

Soraya is an Iranian woman in her mid-30s from a rich neighborhood in Tehran. In Iran, Soraya and her family lived in Tehran and her husband had a business there. In the summer of 2017, they moved to Turkey. Soraya is a high school graduate housewife who is preparing for the university entrance exam in Turkey. She knows Persian, Turkish, and elementary level English. Although her parents are Turkish-speaking Iranians, since their dialect is different from the one spoken in Turkey, she had to learn Turkey-Turkish when she moved here. Because she got married at the age of 19; she did not start college, and she seems to have resented this in later years in her marriage; which showed its effects later in the midst of the study. Soraya lives in a remote part of Istanbul with her husband, who is in his mid-50s, and daughter, who is 10 years old. She spends her time learning Turkish at the municipality's courses, studying for the university exam, exercising, and doing housework. She is usually very busy with these, so she complains about not finding enough time for herself.

Soraya relates their reason for coming to Turkey to the oppressive regime in Iran. Because they did not want their daughter to experience this oppressive and zealot atmosphere in Iran and for sake of being in close distance to their family, they decided to live in Turkey. Another reason for their move is their daughter's health. The air quality in Tehran had worsened her asthma and because they did not want to

live in the rural parts of Iran either, they decided to change their country of residence. Before moving, they had visited Turkey 4 years prior to their migration with the purpose of seeing the life here. So, their move was actually planned much earlier. Now, they have been living in Istanbul for more than 3 years at a housing estate. They own the flat they are living in. Although her husband used to have his own business in Iran, because of the laws in Turkey which restrict foreigners from owning their business, he is not working for the time being. He spends his time just like Soraya, learning Turkish or English, and exercising. Their income comes from Iran, thanks to the rent coming from their many flats there.

Although both Soraya and her husband are from Turkish origin, they only spoke Persian while growing up which made it necessary for them to learn Turkish upon moving to Istanbul. Their daughter started school in Turkey and learnt how to write and read in Turkish. Their home language is still Persian but they know Turkish in B2 level and they use it for their daily interactions outside home with the Turkish-speaking community. During my visits to their apartment, we spoke in Turkish but sometimes the family switched to Persian to clarify what I was talking about or to discuss a specific topic among one another. Sometimes, her husband switched to English while speaking to me in order to practice his English.

Soraya seems to be relatively happy in Turkey, living a more secular life and having more freedom as a woman than how she would be in Iran. She does not wear a headscarf, and she usually wears tight clothes with some makeup on. She and her family live a very quiet life in a quiet part of Istanbul, without going out much and interacting with many people.

3.2.2 Laila

Laila is a young woman from Tehran, in her late-20s. She is of Persian origin and speaks Persian and English. Laila came to Istanbul 1.5 years ago prior to my research with her boyfriend, Adib, for educational purposes. She was aiming to start her M.A education while her boyfriend wanted to start his Ph.D. Because they wanted to work abroad after their graduate education, they did not want to study in Iran. They believe schools in Iran cannot provide them the same opportunities as the ones abroad. The reason they chose Turkey for their destination is that they could not afford schools in Europe nor could they get a visa. Laila says that being together was their top priority, so they decided to choose a country where they could both be accepted. They live together in a lively, populous, and cosmopolitan neighborhood in Istanbul. Laila studies at a private university in Istanbul and works at a language school as an English instructor. Her boyfriend was working when we first met; but in time, he quit his job and was later accepted to another private university for an M.A. program. Adib is of Turkish origin, he knows Azeri in addition to Persian. He also speaks English and Spanish and learnt Turkey-Turkish during his undergraduate years. His knowing Turkish acts as a disincentive for Laila to learn Turkish because she depends on her boyfriend to handle daily interactions and does not make an effort to do so herself. She uses English in her daily interactions or gets help from Adib; thus, we used English in our interactions during our meetings, as well.

When we first met, Laila was very unwilling to improve her Turkish because she did not intend to stay in the country for long and could depend on her boyfriend who was very happy to be in Turkey and Istanbul. In time, as the political atmosphere in Iran and around the world changed with the public protests in Iran and the death of the former General of the Islamic Revolutionary Guardian Cops, Qasem

Soleimani; her perspective towards living abroad changed as well. Initially, she was planning to move to Europe after her M.A., but in time because of Iran's political image, she thought it was not possible for her to move to a Western country in the foreseeable future, so she started to think that they could continue living in Turkey, which made her more enthusiastic to learn Turkish.

Although she did not make many Turkish friends and interact with people in her first year in Turkey; eventually, she became more open to the Turkish society once she had decided to reside in the country permanently. Although her family's financial situation is good in Iran, Laila has to work in order to afford her life in Istanbul because of the exchange difference between Turkish lira and Iranian rial. That is why she is working as an English tutor at a private institution even though it is not her major because private tutorage is one of the better jobs for the non-Turkish-speaking community in Istanbul.

Laila is an outgoing and confident young woman. She has a secular-orientation to life; she does not wear a headscarf and she does not support the theocratic regime in Iran. One of the factors that make her more positive about her life in Istanbul is that it is not restrictive as in Iran; she can be much freer and be more in touch with the world.

3.2.3 Firuzeh

Firuzeh is a Turkish-Persian young woman in her late 20s, born and raised in Tehran. She knows Persian, English, Spanish, and a little Azeri and Turkish. She is an M.A graduate. Firuzeh and Laila are friends, and they moved to Turkey together as well. Firuzeh was also working as a private English tutor because of financial concerns. Before moving to Istanbul, Firuzeh took some courses from a state university as a

guest student for a semester. She is of a very independent and adventurist nature; she likes to travel, meet new people, do sports. She does not like spending time staying in one place. Therefore, she socializes more than Laila. She has many friends from different nationalities; Turkish, European, African, etc., and she uses English or Turkish to communicate with them while using Persian in her interactions with the Persian friends. Firuzeh's reason for coming to Turkey is closely related to her adventurist nature; she wants to travel the world and she chose Turkey as her first destination. She does not support the oppressive culture in Iran; therefore, does not want to live there. Firuzeh complains about the controlling attitude of her Iranian acquaintances towards her lifestyle; the way she dresses, her not wearing make-up, or her doing sports, so on and so forth. Since she was not happy with this sort of interferences, she did not want to stay there. Now, in Istanbul, she is much freer; she does not wear headscarf, nor does she apply heavy make-up associated with the Iranian culture, because she likes to look more natural.

Growing up, Firuzeh's mother used Turkish in their house so that her children can learn her language. But in time, Persian became their home language; so, she does not know much Azeri. But even the little knowledge she had helped her when she first moved to Turkey because of the commonalities of Azeri and Turkish. Currently, she uses mostly Turkey-Turkish in her interactions. Because she socializes with Turkish speaking groups more than Laila, her Turkish has improved more as well. She has been learning Turkish by listening to others and speaking with people. In our meetings, we used both English and Turkish, switching between the languages according to the flow of the conversation. Our switches mostly occurred when we experienced difficulty in expressing ourselves in one language. Therefore, we preferred to switch to the other one implicitly.

Table 1 shows the demographic information related to my participants:

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant pseudonym	Gender	Age	Job	Languages spoken	Time of residence in Turkey
Soraya	Female	35+	Housewife	Persian, Turkish, English	+3 years
Laila	Female	25+	Student, Entrepreneur	Persian, English, Turkish	+2 years
Firuzeh	Female	25+	Unemployed	Persian, Turkish, English, Spanish, Azeri	+2 years

3.2.4 Other Agents

During the data collection, there were other agents that were included in the study even though they were not my core participants. To elaborate; during my visits to her apartment, Soraya's husband and daughter were also present and the family's interactions with each other and myself were included in the recordings as well.

Also, from time to time, I met Laila and Firuzeh as a group and recorded their interactions with each other and me. In these meetings, Laila's boyfriend Adip also joined us on occasion. This section will be a brief description of these individuals and how they were included in the study.

As stated above, in Soraya's apartment, both her husband Arman and her daughter Ester took part in our interactions. Arman is a middle-aged Iranian man in his mid-50s. He is descended from one of the Turkish communities in Iran but because he grew up in Tehran, he does not know their heritage language and speaks Persian. Back in Iran, he had his own business but upon their migration to Turkey, he turned over the business to his brother. As laws in Turkey make it very challenging for a foreigner to start a business in the country, Arman does not work; instead, he uses the rent money of their flats in Iran to provide for the family. Unlike Soraya who has not traveled any part of the world other than Turkey, Arman has lived in

many countries. He visited or spent a few years in different countries. He argues that his reason for choosing Turkey as the family's residence country is because life in Turkey is closer to the one in Iran. The culture and lifestyle are similar to theirs whereas in the other countries he visited, culture and lifestyle are not appropriate for a family, in his views. Because he has traveled a lot and spent some time in the countries he visited, Arman knows English and Japanese alongside Persian and Turkish. He cares deeply about language learning for he thinks it is necessary to know a foreign language in a global world. Arman spends his time studying English and Turkish in order to improve his linguistic skills. Although his level of Turkish and English is close to intermediate, all day long, he sits at the dining table and studies vocabulary. During my fieldwork in their home, Arman either participated in our discussions or put on his headphones and studied English. His voice can be heard in the background of some recordings as he was practicing English vocabulary. Arman spoke to me mainly in Turkish but sometimes we switched to English upon his request. My status as an English teacher appealed to him as an opportunity to improve his English and receive feedback for his linguistic skills. His contribution to various topics of discussion includes talks about learning a foreign language; prominently English, about their daily life, and Iranian culture.

Ester, Soraya and Arman's 10-year old daughter goes to elementary school student. The family moved to Turkey just when Ester was about to start school so she started her education in Turkey. She is enrolled at a state school in their neighborhood. Ester is a very sociable child; she has many friends both at school and in their housing estate. She is also very talkative and friendly; I could easily bond with her and played games. She loves playing games or doing magic tricks with her family. It is clear that Ester is highly influenced by her mother's actions and ideas.

She is a very talented child; she is interested in gymnastics and painting which are her mother's hobbies as well. Also, Soraya recounted that they spend time talking about different topics and exchanging ideas; Soraya tells her about the books she read or about how she thinks about a topic. Ester's Turkish is native-like; she does not have an accented speech. In fact, she always corrects her parents' Turkish and criticizes them for their sloppy accent. Because the home language is Persian, Ester also knows spoken Persian but as a result of not going to school in Iran, she does not know how to read and write in the language. Soraya teaches her reading and writing in Persian with the help of some books they brought from Iran and her father is trying to teach her some English. Ester's inclusion to the study occurred when she returned from school during less personal discussions. She was present when we were talking about languages or culture or more daily issues; we studied Turkish or Persian or played games together. However, Soraya and I preferred to go to the kitchen and leave Ester in the living room whenever the topic of discussion was a more private one such as romantic relationships.

Adip was another agent that took part in the study; he joined in my meetings with Laila occasionally. He is an Iranian Azerbaijani man in his late 20s. He is Laila's boyfriend and came to Turkey with her. Currently, Adip is an MA student at a private university but in their early years in Turkey, he worked at a hotel. He has an MA degree from an Iranian university as well. He is studying in Turkey only for the student visa as he could not renew his work permit. He is also taking part in Laila's start up. Adip is a very friendly person; he has offered me help in learning Persian or with my study repeatedly. Because he visited Turkey before, he has many Turkish friends and he receives emotional and academic support from my Persian teacher who acted as a gatekeeper for me and referred me to Adip. This support had also

positively affected his adjustment to living in Turkey as opposed to Laila who did not have any Turkish acquaintances here. Adip knows Turkish, English, and Spanish besides Persian and Azeri. His level in these additional languages is proficient; in fact, he tutors language courses as a side income. Adip's inclusion to the study occurred during my first meeting with Laila and when I visited their workplace. He provided me with insights into how knowing Azeri and Persian had affected his Turkish and into their new life experiences in Turkey. Moreover, we talked about their plans for future as well as some political issues regarding Turkey and Iran. These discussions occurred prominently in English as Laila could not follow up Turkish conversations. We switched to Turkish when Laila was not present in the room, e.g. when she went to get coffee, or when English was not enough to explain something to each other, only for a brief period of time when Laila was present.

As can be seen from these recounts, other agents of this study included the immediate family members or life partners of the core participants. My interactions with them only occurred in the presence of the core participants and included topics related to language, culture, or their lives in Iran and Turkey. These discussions took place either in Turkish or English based on the agents' choice or according to what language the situation called for. As my knowledge of Persian was only at the beginner level, I could not use Persian, but the participants and the agents used the language in order to carry out their own conversations or when English and Turkish were not enough to understand the conversation.

3.3 Collecting the ethnographic data

As stated previously, starting from April 2019, when I decided to study Iranians, until October 2019, I tried to contact as many Iranians as possible in order to find

possible participants. I tried to spend time with these individuals in order to get better acquainted with them; trying to learn about their lives, problems, language use, etc. In July, our research project got the ethical permission for data collection in which time I was still trying to build and/or improve my relationship with the Iranians who I had so far contacted. I finalized the participant recruitment period around September and October and conducted recordings from October 2019 until December 2020. The audio-recordings of the spontaneous interaction of my 3 participants with me and other agents are amounting to 30,5 hours. I also conducted 18,5 hours of one-to-one interviews with them in 20 different times. Recordings and interviews were conducted in coffee shops or our homes; in settings where no outsiders would be able to hear us. In total, I recorded 49 hours of interactions and for each meeting; I took observational field notes even when I was not able to audio-record the interactions. By the end of the study, I had a total of 53.918 words of field notes in 37 different entries. The following sub-sections will be detailed recount of how my data collection and fieldwork as a researcher as participant took place, and how I approached the data for analysis.

3.3.1 Participant observation and fieldnotes

During the participant recruitment period and my fieldwork, participant observation was my primary tool in data collection. As an outsider to the Iranian migrants' social contexts, I tried to make sense of everything happening around me by writing my experiences in the field and reflecting on them. During the first stages of fieldwork, I often consulted to my participants for some things that I could not make sense of. In time, I familiarized myself with the settings and the contexts and built "patterns of

expectations” (Blommaert and Jie, 2010, p. 30) about my participants and certain events.

From the beginning of my fieldwork, one of my primary goals was to observe my participants in different settings in interaction with different interlocutors. This way, I could get a glimpse of how their interactions unfolded in different contexts. With this in mind, I tried my best to socialize with my participants in different settings where they visited the most in Istanbul rather than a one-specific social space. Although our primary meeting points were either the participants’ homes or a coffee shop; I also visited my participants at their workplace, or we also went shopping or sightseeing together. During my house visits we had lunch, tea parties, birthday celebrations, and so on. During these events, my participants were occasionally accompanied by their family or significant others. Soraya’s family members were always at home during my visits and Laila’s boyfriend joined us from time to time. Additionally, I sometimes got together with Laila and Firuzeh simultaneously. Although I relied on audio-recording in most of these meetings and get-togethers, I chose not to record our interactions during some of them in order to preserve the authenticity of the context and the interactions.

In those times when I could not record the interactions because we were out shopping or sightseeing, fieldnotes became my primary data collection tool. I had already made a habit of keeping fieldnotes for all meetings and activities I had with my participants but these fieldnotes gained even more significance for the meetings during which I could not get a recording for those fieldnotes were the only aid for me to remember the events of the day, our interactions, and specific moments in interactions. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011) suggest writing fieldnotes immediately after the fieldwork for it produces a fresher and more detailed recounts

of the field. Taking this suggestion into account, following each fieldwork with my participants, whether it was recorded or not, I immediately went home and wrote the fieldnotes in order to recount the events with a fresh memory without forgetting anything. Even in that case, I sometimes had difficulty remembering some details; for each fieldwork lasted at least 3 hours sometimes even extending to 9 hours. I did not take notes or jotted things down during fieldwork in order not to harm the naturalness of the context or to disturb my participants during interaction. This fact made fieldnotes even more valuable for me because I did not have any reminders from the fieldwork other than the fieldnotes that I kept afterwards. As is also suggested by Emerson, et al. (2011); on occasion, I recorded my own voice as I recounted the day's events after separating from the participants so that my notetaking after the fieldwork would be faster. Upon arriving home, I turned these recordings into extended fieldnotes on my computer. Although my first few fieldnotes were in Turkish; soon, I realized that I could express myself better in English and switched to English in writing. Many scholars such as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) and Montgomery and Bailey (2007) have emphasized the importance of including critical reflections in fieldnotes and memos since they provide a good source for future interpretation and analysis. In the same vein, in my fieldnotes, I not only described the flow of events during the meetings, but I also included my reflections about my rapport with the participants, my researcher identity, and my comments on the specific events or the participants' statements to guide me in my further analyses. In the end, I had a total of 59.518 words of fieldnotes in 37 different entries.

3.3.2 Making recordings of spontaneous interaction data

Soon after receiving the ethical permission for our project from the Ethics Committee of Boğaziçi University, I combined my participant observation with the recordings of the spontaneous interactions of my participants. When took place in more fixed settings such as the participants' or my home, some coffee shops or parks, I preferred to record the interactions of my participants in order to get a more accurate documentation of the interactions. Because we were not mobile in those settings, it was easier for me to record everything and rely on those recordings as well as the fieldnotes in the interpretation of the data. Naturally, recording spontaneous data came with its own concerns and complications as well. Although some scholars warned the researchers about the technical issues regarding the recording equipment such as the technical features of the devices or the software (e.g. Goodwin, 1993); I was mostly concerned with the ethical issues surrounding the recordings and the impact of the physical conditions on the recordings.

Speer and Hutchby (2003) and Bower (2015) stress the importance of following the ethical necessities: notifying the participants that their talk will be recorded and receiving their informed consent before starting the recordings. Following their remarks, first, in order to ensure my participants' privacy and voluntary participation in the study, I prepared a consent form in order to inform them about the content and scope of the study (see Appendix D). I informed them about the purpose of the study and explained to them that I will respect their right to be anonymous and use a pseudonym so as not to reveal their identity and that the recorded data will solely be used for academic purposes. Only upon receiving their written approval, did I begin the recordings.

Another pressing issue regarding the recordings was making recordings in public settings. As Meakins, Green, and Torpin (2008) explain elaborately, the physical conditions of the field influenced the sound quality and understandability of my recordings. When I was at the participants' homes or workplaces, it was easier for me to record and listen to the interactions because there was no background noise or interruption from the outside. Moreover, I did not have to worry about whether outsiders could hear us or not. However, in public places such coffee shops or parks, there was always background noise which drowned the participants' voice and made it difficult for me to focus on the participants' speech when I played the recordings later. I had to play the same section over and over again or rely on the context in order to make sense of the participants' utterances. To avoid such complexity, I strived to sit at less populated, less noisy public places and chose the tables at the far end of the rooms so that outsiders could not hear us while we were talking about sensitive issues. For recordings, I used two different devices depending on the setting. If we were at a secluded area such as homes or offices, I used my own recording device that was provided for the research project. If we were at a public place, I used my own tablet since it was less noticeable. A recording device could attract the attention of others and create curiosity, but a tablet sitting on the table did not meet the curious eyes.

Because my aim in our meetings and get-togethers was to document spontaneous interactions, I refrained from interfering with the course of the discussions by directing the participants towards a more related subject or opening discussions only related to the study. Because the existence of a recorder made the participants more conscious about the study (Speer and Hutchby, 2003) and made my researcher identity more visible, sometimes, the participants did not want to talk

about an issue or occasionally gazed at the recorder to demonstrate their concerns. In those moments, I reminded them that I could turn off the recorder if they were feeling uncomfortable. Luckily, these moments were scarce, and, in most cases, the participants decided to disregard the existence of the recorder and resumed the discussion. Stubbs (1983) and Blommaert and Jie (2010) claim that being recorded creates an intrusion in the normality of the situation and the speech of the participants. Thus, they may tend to speak ‘unnaturally’ as opposed to our expectations. In my fieldwork, too, because recordings could distract the normal flow of events and interactions, occasionally I had to make the decision to not record some of the meetings in order to preserve the naturalness of the setting. In events such as birthday celebrations or when I felt that the participants were looking for my friendship, I decided to turn to covert participant observation rather than an overt documentation of the data. One final issue regarding the recordings was the regularity of meetings. Although I had aimed to meet my participants at regular and frequent intervals so as to retrieve a more organized and systematized data, because of my participants’ schedules and the pandemic, occasionally, we had to take long breaks between two meetings. During the lockdown, I contacted my participants via phone calls or videocalls and put them on speaker to record these calls on my recording device with their approval as well. This way, although not extensive, I could still collect data in a systematized fashion.

All these recordings not only provided me with ample data with instances of natural, spontaneous interactions, they were also a significant aid in remembering the notable moments in the field. Because I did not jot down notes in the course of the fieldwork, returning to the recordings and listening to them before writing the fieldnotes following each fieldwork helped me remember the course of events in

detail and create elaborated fieldnotes. After each fieldwork, I transferred the recordings to my laptop and labeled them with the date and the context. This way, I could easily locate the recordings if I needed to listen to them again. I also made a content list on a Word file for each recording with the exact moments of particular events specified so that it would be easier for me to go back to each recording and listen to those specific moments. Table 2 below summarizes the number and duration of the recordings of spontaneous interactions in the field for each participant.

Table 2. The Number and Duration of Recordings of Spontaneous Interactions

Participant Name	Total number of recordings	Total duration of recordings
Soraya	7	1073 mins
Laila	7	400 mins
Firuzeh	8	270 mins
Laila & Firuzeh	1	90 mins

3.3.3 Interviews

Although participant observation and the recordings of naturalistic interactions were my primary source of data, I also conducted interviews with my participants in order to increase the credibility of the data via triangulation (Maxwell, 2013). Furthermore, interviews assisted me in gaining a deeper perspective into interpreting the lives and utterances of the participants. Throughout the study, I conducted 14 interviews amounting up to a total of 18,5 hours. The content of these interviews ranged from the linguistic background of the participants and their experience in learning languages, to their religious faith, to the Iranian culture, or to their social life (see Appendix A). The interviews were semi-structured by design; that is, I did not follow a strict course in the ordering of the questions; rather I followed a somehow informal

format. As part of the semi-structured interview and in order not to pressure or direct the participants, I avoided asking straight-forward questions. Instead, I presented my questions in an open-ended format.

During the initial interviews, I had realized that my participants had a different expectation regarding the interviews. They were expecting to have more structured and formal interviews where I had questions at hand and was looking for straight-forward, to-the-point answers. Thus, they were not very comfortable or expansive during these initial interviews. Contrary to my participants' expectations, I positioned myself not only as a researcher who was there to observe, but also as a friend and an outsider who was interested in their culture. This way, by changing my role according to the situation, I could receive more detailed and explanatory answers from them and also interpret their statements from different points of view. Levy and Hollan (1998) suggest that acting as a friend and establishing trust with the interviewees can create an optimal setting for the interviewees to share. Similarly, for me, taking on a more friendly attitude rather than a formal researcher identity created a sincere, comfortable setting where the participants could feel safe to share their stories and experiences. Being in a conversational setting, I also shared my experiences with them; commented on their statements, and sometimes even let them change the subject for a more repressing issue for them. This formed a relatively natural interaction between me the researcher and the participants.

In the course of the interviews, in order to make sense of and interpret the participants' experiences and accounts, I added follow-up questions requesting the participants to elaborate on their answers and asking for examples from their lives. While addressing the questions, I aimed not to be offensive to the participants, or to threaten their face. I worded my questions carefully, trying my best not to assume

facts or to be directive towards a specific answer. For personal questions, I asked them whether it was acceptable for me to ask that specific question and I reminded them that they did not have to answer the question if they felt uncomfortable. That way, I strived to create a safe environment for my participants.

As with their expectations, my participants' attitudes also differed during the interviews. Laila had an experience with interviews from her own studies, so she was already well-prepared and knew what to expect. Most of the time, I only told her the main theme of the interviews and she just started telling me her ideas, experiences, stories regarding the issue. When she made a statement, she immediately started explaining her reasons for thinking like that without me needing to prompt her. Her discourse was highly affected by her higher education and her interests. She used more academic and advanced lexicon, she addressed more serious issues such as economics and politics. She was not hesitant to touch upon sensitive issues such as her identity as an Iranian or her criticisms on the Turkish culture. She was more straightforward in her answers. Soraya, on another hand, had noticeably insightful observations regarding the Turkish culture that she always disclosed. Although her ideas were also very sophisticated, Soraya had a linguistic barrier in that she never needed to express her insights in the Turkish language. Because she used Turkish only in daily settings, she sometimes had difficulty in retrieving the words she was looking for. Yet, despite all the difficulty, she always managed to refer to the books she read or quoted the scientists that she read. The most difficulty I experienced in the interviews was getting Firuzeh to talk about the serious issues that I brought up. Because she was not really interested in issues such as migration or politics, she always displayed boredom and haste during the interviews. No matter

how hard I tried, she was not completely immersed in some of the discussions and provided only facile answers.

In some of the interviews, because the participants' significant others were also present, I included them into the discussions as well. Soraya's husband was present in most of my visits, so I conducted interviews with him alongside Soraya. Similarly, Adip also joined one of the interviews with Laila for he was present in the office and I did not want to exclude him. This also presented an insight into their relationship and I could learn about their migration experience from Adip's point of view, too. After all the interviews, I turned off the recorder and spent some more time with my participants. This showed them that I was not only interested in the data but was also interested in them as friends and contributed to our rapport in the course of the study. Table 3 below demonstrates the number of recordings collected from each participant.

Table 3. Number and Duration of Interviews

Participant names	Total number of interviews	Total duration of interviews
Soraya	6	350 mins
Laila	7	450 mins
Firuzeh	7	310 mins

3.4 Approach to analyzing and interpreting language data

The previous section was a review of the ethnographic data collection process. In this section, I aim to the data analysis and transcription methods used in this study.

3.4.1 Analytical Tools

The data analysis method used in this study is aligned with the Linguistic Ethnography research framework. Based on the idea that “meaning takes shape within specific social relations, interactional histories and institutional regimes, produced and construed by agents with expectations and repertoires” (Rampton, 2007, p.585), linguistic ethnography focuses on the close ethnographic examination of the effect of social contexts on communication. Under this framework, it is claimed that meaning consists of more than just the expression of ideas but rather it consists of the “biography, identification, stance, and nuance” which are signaled in language in interaction (Rampton, 2007, p.585). In light of Dell Hymes’ interpretation of Discourse Analysis; that is, the Neo-Hymesian linguistic ethnographic analysis as Rampton (2007) puts it, speakers are agents of an interaction with their own expectations and repertoires and the meaning of these expectations and repertoires can be grasped with a close look on the speakers’ discourse (Rampton, 2007). Therefore, in order to comprehend and interpret the meaning behind the language practices of the speakers, researchers must present a close linguistic analysis of the ethnographic data, rather than an explanation of the data from a solely ethnographic perspective (Creese & Blackledge, 2011; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2014).

In line with the given information, while analyzing the interactions and utterances of my participants, I focused on the linguistic repertoires and language use of the participants along with the ethnographic description of the social context. I closely investigated and attempted to analyze the effect of the social context on the discourse of my participants. In order to reach a clearer understanding of the

meaning behind their utterances, I focused on their use of word choices, grammatical structures, linguistic switches, and identifications alongside the social context.

3.4.2 Data analysis procedures

In line with the data-driven research tradition, the research questions and data analysis techniques of this study evolved over time based on the data collected through ethnographic fieldwork. Even if I had preliminary research questions in mind, they took on their latest form with the directing of the data acquired from my observations and fieldnotes, recordings of the naturalistic interactions, and the semi-structured interviews. Since the beginning of the fieldwork, I had been turning back to my fieldnotes and the recordings of the interactions and interviews; reading and listening to them repeatedly in order to get familiarized with the data. This reflective work provided me with an insight into recurring themes and issues which later helped me formulate my research questions around the topics of agency and transformation. I had already been reading related studies on linguistic ethnography, migration and identity studies, Discourse Analysis, and Iranian migrants. Upon finalizing my research questions, I further extended my focus on related literature to works on Agency.

Following the finalization of my research questions, I turned my focus on interview and interactions accounts which revolved around those themes. I categorized them under different sub-themes, approaching these themes and sub-themes with a critical viewpoint. I aimed to connect these themes and sub-themes in a way that could explain the readers how these women's migration experiences transformed their agency. By 'coding' my data in this pattern (Strauss, 1987;

Saldaña, 2015), I strived to obtain more “summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative” portions of language-based data (Saldaña, 2015, p.3).

As stated earlier, with the triangulation of the data, I have aimed to achieve validity and a more explanatory account of claims. Therefore, in the analysis of the data, too, I made use of all three data collection tools- that is; fieldnotes based on my participant observation experiences, the recordings of spontaneous interactions of the participants, and the recordings of the semi-structured interviews with the participants- in order to support my argumentations.

3.4.3 Transcribing the data

In the first two sub-sections, I discussed the selection of the analytical framework and the procedures for data analysis. This sub-section will be a discussion of my strategies for transcribing the data efficiently and a recount of my decision-making process regarding the transcriptions. As stated previously, in the course of the fieldwork, I made a habit of writing the fieldnotes as soon as possible in order to narrate and reflect on the events of the field in detail. Similarly, by following Saldaña's (2015) advice, after each recording, I listened to them carefully and summarized the chain of events and points worth focusing on as a list. I noted each event with its exact moment in the recording and listed them one by one. Then, I categorized each of these events, interactions, and statements by giving them a title based on the main theme of that specific moment. This list and the categorization helped me locate the recurring patterns in the data and group them for analysis. Additionally, this strategy of having a list of the notable moments of each fieldwork aided me in the transcription process as well. Because it was going to be burdensome to transcribe every detail of the recordings; I had decided to focus on the most relevant instances

in the data for the transcriptions. While doing this, the list I had prepared assisted me extensively. I could scan the list to mark the most relevant parts in the data for the analysis and locate them in the recordings easily by looking at their time span in the data. Thus, thanks to this list, I could analyze the noteworthy moments in the data related to the study and have rough transcriptions or notes of the other parts of the data at hand as well.

Other than selecting and deciphering particular moments in the data, I had to also make a decision as to what conventions to use in those transcriptions and what phenomena to represent in the speech of the participants. In line with my framework, I adopted Hutchby and Wooffitt's (2008) transcription conventions (see Appendix B). During the transcriptions, deciphering the data that were collected in public settings such as coffee shops proved to be very challenging for me. There was background noise from the chatter of the people or the music which made it difficult to hear the participants' utterances. I had to replay the same moment over and over again in order to comprehend what the participants said. Contrarily, the data that were collected at home was easier to listen and decipher.

This section of the chapter was a brief summary of the data analysis and transcription procedures and the decision-making process behind these actions. The next section will recount the decision-making and implementation processes in the interest of ensuring the ethicality of the study.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Throughout the study, I always kept in mind the ethical issues regarding the participants' consent, privacy, and benefit. After the initial, unrecorded interviews and meetings with the participants, I officially began my fieldwork and data

collection process with the approval from SBİNAREK for our research project³ (see Appendix C). During the initial meetings with the participants, I had already informed them about my research agenda; the aims and content of the study; how I was planning to collect and analyze the data, and how and with whom these data would be shared. Upon informing the participants about the study, I received their written consent (see Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) as well. In addition to containing information about the research agenda, these consent forms also included information regarding how I, the researcher, was planning to protect the privacy of the participants (Alcadipani & Hodgson, 2009). The forms clearly stated that I would use pseudonyms and eliminated any information regarding their personal life that could reveal the participants' identity and jeopardize their anonymity. I omitted or changed their neighborhoods, refrained from providing detailed accounts about their professions or pursuits. I did not specify their age or appearance in order not to draw a clear image to the readers about the participants' physical profile that could expose them. Even though the participants and I became close during the fieldwork; I only resorted to my researcher identity in presenting and discussing the data and did not give out any information that they confided me outside the study. Finally, I explained to the participants that their participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and they could withdraw from the study whenever they wanted (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). During data collection, I always requested their consent for using the recorder and reminded them that I was willing to turn off the recorder if/whenever they needed to.

³ Because the data for this thesis derives out of a start-up project titled "Contemporary Linguistic Diversity in İstanbul" (SUP Project code: 15561), the actual data collection started much earlier, that is in July of 2019, upon obtaining an ethics approval from SBİNAREK.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) discuss that sometimes research turns into an ‘exploitation’ of the participants when they provide the necessary information to the researchers ‘yet get little or nothing in return’ (p.217). With this in mind, besides ensuring their privacy and voluntary consent, I also took it into consideration as to how this study could benefit the participants in return for their contributions to my thesis. The first and foremost benefit of the study for the participants was in learning Turkish. Soraya always consulted me with grammar and vocabulary questions; asked me to explain or simplify texts for her. For a brief period of time, I taught Laila Turkish as she taught me Persian at the same time. Firuzeh always requested me to simplify a message or information for her whenever she had a confusion about a matter. Other than my core participants, even the other agents that took part in the study sought my help in learning Turkish or English. In a number of occasions, Soraya’s daughter Ester called me to ask for clarification for her homework or Soraya’s husband Arman practiced English with me. As well as language learning, my participants always reached out to me for personal or professional matters. They confided in me with their secrets and troubles, asked me to call the bank instead of them when they could not explain the situation in Turkish, or requested my aid in their applications to schools and other organizations. In various occasions, Firuzeh complained about her boyfriend to me; Soraya sought my help with problems with her husband; and Laila confided in me about how living in Turkey and learning Turkish was making her feel overwhelmed. I taught Soraya how to shop online and opened job advertisements for Laila and Firuzeh for a number of times. I even called a clinic for maternal and infant health for Firuzeh when she thought she was pregnant. Thus, I can safely claim that I was helpful towards my participants and

their immediate circles in various matters from language learning to practical matters as well as being an emotional supporter for all of them.

3.6 Validating findings

There have been various definitions of validity in qualitative, inquiry-guided research. While Agar (1986) and Schwandt (1997) define validity as establishing credibility in the study; Mishler (1990) and Angen (2000) drew attention to the degree of trustworthiness on the observations and interpretations of the study. Taking these definitions into consideration, I aimed to ensure the validity of my data throughout the collection and analysis processes. To achieve this aim, I made use of various procedures suggested by different scholars. Creswell and Miller (2000) specify some of these procedures as ‘prolonged engagement in the field’, ‘thick description’, ‘triangulation’, ‘member checking’, and ‘external audits.’ In order to ensure and increase the credibility and trustworthiness of my study, I followed these procedures suggested by Creswell and Miller (2000). As part of the longitudinal study, I spent lengthy times with my participants in various settings. I became ‘personally and deeply acquainted’ (Gold, 1997, p.389) with my participants experiences and views. This prolonged engagement provided me with insight into their lives and also enabled me to provide ‘thick descriptions’ of the field and the participants’ lives and stories. I strived to conceptualize all interactions in the analysis chapters and to provide “deep, dense, detailed accounts” (Denzin, 1989, p. 83) of the settings, participants’ background, their lives and views in order to present well-organized and elaborative accounts to the readers and justify my interpretations.

To ensure an in-depth understanding of the events and the participants’ utterances, I aimed to achieve a triangulation of the data by combining my

observations with the documentation of the participants' spontaneous interactions and focused interviews with them. In my fieldnotes, I reflected on each event and utterance in the interactions. I followed up these interactions with interviews on different subjects so as to obtain a perspective on my participants' experiences and orientations. Moreover, in order to check the accuracy of my interpretations, I did member checking with my participants and compared my insights with their reflections. Finally, throughout the study and my thesis writing process, I had a chance to receive feedback from my advisor and compare my understanding on the issues with her perspective on the same subject. Therefore, I believe that by completing all the steps I listed above, I have managed to increase the validity of my study.

3.7 Researcher's positionality

As a fieldworker, my presence, positionality, and differing identity roles had an impact on the research field and the participants as well (Pole and Hillyard, 2016). As a participant observer, I had to reveal different aspects of my identity in the field, both in order to be accepted by the participants and because the situation called for it. Because I was an insider to the Iranian migrant communities, I could not count on a familiarity or a common ground in the field in order to gain access to the lives of the participants. Therefore, throughout the fieldwork, I made use of my outsider status in order to get by on the field and learn about the interactions, lives, and culture of the participants. They saw me as a passionate, naïve learner who was enthusiastic about their lives and their language and culture and they tried to educate me about those things.

As with all fieldwork experience (see Goffman, 1959), I, too, had to present different selves at different times with different people. In various situations, I switched my roles between being an outsider and insider or being a researcher or a friend. Although I was an outsider in the field as I was not a member of the Iranian migrant communities, the fact that my participants were young woman had given me insider-ness in some extent. As a woman, I could relate to many of their stories and experiences. This provided some solidarity, a feeling of sisterhood, to my participants and me. They complained to me about their significant others, we gave each other relationship advice, discussed many issues related to womanhood or even talked about sexual topics. Thus, I can say that my femaleness turned into an advantage in the field. These topics could not have been opened up to a male researcher, at least not easily.

Another aspect of my identity that provided an advantage for me in the field was my identity as a student and a teacher. Laila was still in higher education and Firuzeh had higher education plans, thus they could share their studies or educational plans with me. We talked about our courses, research, or theses. They also knew they could consult to me with their questions regarding higher education in Turkey. Similarly, wanting to study in higher education herself, Soraya regarded me as a resource to gain related information about the topic as well. She always complained to me how difficult it was to study for an exam after so many years out of school and she counted on me to learn and inform her about issues regarding the university acceptance process of the university students. As an English teacher, I could easily connect with Laila and Firuzeh who were private tutors themselves. We discussed our students, exchanged information about tutoring opportunities, etc.

Finally, the closeness of our ages contributed to our rapport as well. For instance, if I were older, Laila and Firuzeh might possibly not have felt equally comfortable around me; they might have seen me as a serious researcher, a scholar that was not there to make friends. Likewise, Soraya, who was aspiring to have a career, might have probably felt intimidated by my scholar identity. Thus, being a young, novice researcher broke down the barriers that could have otherwise been set between me and my participants. I would not have been able to build the rapport and sincerity between us if there had been a big power difference between me and my participants. Another point about our age difference should be made here about the opposite case as well; that is me being younger than the participants. I was 5-15 years younger than my participants which seemed like a big gap to me at the beginning of the study. I was not sure what to talk to them; whether they, especially Soraya – a married woman with a child, would consider me as somebody to relate to. Later, I came to realize that this did not have to be an issue as long as they regarded me as someone to talk to. In fact, me being younger than them brought about a new dimension to my relationship with them. They saw me as a young, naïve woman who needed their advice and guidance in issues with relationships and career. Thus, at the same time, I was both regarded as a researcher through my investigative attitude and accepted as a friend by improving our rapport and gaining the trust of the participants in time. Consequently, despite my outsider-ness in the field based on my national identity, I could still gain a partially insider status through other aspects of my identity.

Although ethnographic study itself is based on interpretation and subjectivity (Pole and Hillyard, 2016), it is suggested that the researcher can stay objective to some extent (Gouldner, 1973). However, I must admit that it was extremely difficult

for me to stay impartial and hide some of my ideas at the beginning of my fieldwork. As an outspoken person, I could not hide my sadness or anger upon hearing my participants' bad experiences as immigrants or their general troubles in life. After going back to the data and listening to myself or reflecting back while writing my fieldnotes, I occasionally noticed that I had expressed my own feelings and opinions when my focus should have been the participants and their orientations. However, in time, I had developed an inner control mechanism that I always activated during the fieldwork. That way, I managed to only focus on the event itself and the participants' take on the issue rather than my own orientation with it.

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological concerns and processes that revolved around this study. Starting with my gaining access experiences, I recounted how I reached my participants and collected the data. Alongside that, I shared my concerns about all these processes and how I overcame these concerns. Although the constructionist nature of linguistic ethnography has created issues for the ethicality of the study and my position as the researcher and concerns for the data collection and later, validation of the findings, with the help of the related literature, my advisor, and my personal experiences, I have managed to ensure the safety and reliability of my data collection and analysis procedures.

CHAPTER 4

INVESTIGATING AGENCY IN THE HOMELAND

In order to investigate and understand how the participants reconstructed their agency in a new country, in this chapter, I delve into their past experiences in the homeland and question how life in their home country affected their agentive acts as women. Throughout the fieldwork, I observed that oppression in Iran in the form of hijab laws or familial restrictions was a recurrent theme in the women's narratives. Even in very trivial and simple interactions or daily exchanges, they always found a way to reminisce their past and compared it to their current conditions in Turkey. Growing up and spending their early adulthood years in an Islamic state under Sharia law seem to have embodied the discourse of these women immensely. Realizing that, I also focused some of my discussions and interviews on these issues in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of their past and to interpret how this past reflects on their current lives in İstanbul. While there were various limitations in their past in the homeland that these women addressed, they generally complained about how the government controlled women's clothing, especially the sharia laws for hijab, and how their family members constrained their lives by meddling with their relationships and actions. Taking these two mostly complained points into consideration, the first two sections of this chapter will discuss these points in relation to the participants' agency in detail. The first section will be an investigation of how faith and law were used as a control mechanism in the lives of these women with the imposition of hijab while the second section will examine how these women struggled with the domestic restrictions of their families regarding their clothing, faith, or lifestyles. Finally, the third section will be a discussion of the emancipation

struggles of these women; it will provide recounts of how my participants fought with these external restrictions in order to gain their autonomy and agentive roles against the different parts of the society.

4.1 Hijab compulsion with the intersection of laws and religion

The participants of this study all have very modern appearances; they generally wear moderate to revealing clothes paired with light make up. Soraya loves to wear tights and low-cut blouses while Firuzeh spends her summers in short shorts. None of them wear hijab or any kind of headscarf while in Turkey. In fact, at one time, Soraya showed me a picture of herself in Iran, covered in hijab, almost in an ashamed way because she did not like herself in that look. While they can dress freely in Turkey, the situation in Iran is quite the opposite for them. In many instances during my fieldwork, they complained about the hijab pressure and how the government even punishes women for their clothing. Government control that emerges in the form of the Guidance Patrol, the morality police that governs citizens' clothing, is one of the factors that constrained these women from living out their own lives and dressing and acting freely. In fact, this control is one of the reasons that urged these women to leave their home country which they constantly compare with their current destination, Turkey.

Against this background, in one of my interviews in which I inquired about the religious life in Iran, Firuzeh explains how religion in her country is strictly contextualized by laws as well. While talking about religiosity, she first explains to me that children in Iran received religious education in schools, but her mother changed her school to a less religious one after a while because she did not want her to get too affected by the zealous mindset. When I asked whether her mother was

religious or not, Firuzeh expressed how the definition of religiousness differs in Iran when compared with the Turkish context. She shared her observations on religiousness in Turkey; that is, how it is defined and practiced differently by different groups in different regions in Turkey whereas in Iran, everyone has to practice Islam in line with the laws of the country:

Excerpt 1 [Interview, 04/09/2020]:

1 F: Ama İran'da dindarlık farklı bence yani. Ona göre var sizde de ama bizimki
2 biraz değişik. (...) Mesela bizde ahlak polisi var, bi kadın mesela sen eğer uzun
3 giymedin, saçların bu kadar açıktı, onları hapse götürüyorlar. (...) Mesela benim
4 ayağım bu kadar çıksa ya, izin vermiyor. Sizde mesela var, o kadınlar var ki حجاب
5 var, eteği giyiyorlar ayakları dışarda (...) ama bizde öyle değil, bu çıkmazın
6 bu kadar dışarda olmasın yani. Bilmiyorum mesela manto giyiyoruz biz, mesela
7 uzun bir kıyafet üstümüzde. Bu kısa olmasın, kısa olsun onu hapse götürüyorlar.
8 Bilmiyorum, saç çok fazla açık olsa hapse götürüyorlar, her şey zorunda yani.
9 Zor olmak zamanında sen bir şey yapamıyorsun yani.

1 F: *But religiosity in Iran is a little different, I think. You have it too but ours is a*
2 *little different. (...) For example, we have the morality police, there is a woman for*
3 *example you didn't wear long, your hair was showing, they arrest them. (...) For*
4 *example if my ankles can be seen until here, they do not let you. You have that, there*
5 *are some women who wear hijab, they wear skirts, and their legs are shown (...) but*
6 *we don't have that, do not reveal it that much. I don't know for example we wear*
7 *cloaks, a long clothe on us. It should not be too short, if it is short, they take her to*
8 *prison. I don't know, if her hair is uncovered, they take her to prison, everything*
9 *is an obligation, I mean. When it is an obligation, you cannot do anything, I mean.*

This explanation of religiosity by Firuzeh depicts the oppressive setting in Iran clearly and also shows that religious devotion in the country is not considered an internal issue but something that can be monitored by external authorities. Faith is not something women can live in their own world; rather they must show it materially. Firuzeh's word choice such as *izin vermiyor/they do not let you* (line 4) or the use of a modal of ability in the negative form as in *sen bir şey yapamıyorsun/ you cannot do anything* (line 9) imply that this show of faith is not something women choose voluntarily, rather it is something imposed on them by the morality police. Firuzeh also positions herself and the researcher across Iran and Turkey by aligning herself with the Iranian culture and me with the Turkish culture by using *sizde* and

bizde meaning *you* and *we* (lines 1,2, and 4). While explaining religiosity to me, she compares the situation in Iran and Turkey with each other and while doing that she also positions Turkey in a more preferable state. According to lines 4 and 5, a woman in Turkey can be regarded as pious even if her ankles are visible through her cloak. However, in Iran, the authorities inflict an external force to wear hijab with the help of the morality police.

The mention of the morality police and prison in lines 2,3,7, and 8 is also worth noticing in that this is the first example Firuzeh provides while explaining religiosity to me. This shows that she associates religious devotion with the police pressure; that these two concepts are coded together in her mind. Religion cannot be discussed without pressure and therefore the lack of agency for these women. Lines 8 and 9 state women's state in Iran clearly; how they are repressed by the government's obligatory rules and implementations. Firuzeh's utterance in line 8, *her şey zorunda yani*, demonstrates this lack of agency on women's side; women *cannot do anything* with their free will, even specifically regarding faith, because everything is held obligatory for them. Religion and law are also so intertwined that if you wear something inappropriate, you may be imprisoned. Thus, for Firuzeh, even showing her hair is somehow considered a rebellious act and a towards religion and laws.

The effect of hijab oppression takes place in other discussions as well. In another conversation with Firuzeh on gender roles and the woman's place in Iran, she links the topic with the oppression on clothing and other related activities in her life. As a free-spirited young woman who is fond of sports and working out, Firuzeh enjoys going out and exercising. She finds a lot of opportunities to do that in İstanbul, since she has a lot of free time and her neighborhood is close to the seaside. We walked around her neighborhood many times after getting coffee; just strolling

and chatting together. Because she is always very active and takes part in various sports activities such as marathons and swim races, I thought that she used to do these activities in Iran, too. However, a discussion in the later stages of the fieldwork proved otherwise. In fact, it was the first thing that came to her mind when I asked her a rather serious question:

Excerpt 2 [Interview, 04/09/2020]

10 E: E peki **Islamic** bir **state**'te büyüme nasıl bir şey? Mesela etkisini görüyor musun
11 günlük hayatta?
12 F: Tabi ki mesela **there are some usual things for example I can't go for**
13 **running as easy as here. I can't wear short and t-shirt for running, I have to**
14 **be covered and sometimes they act when you are on bicycle...** Çok özür dilerim
15 mesela poposuna çok kötü gözle bakıyorlar. Her şeye kötü gözle bakıyorsunuz,
16 olur mu? Her şeye izin vermezler yani.

10 E: *And what is it like to grow up in an **Islamic state**? For example, do you see its*
11 *effects in daily life?*
12 F: *Of course, for example **there are some usual things for example I can't go for***
13 ***running as easy as here. I can't wear short and t-shirt for running, I have to***
14 ***be covered and sometimes they act when you are on bicycle...** I am sorry*
15 *for instance they look at her bottom in a very bad way. You look at everything in a*
16 *bad way, is this okay? Namely they do not allow everything.*

Earlier in this discussion in which we talked about life in an Islamic state, I asked Firuzeh whether the zealous environment in her country influenced her as a woman throughout her childhood, adolescence years, and in her domestic and romantic relationships. When I directed this question about how she grew up in such an environment, the first issue Firuzeh addressed was not her childhood years directly, but how the society restricted her clothing in the street especially during exercising. Because exercising is the most basic activity in her life as an energetic person, it is also the most fundamental area where she feels the oppression in the society. The emphasis on society by the researcher is worth noticing because as can be seen from the extract, Firuzeh does not mention the laws or regulations in the country. Rather, she directly refers to other people's approach towards women's clothing (lines 13 & 14). In fact, her remark in line 16, *Her şeye izin vermezler yani/*

Namely, they don't allow everything, demonstrates that the practices of the government have sunk into the society very deeply that they can intervene in anything and everything that women do. Another part worth noticing is how Firuzeh compares Turkey and Iran as in the previous excerpt. These comparisons may be used just to provide a relatable context to the researcher or to actually compare her old life and the new. *Here* (line 13), in Turkey, Firuzeh can wear whatever she wants (in fact she was wearing shorts and a sleeveless body on the day of the interview) and act freely without fearing for the society's or government's reaction. On the contrary, in Iran, she cannot and could not wear clothes that are deemed inappropriate by others- for example, the same clothes that she was wearing on the day of the interview; she needs to be covered even for sports both because of the societal pressure and the police oppression.

Other than her discontent with the Sharia pressure in clothing, Firuzeh is also disturbed by the harassment that she might face during exercising. Riding bicycle is frowned upon in many parts of Iran and even forbidden in some regions. In fact, this issue was a highly debated topic in the country when the morality police arrested a woman for riding bicycle. Other than being frowned upon, women can also face verbal or sexual harassment because of the way they sit on the bicycle being associated with sex. Firuzeh objects to how women are harassed by nasty glances and criticizes the harassers for acting this way for everything (lines 15 & 16). This mention of *her şey / everything* embraces not only the clothing but the acts of women in general. Their exercising, bodies, and probably even more aspects of their lives are being restricted (*her şeye izin vermezler/ they do not allow everything*) (line 16) and this time, this restriction is not even related to faith or law. It is simply the societal

pressure that prevents these women from occupying space in the society and acting their free selves.

While reflecting on the anecdotes of how she was oppressed in the past, Firuzeh frequently uses necessity or ability modals *can't* and *have to* (lines 12 & 13) indicating that these actions were not a result of her own willing, but rather they were actions that were forced on her. She was made to follow or refrain from these actions in order to conform with the society and the laws. Her constant comparison of Turkey and Iran demonstrates the change in her living conditions as well. In the past, she was obligated to act in certain ways or wear certain items in order to be free from harassment or imprisonment. Yet now that she is in Turkey, she does not have to fear from these constraints, she can act more freely in her daily life. This comparison is also an indicator that for Firuzeh, a better life is one where she does not have to conform with the external control mechanisms for simple actions such as running or dressing up.

Because Firuzeh is fluent both in English and Turkish, both she and I switch between these languages in all of our meetings with rare and minor switches to Persian since I do not know the language proficiently. However, these switches do not occur arbitrarily. We generally switch among languages according to the context where one language seems more appropriate or when we have difficulty expressing ourselves in one of these languages. For example, in *Excerpt 1*, Firuzeh prefers to speak monolingually in Turkish other than her one switch to *hijab* which is a very specific term for their hair covers in Iran. She chooses to express herself in Turkish when talking about *dindarlık / religiosity* because it is a very specific and popular concept in Turkey. Yet because Turkish does not have a particular name for the Iranian hijab, she prefers to state it in her own language. Therefore, she switches

between Turkish and Persian according to the context. Contrarily, in *Excerpt 2*, both Firuzeh and I switch between English and Turkish based on how much we feel comfortable in expressing our ideas on the issue at hand. Because I do not want to influence Firuzeh's accounts by mentioning Sharia before she does, instead of using that word, I use *Islamic state* (line 10) in my question. The reason why I do not use Turkish here is because at the time, I had prepared my questions in English, but the interaction was being lead in Turkish, so I had to insert English when I needed to refer to my questions. Firuzeh's inter and intra-sentential switches in this example result from her need to express herself more clearly. At first, she realizes that it will be easier for her to give an answer in English (line 12), but then she switches back to Turkish because she will express this part of the conversation more clearly in that language (line 14). For instance, her disapproval in line 16 where she cries out *olur mu/ is this okay* has a stronger and more effective meaning in Turkish than English. Therefore, she may have wanted to stress this part and enhance the effect of her utterances by switching back to Turkish.

A similar distaste for hijab compulsion and the morality police makes itself visible in Soraya and Laila's discourse, too. In fact, Soraya mentioned this issue even in our introductory meeting, during which we talked about their everyday life in Turkey. Soraya's opening a subject that is sensitive and intimate on our first meeting surprised me because I did not think she would open up to a researcher instantly, especially after a light conversation about getting to know one another. As I wrote in my fieldnotes:

Excerpt 3 [Fieldnote, 11/07/2019]:

S wants to improve her English; in fact, she wants to prepare for the university matriculation exam. I offered her my help and she also said she would help me with Persian if we lived close. Because their neighborhood is in a distant part of Istanbul, I asked them how they found here and whether they are happy with their choice. They explained that Mr. Faysal helped them find the flat and they enjoy living in this part of Istanbul.

(...)

After talking about the crowd of Istanbul and the busyness of some neighborhoods, S and her husband also told me that they enjoyed people's attitude here in Turkey. They think that Iran is very restrictive towards people's lives. That is why they like Turkey, nobody disturbs others in Turkey about clothes or religious beliefs. S said that she does not want to wear hijab. Here, she can dress more freely.

As can be seen from the excerpt, I noted the beginning part of our conversation as a light discussion. Soraya's family cares about language learning in a global world and Soraya also plans to study English language teaching in Turkey. At the time of our meeting, she was just starting to study for the university exam, but she wanted to improve her English so that it would be easier for her to adapt when she enrolled in a school. With the intention of improving my rapport with her, I offered my help to Soraya with English and knowing that I wanted to learn Persian for my fieldwork, she, too, kindly offered her help. Because Soraya commented on the distance between our neighborhoods, I switched the topic to how they like their own neighborhood. In the following part of the discussion, suddenly Soraya and Arman switched the focus from how life can differ in different parts of Istanbul to how their life in Turkey is enjoyable for them thanks to the tolerant behaviors of the society towards differences.

Even in our first conversation, the mention of clothing goes hand in hand with religion, again. Although Soraya's mention of hijab on our first-ever meeting after a conversation about her studies and their neighborhood surprised me since we did not know each other at the time, later on, as we spent more time together, I started to conceptualize her remarks better, too. As she does not practice Islam, she finds it even more restrictive to wear hijab. For her, Turkey is a place where she does not have to practice a forced faith, which is why she feels freer. Soraya's remarks on Iran being enforcing, combined with her dressing style make even more sense. In my visits to Soraya's house, I was very surprised with the way she dressed. She was

wearing very tight and revealing clothes, with light but noticeable and charming make up. She seemed nothing like an Iranian woman represented in the media. In fact, she seemed more modern than many married Turkish women that I am used to. Soraya's image was an absolute contrast to the broadcasted Iranian culture and even the Turkish lifestyle. The notes in *Excerpt 3* also suggest that the state, religion, and oppression are all intertwined for Soraya, just like Firuzeh. She also associates oppression with hijab and the lack of agentive actions. Finally, these remarks also indicate that she preferred to change her country rather than yielding her freedom. Considering that she was even arrested in Iran for not wearing hijab properly, it can be inferred that her choice to change her residence was not only a simple mobility but an act of gaining independence from despotism, too.

According to the accounts of my participants, the morality police do not cast their shadow only on women's hijab and ensure their religiosity, they also act as guardians of morals that monitor women's relationships with men. They patrol the streets and intervene with couples or friends so that they do not get too close to one another or act in an unholy way. Laila and her boyfriend Adip had to encounter with the morality police in more than one occasion one of which is narrated in the excerpt taken from an interview below:

Excerpt 4 [Interview, 24/10/2020]:

- 17 E: What is it to be a woman in Iran for you? What was it like? What can you say
 18 about being a woman in Iran?
 19 L: Being like a soldier in a war. Because every time, especially this latest years with
 20 **ار شادگ شت** the police just for your hijab this year really annoying for example
 21 Adip and I just we were in a relationship we were going to park city chatting
 22 together because we just want to talk we just want to eat something together and
 23 they just crossing us observing us what are you doing why are you sitting here do
 24 not touch each other. Sana ne?
- 17 E: What is it to be a woman in Iran for you? What was it like? What can you say
 18 about being a woman in Iran?
 19 L: Being like a soldier in a war. Because every time, especially this latest years with
 20 the Guidance Patrol, the police just for your hijab this year really annoying for

21 **example Adip and I just we were in a relationship we were going to park city**
22 **chatting together because we just want to talk we just want to eat something**
23 **together and they just crossing us observing us what are you doing why are you**
24 **sitting here do not touch each other. *What is it to you?***

During this interview about women's place in Iran, I asked Laila how she feels to be a woman in her country to which she replied as *being like a soldier in a war* (line 19). This metaphor reflects how Laila had to fight with the oppression and monitoring of the government in countless occasions. Especially in the latest years, with the influence of the morality police, she had to always protect herself from encountering with them, just like a soldier dodging bullets. In lines 21-24, Laila recounts how she and her boyfriend were disturbed by the morality police and questioned for any act of profligacy. In lines 21 and 22, Laila almost strives to clear their names, suggesting they were acting innocently by just *chatting together* and *eating something*. Even these innocent actions were deemed immoral by the police and after monitoring the couple, they questioned them in a way that suggested the couple was acting very indecently (lines 23 & 24). In the same lines, Laila imitates the police by repeating their questions in a hasty way and a blaming tone to show me how frustrating these questions could be. At the end of her recounts, she finally switches to Turkish to express her frustration asking *Sana ne?/What is it to you?*, which is an exclamation in Turkish to show one's exasperation with the other party and their meddling with one's business. Her switch to Turkish indicates a questioning of the morality police's authority and drawing attention to the meaninglessness of their actions; that is, meddling with an innocent interaction between a couple. Laila's use of this expression also demonstrates a somewhat gaining of her agency by owning her own actions and objecting to the state's involvement in their relationship. She challenges the authority of the state and declares her own liberty.

All of the excerpts above demonstrate how political and religious implementations intersect with each other in Iran in an attempt to control women's lives. In the Iranian society, faith became to be measured with external indicators rather than being an internal subject for a woman. Women have to dress in a certain way to show their morality and devotion to God and they have to behave in certain ways so as not to be publicly shamed or even hassle with the laws. Experiencing these similar oppressions by the state or the society in the form of hijab compulsion or the surveillance of the morality police turned the lives of the participants of this study into a battle for their freedom and influenced their current discourse as well. Their use of the modals of obligation is an indicator of how they were not the actors of their actions but rather the passive objects of the state's or society's impositions. These impositions seem to have limited their agentive roles in their own lives, preventing them from fulfilling even trivial actions, such as running, without the existence of a control mechanism. The recounts of these women clearly reflect their frustration with the state oppression and their yearning for a freer lifestyle as well. In their comments, they frequently compare Iran to their current destination Turkey indicating that these oppressions in their homeland also prompted them to change their residence. In fact, while their remarks about Iran include obligation markers or negative connotations, their comments on Turkey are frequently associated with positive statements such as *free*, *easy*, or *comfortable* which also demonstrates how their life in Turkey creates a contrast to their past in Iran as well.

4.2 Suppression of women in the form of domestic impositions

The participants of this study experienced pressure from their families as much as from societal and governmental norms. Even though their families were more open-

mindful and tolerant compared with the majority of the Iranian society, there were still some restricting factors in the lives of these women resulting from their families' cultural or religious concerns or because of their lifestyles. These factors took up a considerable place in these women's lives and ultimately shaped their present as well. The effects of these past tensions with their parents or spouses can be noticed not only in their discourses but also in their actions. This section will be an overview of how these restrictions and tensions in their domestic lives affected the past experiences and actions of these women.

In the previous section, the experiences of my participants regarding the societal pressures revolved around similar issues. However, in this section, I focus on how each woman recounted different stories about how their agency was impeded by their families. In various meetings and discussions, Soraya narrated how her husband's actions restrained her life in various ways. Soraya married at a very early age with a man twice her age. Although Arman had promised her that she could go to university after their marriage, he did not keep his promise; he discouraged Soraya from studying, working, and even going out with friends. Soraya spent her years at home, trying to convince Arman to let her study or at least go out with friends. When she did go out, he spent his time calling her and checking her every step. Therefore, Soraya spent her marriage under the shadow of her husband, following his wishes and fighting his rules.

Arman's rules still prevail in their household, which gives so little space for Soraya to follow her own wills. Countless times when we were outside, Arman called her asking where we were and what we were doing or when she would be back. He knew that she was with me and we were just walking around the beach, but he still felt the need to check on us. Of course, I did not realize these tensions at the

beginning of my fieldwork. Although Soraya showed signs of weariness for Arman's restrictions, I did not pick up on these clues until it was the later stages of the fieldwork. At the beginning of the fieldwork, we only met at their flat where Arman was also present. In these meetings, they generally displayed an image of a devoted, happy family. However, at the later stages, because of the pandemic, we met in an open area. Now that we were alone, Soraya could speak more openly about their relationship to me as well. The following excerpt is from my fieldnotes about our third meeting with Soraya which describes the first time she opened up to me about their relationship when Arman was outside:

Excerpt 5 [Fieldnote, 26/10/2019]:

Biraz sohbet ettikten sonra **interview**'ı tamamlayıp salona geçiyoruz. Ben yarım saate kadar kalkabileceğimi söylüyorum, bir arkadaşım şehir dışından geleceği için. Ne güzel arkadaşlarımla dışarı çıkıyorsun. Ben hiç çıkmadım öyle arkadaşlarımla. Genç evlendim zaten o yüzden her şeyi eşimle yaptık. Bazen diyorum arkadaşlarımla şuraya gitsem diye, eşim diyor birlikte gideriz. Ben de diyorum: 'Gelme sen, bıktım senden. Yalnız gideceğim ben. (Bunları şaka olduğunu belirten bir üslup ve ses tonuyla söylüyor.)

*After chatting for a while, we complete the **interview** and go back to the living room. I inform Soraya that I may leave in half an hour, because a friend of mine from another city will visit me. You go out with your friends, how nice. I never went out with my friends like this. I married young so we did everything with my husband. Sometimes, I tell him, I'd like to go somewhere with my friends, my husband says we can go together. I say to him: 'You don't come along; I am sick of you. I'll go alone. (She says these in a way and tone that indicate that it's a joke.)*

Excerpt 5 clearly shows my naiveness as a researcher at the beginning of my fieldwork. Although Soraya clearly states her discontent with Arman's protective attitude, I immediately looked past it thinking it was a joke. The later stages of the fieldwork proved that Soraya's remarks were actual complaints, and she was just looking for a friend to confide in. Reading between the lines, I now realize how Soraya was expressing her resentment towards her early years of marriage; not being able to go out with her friends and doing everything with her husband's supervision.

The comment that she *married young* is a recurrent remark in Soraya's discourse; she mentioned this fact in almost every conversation we had. Soraya links all her problems to this fact; not having gone to university, not seeing her friends, not working, or not finding time for herself. Still, after more than 15 years of marriage, Arman does not want to leave her out of his side and wants to do everything together. However, now that she is more mature and more aware, Soraya has started to refuse her husband's persistent watch, at least with her words; somehow even reprimanding him.

Arman's persistence on doing everything together has led to a lack of agency in Soraya's part since Arman took control of all their actions. Because as a male he had more power in the society and at home, he started to seize all the acting authority in their household in time. Although he promised Soraya that she could study after their marriage, he did not keep his promise over the years. Consequently, since their marriage, studying had been a passion for Soraya; a dream that she could not abandon but could not reach either. She had aspired to finish university and start working one day. Now that Arman allowed her to start university in Turkey, studying was generally the only thing she wanted to talk about; she made plans, complained that she could not create enough time for studying because of her chores, asked me questions about university life, and so on. During a similar conversation, Soraya explained to me what inspired her to decide to study again; she had met a Turkish neighbor around her age who was very confident and successful. Soraya narrated how much she envied that woman and wanted to be like her, working with passion and confidence. She also shared some information she had read in a book which claimed that if we are influenced by someone, we probably share similar interests with them and we can do what they do as well. Soraya suggested that she shared the

same interests with that woman and would have worked at a similar area if she had had the chance when she was younger. Then, she expressed that although she still wants to do these things, she does not have the confidence anymore after years of being discouraged by her husband:

Excerpt 6 [Interaction, 25/10/2020]:

- 25 S: (...) müdür olmayı seviyorum, psikolog olmayı seviyorum, öğretmen olmayı
26 seviyorum. Mesela bunları seviyorum. Diyor ki bunları seviyorsan diye birini
27 böyle durumlarda görüp etkiliyorsan demek ki sende de o şey var diye.
28 E: Evet öyle bir istek var
29 S: Sadece kendine güvenmen gerekiyor o da bende yok hehee. Gerçekten
30 benim özgüvenim çok şey değil, yüksek değil umm bu önceden böyle
31 değildim umm evlendikten sonra hiçbir şey yapmadım. Her şeyi Arman yaptığı
32 için. Her şeyi o yaptı, ben hiçbir şey yapmıyordum. Hep şey oldu, sen
33 yapamıyorsun diye sen falan sen ben olmasam böyle yapamazsın, ben olmasam
34 diye. Böyle şey oldu o yüzden, artık ben de öyle inanıp evet ben yapamam evet
35 ben diye şey yapamıyodum.
36 E: Çünkü biri senin yerine bir şeyi yapmaya başlayınca zaten sen onları
37 yapmayı biliyorsan bile zamanla unutuyosun. Yapamazsın gibi geliyor ona
38 inanmaya başlıyosun.
39 S: Evet o yüzden gerçekten güvenimi kaybettim. Şimdi bir basit bir işi de yapmak
40 istiyorum yok ben yapamam, önce böyle diyorum, sonra yok yaparsın yaparsın.
41 Hep bununla uğraşıyorum umm ama yapmaya çalışıyorum, bakalım nolacak.

- 25 S: *I like to be a manager, I like to be a psychologist, I like to be a teacher. I like*
26 *these for example. The book says that if you like these and see someone in similar*
27 *situations and are influenced, it means that you have that too.*
28 E *Yes, you have that desire too.*
29 S: *Yes, you only have to trust yourself which I don't heheh. Really,*
30 *I don't have much, that much confidence umm I wasn't like this*
31 *before umm after getting married, I didn't do anything. Because Arman did*
32 *everything. He did everything, I did nothing. It was always like, you*
33 *can't do anything and so on if I weren't here, you can't do this, if I weren't here*
34 *and so on. Thus, it turned into, I now believed that I cannot do it yes*
35 *and I couldn't.*
36 E: *Because if someone starts doing things for you, you start forgetting how to do those*
37 *things in time even if you knew it before. It feels like you cannot do it anymore*
38 *you start believing that.*
39 S: *Yes, that's why I lost my confidence. Now, I want to do something simple,*
40 *no, I can't do it, first I say that then no you can do it, yes you can.*
41 *I have to do this all the time umm but I am trying, let's see what will happen.*

In lines 25-27 Soraya lists her similar interests with the Turkish neighbor that inspired her with his confidence and success. In our previous conversations, Soraya told me that she had wanted to be a teacher or psychologist. This time, she also adds manager as her aspiration because that woman was a manager, too; she is somehow

trying to confirm the book that she had read. If you have these similar interests with another person, according to her book, then you can do what that person does, too (lines 26 & 27). Therefore, she is somehow encouraging herself to be like that woman by aligning her interests with her. She is encouraging herself because as she explains in the following lines, she does not have a lot of confidence because of her husband. After their marriage, Arman took control of everything in their lives and managed the household by himself. He despised Soraya's skills and actions claiming repeatedly that she could not achieve anything without him (lines 32-34). While Firuzeh and Laila expressed their lack of agency with the use of modals of obligation, Soraya expresses it with the use of modals of ability in the negative marker (e.g., *yapamiyodum / I couldn't* in line 35), meaning that she was unable to act independently because of her husband's discouraging implications. In time, all these disdainful remarks by Arman did start to discourage Soraya from doing anything and it led her to lose any kind of confidence. On many occasions, I had to encourage her to keep studying because she did not believe she could succeed. I motivated her, saying that she could at least try her best before quitting because studying seemed to be the only thing that inspired her. Yet, just like in *Excerpt 5*, Soraya states how she has started to challenge her past restraints gradually. In *Excerpt 5*, she stated that she defies Arman by telling him to leave her to herself. Similarly, in this excerpt, she defies her husband's discouraging remarks and their effects on her by encouraging herself to act (lines 39-41) more and more, convincing herself that she can do the tasks ahead of her (*yaparsın yaparsın / you can do it, yes you can* in line 40).

While Soraya's agentive role was impeded by her husband, Firuzeh and Laila were constrained by their parents and relatives. Based on Laila and Firuzeh's

accounts, in Iran women are seen as fragile beings who must be protected by their parents until marriage after which time their actions and protection will be turned over to their husband's control. Both of these women grew up in religious households with conservative rules, therefore their actions were monitored by their families, too. As an only child, Firuzeh was already restricted considerably because her parents were protective of her. They did not allow her to socialize a lot or leave their protective wings. Firuzeh complained how her family did not let her stay at her friends' house or travel around the country even after she was of lawful age or finished university. Her parents had feared that she might get into trouble or someone might hurt her. Besides this over-protectiveness, Firuzeh's mother and her relatives were all very conservative and did not believe in giving too much freedom to young women. For Firuzeh, the pressure does not only come from her parents, but she is restricted even by others who claim a right on her life just because they are somehow related to her. A few minutes after the discussion in *Excerpt 2*, where she discussed how the government suppresses women in Iran, Firuzeh expressed how she is bothered by her relatives' interference on her life, too:

Excerpt 7 [Interaction, 04/09/2020]:

- 42 F: Yani herkes özgür yaşayabilir ve sen mesela bir kadına söylersin... Mesela
43 benim teyzem yani sen iyi bir kız değilsin, neden mesela buranı gösteriyorsun?
44 O bir kadın olarak beni kötü gözlen bakıyor. Benim iyilik ve kötülüğümü,
45 her şeyimi benim giyinişime bağlıyorlar. Hatta mesela nasıl sen Allah'a
46 inanıyorsun, inanmıyorsun ona bağlıyorlar, bak her şeyi ona bağlıyorlar.
47 Sen bıktı, sen, umm, bıkiyorsun evet.
48 E: Evet bıkiyorsun.
49 F: Bıkiyorsun ya size ne yani. Her şey size nasıl diyim...
50 E: Hesap vermek mi?
51 F: Evet! Bizde o var yani, sen onlara hesap vermek zorundasın. Size ne ya.
52 Sen kendi işine bak, ben kendi işime bakayım.
53 E: Sen buna inanıyorsun?
54 F: Evet!

- 42 F: *I mean, everyone can live freely, and you tell a woman... For example*
43 *my aunt, I mean you are not a good girl, why do you show your body?*
44 *She sees me as a bad woman. They associate my goodness or badness,*
45 *everything about me with my clothing. Even, for example, whether you*

- 46 *believe in Allah or not, they associate these with my clothing, they connect*
 47 *everything to that. You get, you, umm, you get sick of it yes.*
 48 E: *Yes, you get sick of it.*
 49 F: *You feel fed up; I mean why do you care? Everything to you, how should I say...*
 50 E: *Answer to them?*
 51 F: *Yes! We have that, you have to answer to them. Why do you care?*
 52 *You mind your own business; I mind my own.*
 53 E: *You believe in this?*
 54 F: *Yes!*

The same theme of interference on clothing that is discussed in *Except 2* continues to be discussed in this excerpt, too, with a focus on the domestic aspect. Firuzeh is not only suppressed by the government or the society but she also feels the pressure of her close circle. Her aunt, a devoted woman, criticizes and openly shames Firuzeh for her clothing (lines 43 & 44). For her aunt, every aspect of a woman's life is connected to her dressing; she is considered a good person or a bad one based on how she is dressed; namely, how she covers herself. In the aforementioned lines, Firuzeh solely talks about her aunt, using the third person singular subject marker as in *she sees me as a bad woman*. However, starting with the rest of line 44, suddenly, the subject of Firuzeh's sentences turns into third person plural indicating that she now generalizes her own criticism towards everyone who interferes with her life. She now calls out to her whole family, asking why they intervene in her life and associate everything about her life with the way she dresses. *They* even interfere with her faith, claiming her faith in God is also related to her clothing (lines 44 & 46). Considering they do not regard her clothing as appropriate for their faith, this means they actually call her a disbeliever (lines 45 & 46). Starting with line 47, Firuzeh expresses her frustration with this meddling by her close circle and suggest that everyone should mind their own business instead of meddling with each other (line 52). This utterance, *You mind your own business, I mind my own*, is similar to Laila's use of the expression *Sana ne?/ What is it to you* (line 24 in *Excerpt 4*) in that it also

represents an owning of one's actions on Firuzeh's part. She, too challenges the authority and meddling of others with her life.

Firuzeh's use of language in lines 49-51 is also worth noticing. She generalizes her own situation to her culture, as in *we have that* (line 51). This means that the pressure she is exposed by her relatives is not something that is only directed at her, but it is a general experience in the country; women *have to answer to* the government, their families, and their relatives. The use of obligation marker in her statements resumes in this excerpt as well (line 51), pointing out how she was bereaved of her agency against her will and how she was forced to act in a certain way by her domestic circle. Moreover, this use of generalization in line 51 also creates another contrast with Iran and Turkey. With her mobility to the latter, Firuzeh is free from the obligation of answering to different parties in her life about her own actions. Now, she can become the owner and actor of her own decisions and her own living.

A similar restriction by family and relatives that Firuzeh experienced could be seen in Laila's house as well; her parents came from a conservative region of Iran and still held their values and rules intact. Although her parents cared deeply about their daughter's education and career and encouraged them to improve themselves, they still wanted to control their daughter's lives to some extent as well. Despite the fact that Laila and her sisters are all adults, they still have a curfew at their house. Besides that, Laila is the only unveiled woman in her father's side and has to hide this situation because she knows how she would be despised by her relatives. In the excerpt below, Laila informs me about how she struggled with her family's roots, practices, and approach to her life when she was living with them and how she still feels the impact of their past tensions.

Excerpt 8 [Interaction, 24/10/2020]:

- 55 L: Four years ago, when we were beginning on the six months, I told my sister,
56 she told everyone. And then I decided okay I won't tell them anything about my
57 personal relationship never ever.
58 E: What happened?
59 L: We had very bad fight and I had a panic attack. And I never forgive them for that
60 because it hurts a lot. Both emotionally and also physically. Because you know the
61 panic attack for me is like all my body become blocked and I cannot breathe very
62 well. Somehow, I go to the death and back. I just, okay I cannot handle my family, I
63 cannot convince them, so I do not talk about it anymore.
64 E: So, they reacted really badly then?
65 L: Yes
66 E: They opposed or...
67 L: We had a fight for two weeks.
68 E: Two weeks, is it because you...
69 F: Every night.
70 E: were dating someone or...
71 L: Yes. Because I was... It's really interesting. They like me married but they don't like
72 me dating. I don't know how they like me to be married.
73 E: Are they maybe thinking about an arranged marriage?
74 L: Maybe. But it's not for me...
75 E: But for you, I don't think so, I mean, if they know you just a little, they wouldn't
76 hehe consider that I guess hheh
77 L: And that's why I stopped talking about myself, I stopped talking about my
78 concerns...

Laila narrates how her parents found out about her relationship with Adip around six months into their relationship and reacted very badly, even causing her to get a panic attack. All the family fought over this issue for two weeks, causing a breaking point in their lives. Lines 64-76 demonstrate how I tried to make sense of the parents' reaction as Laila recounted the events to me. I was very surprised that Laila's parents wanted her to get married without dating anybody because an arranged marriage is not something their daughter would agree which I stated to Laila in lines 75 and 76 as well. This incident caused Laila to drift away from her family and start keeping secrets from them so as to protect herself from their meddling. As with her questioning the authority of the morality police (lines 56 & 57), lines 77 and 78 too demonstrate how Laila takes a stance against her family's authoritative actions. Her remarks directly reflect her determined and independent personality; rather than ending her relationship as her family had forced her, she

decided to hide it instead and not share any details of her personal life with them. Her use of verbs without any modals or hedges such as *I decided* (line 55) and *I stopped* (line 77) is also an indicator of her determinacy and the emerging of her agentive role. Thus, it can be suggested that even though Laila was oppressed by her family's protective nature, she still found her own ways to challenge their authority and take action.

Intervention by families to young couples is a common concept in Iran, especially in conservative families. Because they had to overcome many obstacles by Laila's family, the police, or the society, these troubles hold a big space in Laila and Adip's discourse, too. During a conversation in their workplace, they recounted how young people struggle to build a romantic relationship because of so many obstacles they have to encounter. They explained to me that young people often cannot find any opportunities or settings where they can meet with people from the opposite sex. The fact that schools in Iran are all single-sex schools, combined with the restrictive stance of families about their children's friends, and the societal pressure and monitoring prevent young people from interacting with the opposite sex. When they do find an opportunity to interact with each other, this time they risk getting caught by the morality police. In these interventions by the police, the fear of getting arrested is generally overthrown by the fear of being tattled to parents. The police can call the parents of young women and inform them that their daughter was seen with a man on the street. While recounting a similar experience, Laila and Adip explained to me what would have happened if they had gotten caught and how their families would react to this situation upon hearing their relationship. Although they both faced similar risks, their stance towards these encounters has a noticeable difference:

Excerpt 9 [Interaction, 12/09/2020]

- 79 A: It's the government's fault, the government bans everything. Drinks, imagine.
80 drinks If I come with Laila and take her hand, what is your relationship show me
81 your relationship.
82 L: Yeah, they stop you and ask you about your relationship. Ah once we had a party
83 near my office and we went there, and the police came I just ran hheheh.
84 A: Because if they arrest you, they call your family (...)
85 E: For example, how would your families react?
86 A: Hmm?
87 L: How would your family react Adip?
88 A: Yeah, for boys it's not a big problem, I think.
89 L: But for girls
90 A: Because okay this is normal.
91 L: This is a shame for you do that.

In this excerpt, Adip and Laila explain to me what happens when the police intervene with young couples. They take turns explaining the situation and sometimes their sentences overlap as they do so from their own perspective (lines 88-91). Adip blames the government for banning everything and meddling with romantic relationships. When young couples show any kind of affection towards each other, they are questioned by the police regarding the nature of their relationship, meaning whether they are married or not (line 80). Relationships out of marriage are strictly frowned upon and even punished. Because the police can arrest couples or inform their families about their whereabouts, young couples are afraid to get together out in the public. This fear is reflected on Laila and Adip's past experiences as well, as Laila explains in lines 82 and 83. For fear of being caught by the police, Laila left Adip alone in a party and ran away, which is explained by Adip in the following line (84) as, *because if they arrest you, they call your family*. I was informed later in my fieldwork that her parents still do not know about her relationship with Adip even after 4 years together. Considerably, the police calling her parents to inform them that Laila was caught in a party with her boyfriend would have caused a lot of trouble for her. When I wanted to learn about their families reaction in a hypothetical arresting situation, Adip could not hear me and asked for

clarification, and Laila repeated my question to him in line 87, in a mocking tone. She took on a mocking tone because she was aware of the juxtaposition in their experiences in a similar situation. In the remaining part of the discussion, both Laila and Adip recount how their family would have reacted if they had been caught by the police and even though they recount the possibilities at the same time, in an overlapping manner, there is a notable distinction in how they approach the issue. In lines 88 and 90, Adip answers my initial question, and he seems not bothered by this possibility; *for boys it is not a big problem because this is normal* for a young man to see young women. He is aware of his privilege as a man; he would not have been berated for his behavior. At the same time, in lines 89 and 91, Laila explains how it would have been such a shame for a young woman to have a boyfriend and even worse, to get arrested by the police. As a woman, she would have been in a less advantaged position than her boyfriend because she was a woman who had to explain to her family about her date life unlike Adip whose dating was considered a normal occasion. Laila's account of how she had to run away from the police depicts that even though she did question and challenge the authority of her parents or the Guidance Patrol through her utterances or some of her actions, she still feared from their power and retribution. Even when she found ways to act on her own wills, she was still forced to hide that liberty, which is yet another form of oppression imposed on her. Contrary to their past clashes with the police in Iran, both Laila and Adip are much freer to display their relationship in public in their new destination. They do not have to fear from the law or the police, and without the shadow of Laila's family, they can live their relationship more freely. Throughout the fieldwork, I observed them going out or working together, attending to events or meetings with confidence

and assurance that they will not be intervened or questioned on the basis of their intimacy.

In this section, I have discussed how my participants had to cope with their families' demands and expectations for them in the form of parental or spousal interference. Because a woman is seen in the possession of all the family members, these women had to fight against various individuals in their lives. While Soraya was suppressed by her husband's restrictive acts and demands throughout her marriage, Firuzeh and Laila had to answer to their families and relatives even during their early adulthood years. All these women's agentive roles were restricted by their families one way or another with the family member's meddling with their lives. They were withheld from living their lives in their own way because of their families' cultural and religious concerns. Even in domestic pressures, the influence of faith made itself visible as was shown in Firuzeh's experiences with her aunt and the influence of a conservative life was demonstrated in Laila's family's actions as they could not accept the relationship of their adult daughter. Soraya's tensions with her husband suggest how men still hold the power in marriages in the Iranian culture and how women cannot oppose their husband's wills no matter what. Especially for Laila and Firuzeh, these factors can also be taken as a motivator in their mobility since the only way for these women to construct their agency was by leaving their parents' roof and thus supervision.

4.3 Emancipating from the external constraints

The previous sections of this chapter focused on the past experiences of suppression and constraining of the participants of this study. I examined how these women reflected on their suppression by their partners, families, the society in general, or the

government and laws. Although they claimed to have been constrained in various ways, this does not mean that they did not have any active and agentive roles in their lives, nor does this mean that they did not fight these external pressures. As I explained above in Section 4.2, these women found various ways to defy the pressures imposed on them. For instance, Soraya directly confronted her husband by stating her discomfort in doing everything with him or Laila and Firuzeh challenged the control of the state and their families. Of course, these defiant actions also found place in the discourse of these women, too. They opposed these impositions by taking a determined stance in their speech or questioning the external powers. Although these actions or their defiant utterances may seem like small acts, they were still acts of agency and resistance to an external force. These small acts show that these women did not simply accept to lose their agentive roles, rather they created a number of ways and strategies to overcome restrictions. This section will discuss how these women created these ways where they could construct their agency and act their own selves against domestic and governmental pressures.

As stated earlier, the governmental obligations went hand in hand with religious constraints in the lives of these women; they were publicly harassed or shamed for their clothing and forced to wear the hijab as was deemed appropriate by the society. Of course, this was not a case exclusive to my participants; rather, it was a societal issue. Women in general were oppressed this way and the society in general had to endure a type of pressure in many cases as well. Expectedly, they found ways to oppose these political and religious impositions and to manifest their resistance. These ways of resistance were discussed by Soraya and me in an interview about the political atmosphere in Iran. She stated that although she herself

was not bold enough to protest the government openly, she resorts to some of these ways as well.

Excerpt 10 [Interview, 13/08/2020]:

- 92 S: Onlar ki devletten yiyor, onlar çalışıyor, onlar da para alıyor, tabi onlar
93 destekliyor. Ama çoğu hayır, çoğu istemiyor. Ama onlar da saçma
94 düşünüyor, biliyo musun? Herkes, istemeyenler mesela (...) o zamana
95 kadar ki şey var insanlar dini şeyleri bırakmayınca, dindar şeyleri yapabiliyor.
96 Mesela bir yıl dediler ki İmam Hüseyin için dışarı çıkmayın, devlet
97 anlatsın ki biz bunu istemiyoruz. Herkes çıktı. Tamam bir yıl çıkmama,
98 noluca? Mesela seçim zamanında bu yıl oy vermeyin dediler.
99 Oy vermeyin, tamam kimse şey yapamazlar oy vermeyince. Ben
100 bu zamana kadar belki sadece lisede oy verdim. O zaman da çok
101 anlamıyordum, annem o zaman dedi. Ondan sonra hiç zaman oy vermedim.
102 Oy vermeyin, şey olsunlar, görsünler ki insanlar
103 E: Gidip oy verm-
104 S: Gidiyorlar. Böyle basıp gidiyorsun, korkuyorlar. Yok ben oy vermezsem
105 sonra orda çalışmak istiyorsam? Bana bakıp yok, yok korktum. Diyorum
106 bu kadar mı korkuyorsun? Ben de korkuyorum tabi, ben hiç zaman dışarı
107 çıkıp şey yapmadım, korkuyorum. Bazıları korkmuyor. Çoğu da cesaretli
108 olup dışarı çıkıyor. Mesela şey olsa, ben hiç zaman dışarı çıkmam, ben
109 evimde kalırım. Benim bu kadar cesaretim yok, gerçekten. Ama bu kadar da
110 şeyin var ki eğer oy verme ama vermem. En azından bunu yapabiliyorum.
111 E: Bir arada hareket etme şeyleri de yok
112 S: Evet, yani en azından ben bunu yapabiliyorum. Ama yok ben bi tane
113 yapabiliyorum. Tamam. Sen bi tane, o bi tane, o bi tane, öyle oluyor tabi ki.
114 E: Tabi ki

- 92 S: *Those who live on the government, they work and they get money too, of course they*
93 *support the government. But the majority, no, the majority don't want them. But they*
94 *think nonsensical too, you know? Everyone who don't support them for example (...)*
95 *until then, when people don't quit religious things, they can do the religious things.*
96 *For example one year they said don't go out for Imam Huseyin, the government*
97 *should understand that we don't want it. Everyone did go out. Okay don't go for*
98 *one year, what'll happen? For example, during elections they said don't vote*
99 *this year. Don't vote, okay they can't do anything if no one votes. Until now,*
100 *I may have only voted during high school. Then, I didn't know better,*
101 *my mother told me then. After that I never voted.*
102 *Don't vote, so that they can, they can see that people*
103 *E: Go and vote-*
104 *S: They go. You walk away, they fear. No, if I don't vote, then what if I*
105 *want to work there? They look at me and no, no, I am afraid. I tell them,*
106 *are you really this frightened? Of course ,I am afraid too, I never went out*
107 *and did that, I am afraid. Some does not fear. Most of them are brave*
108 *and they go out. For example, if there is a, I won't go out, I will*
109 *stay at home. I am not that brave, really. But if you have this much*
110 *of, then don't vote, I won't vote, though. This is the least I can do.*
111 *E: They don't act together*
112 *S: Yes, I mean, I can at least do this. But no I can do only one thing. Okay. You do one*
113 *thing, he does one thing, the other one thing, of course things happen like that.*
114 *E: Of course.*

While talking about the political atmosphere in Iran, Soraya explains to me that the society is divided into two groups; those who benefit financially from the government, and thus support it, and those who oppose the government which is also the majority of the Iranian society (lines 92 & 93). Soraya criticizes the latter group for not raising their voice to the government and showing their discontent with their impositions. In line 95, she suggests that people should stop commemorating the religious days and following the religious regulations so that they can make the government realize their discontent. Because the citizens do not give up these religious implementations, the government is encouraged to impose even more regulations. Another way Soraya suggests for resisting the oppression is to not participate the elections to draw attention to the undemocratic nature of the situation. Although both of these passive-aggressive protest methods were suggested in the previous years (line 95-99), Soraya informs me that the opposing groups did not follow through and carried on with the protests because they did not want to be blacklisted by the government (lines 104 & 105). Although Soraya claims to be not fearless either; or did not feel bold enough to take to the streets, she still feels proud to do the bare minimum by following through with these passive-aggressive protest methods (lines 108-110). She had not voted since her young adulthood years after leaving her mother's influence. This is her way of getting back at the government for violating her rights. She shows her discontent by not taking part in cultural events or following the religious implementations. She does not take part in the elections because she would have to vote for an illiberal group one way or another, and she does not want to do that (lines 100-102). Of course, there are also those who do show courage and take their resentment to the streets according to Soraya's accounts. She also praises these people who are able to join the demonstrations actively (lines 107

& 108). She expresses her content with her own actions in showing opposition, by saying *en azından bunu yapabiliyorum. / this is the least I can do* (line 110). This may seem like a minimal agentive action from outside, but for a person living under Sharia laws, this is Soraya's way of showing resistance and taking control.

Moreover, as Soraya also declares, if each person starts doing these small actions, then they can create a bigger influence, and more effective consequences *can happen like that* (lines 112 & 113).

Soraya's use of language demonstrates her agentive role even under the Sharia pressure in that, contrary to the previous excerpts, she sounds even more confident and decisive while expressing her opinions and actions. She does not use any hedges or obligation markers; instead, she uses ability markers as in *yapabiliyorum, I can do it* (lines 110 & 112) to manifest her ability and potential to act or direct verbs to show her decisiveness as in *Ondan sonra hiç zaman oy vermedim / After that, I never voted* (line 101).

The excerpt above demonstrates how Soraya and some groups of the Iranian society react to the Sharia constraints and strive to reclaim their power against the oppression. Other than the political regime, the women of Iran reclaim their rights and space in the society as well. They manage this in various ways, from protesting the hijab laws to gradually entering male-majority spaces. Although my participants recounted many experiences of oppression, they also expressed their pride in Iranian women for not giving up their freedom easily. Especially Firuzeh and Soraya always stressed that Iranian women strive to create a better world for themselves by studying and improving their skills. The oppressive image of Iran represented in the media always disturbed Firuzeh because she did not want people to discredit her country as a result of the regime's faults. In a number of occasions, she stressed that although

the government is narrow-minded, the people are certainly not that way and that some of the laws are over-stated because there are ways to bypass them easily. An example from my fieldnotes describes Firuzeh's explanations about how Iranian women reclaim their freedom in different fields in the society.

Excerpt 11 [Fieldnote, September 2020]:

After a little window shopping, Firuzeh suggested we walked by the seaside around Moda Park, so we headed down there. I mentioned her that my roommate and I were looking for a flat then asked her how she was liking her new flat too. I had learned that this was the first time she was living alone so, it must have been interesting for her. She commented that it was very difficult for Iranian girls to live apart from their families, so she had never experienced that. It was very expensive and not customary to live alone for girls in Iran. I asked why they wouldn't allow girls to live alone in order to learn about the mindset, 'because the parents would fear for her safety or the people would think about bad about the girl', she said. I wanted to comment on more about the issue, but as always, Firuzeh acted a little defensive. She started explaining that girls did not experience a lot of oppression in Iran as we thought. She said that "Siz hep sanıyorsunuz ki İran'da kızlar bir şey yapamaz. Öyle değil. Bizde kızlar 18 yaşına basınca hemen ehliyet alır. Üniversiteler de mesela sizden daha iyi bence, hepsi de okula gidiyor kendini geliştiriyor. Sonra mesela aileler de destekliyo okusunlar diye. Evet, bazı şeyler istemezler ama okusun çalışsın istiyorlar. Türkiye'de herkes İranlı diyince hemen 'Aa çok baskı var diyor.' Ama sandığınız gibi değil."

After a little window shopping, Firuzeh suggested we walked by the seaside around Moda Park, so we headed down there. I mentioned her that my roommate and I were looking for a flat then asked her how she was liking her new flat too. I had learned that this was the first time she was living alone so, it must have been interesting for her. She commented that it was very difficult for Iranian girls to live apart from their families, so she had never experienced that. It was very expensive and not customary to live alone for girls in Iran. I asked why they wouldn't allow girls to live alone in order to learn about the mindset, 'because the parents would fear for her safety or the people would think about bad about the girl', she said. I wanted to comment on more about the issue, but as always, Firuzeh acted a little defensive. She started explaining that girls did not experience a lot of oppression in Iran as we thought. She said that "You always think that Iranian girls can't do anything. It's not like that. For example, girls get their driving license when they become 18. Universities, too, are better than yours I think, all girls go to the school and improve themselves. For example, families support them to study, too. Yes, they don't want some things, but they want their daughters to study and work. In Turkey, everyone says 'Aah there is a lot of pressure.' But it's not like what you think."

My notes above about Firuzeh's description of the Iranian women reveal her perspective that life in Iran is not only about oppression and restrictions. They strive to be agentive and make use of their rights as much as they can. They get their driving license in order to act more freely, they study, and more and more Iranian women have started working in different fields. Although parents may restrict their daughters for some matters, they are more tolerant towards education and career, too.

Therefore, Iranian women find various fields where they can demonstrate their agency as well. Firuzeh criticizes the Turkish people's attitude towards her culture, too because they are easily led by the media and prejudice. These notes about Iranian women improving themselves were shared by Soraya in countless times, too. She also suggested that Iranian women work harder and spend their free times to improve themselves. In fact, she criticized Turkish women for spending their time in tea parties instead of improving themselves. Both Firuzeh's and Soraya's comments indicate their contention that despite the mainstream image of the country, women are not repressed in every part of their lives; rather, they are even encouraged to move forward instead of being confined.

This opposition to confinement of course finds a space in Laila's life as well. Based on my observations, I can confidently say that Laila is very keen on her freedom and she always finds a way to manifest her freedom either by her actions or by her words. When she puts something in her mind, she does not quit at least until she tries every possible way to fulfill her wills. Therefore, I was already surprised to learn she was exposed to her family's restrictions. I would have imagined she had overcome their impositions in one way or another. As *Excerpt 8* showed, I was not wrong in my expectation and although she had not overcome their pressure completely, she did not surrender her agentive role, either. Instead, she decided to hide her relationship from her family. The exchange below further demonstrates how Laila is also aware of her defiant personality in the face of constraints and how she expresses this defiance as an act of necessity rather than solely free will, too:

Excerpt 12 [Interaction, 24/10/2020]:

- 115 L: Real- It's really hard. Because you should fight with your family. Fight
116 with the society. Fight with the government. Fight with your stupid partner.
117 Just, it's real hard you know.
118 E: And how is the situation in your family?
119 L: My family was not very conservative that much, but we also fight a lot.

120 Even if because we are originally from XX- XX is like Konya, you know-
 121 and I was somehow like a rebel in the family. So even for the hijab, I just
 122 fight. I don't want to for example, I wanna wear more, how can I say,
 123 not very tight?
 124 E: Loose? Loosened?
 125 L: Hmm hmm loosened hijab. Be free. And when they realized I have a boyfriend,
 126 you cannot understand how my family was. That's why I kept it secret,
 127 still keep it secret for them. I honestly think they are not ready to hear that.
 128 E: That you are living together?
 129 L: Exactly. They are not ready to hear that. Even now officially they just say
 130 you are 29, you are mature enough to make a decision, but I prefer to say nothing.
 131 E: How about your sisters? Do they know you are living together?
 132 L: No, no nothing. Because I am not sure how long they can keep secrets.
 133 E: And how would they react if they learned you are living together?
 134 L: For my mom and for my dad, it would be so hard. It would be so hard.
 135 Because for a time, I just lied to them. I just tell a lie to them. I think it's hurts
 136 but it was necessary. Yani, they put me in a way to do it. I cannot obey their
I mean
 137 rules, you know. (...) I have no idea how can I explain them I have been in a
 138 relationship since four years ago and also I live with that guy, I work with
 139 that guy.
 140 E: (...) Then how did you keep this secret for four years heheh
 141 L: I have a two separate life. It's hard. It's the cost of the freedom for you.
 142 You cannot talk with your sister. You cannot talk with your parents. Even
 143 it's better to keep your secret from friends because you don't know whether
 144 they have a any contact with your family or not. So, it's better to keep it.

After a long discussion about women's rights and women's place in the Iranian society, Laila summarizes her remarks by saying how hard it is for women to take a stand because for every action, they have to fight the pressure and supervision of different groups. A woman has to stand up against her family, her partner, the governmental control mechanisms, and the society's pressure in order to be able to act freely (lines 115-117). When I want to narrow down the discussion to her family in particular, she explains how she had to fight with her hometown's customs and way of life because their parents were affected by them, too (line 120). She compares her family's hometown to a conservative city in Turkey in order for me to conceptualize her remarks. Konya is a city in Turkey that is known for its devotion to conservative customs and lifestyle. Laila's family was from a similar part of Iran as well and as she explained in the following part of this discussion, her relatives were very devoted and traditionalist. Although her parents were more open-minded than the rest of their families, Laila still experienced differences in their lifestyles and

thus, had to try hard to live her life the way she wanted. It surprised me that Laila was considered a rebel in the family (line 121) since she has a very calm temper and a moderate style. Yet this also shows Laila's agentic nature in act. She does not accept the restrictions imposed on her, rather she does everything she can to bend the rules or expand the boundaries. Her desire to wear a loosened hijab also proves this point (lines 122-125). Even if she had to wear the hijab, she still tried to create ways to bend this rule to her own comfort. Laila's use of the verb *fight* (lines 115 & 116) while explaining the tensions with her family has two meanings; the first one may indicate her struggle and challenge to reclaim her freedom. However, the second meaning of *fight* also shows that she does not give in to any kind of oppression by any part of the society. Whether it is the government or her family, Laila does not surrender her rights without at least defending them and fighting for them which shows her agentic and rebellious nature. Similar to Soraya, Laila, too uses more direct vocabulary as she expresses her confrontation with the pressures. She directly states her wills as in *I wanna wear more (...) loosened hijab* (lines 122 & 125) and actions as in *I kept it secret* (line 126), which articulates her agentic roles with more emphasis. Moreover, Laila is aware of her status in the family as the deviant rebel, too. In fact, she clearly states that in line 121, which shows that her agentic defiance is not something arbitrary, rather she acts in these ways purposefully to challenge her parents' restrictions.

Even though Laila's rebellious acts are deliberate moves to claim her voice and agency in her life, even this defiance is something imposed on her. Ideally, she would not have wanted to hide her life from her family, but *it was necessary* for her to do that in order to lead her own life in her own path (line 136). As stated in *Excerpt 9*, Laila's parents had reacted very badly when they had learned that she had

a relationship with Adip. Because of their reaction, she had decided to keep this information to herself and did not tell her parents anything about Adip again. In the remaining part of this excerpt, she justifies her decision to hide her relationship from her family by explaining that they are still not ready for this news (lines 125-130). Especially considering that Laila and Adip are living together out of wedlock, her traditionalist and conservative family members would probably not forgive her for lying to them for such a long time (lines 134 & 135) and violating their values. Even though lying to her parents and keeping secrets from them may seem very problematic, they also open up a free space in Laila's life for her to act freely. They are like a strategy for her to live her own life, her own relationship in the way that she wanted. Her remarks in line 141, summarizes her own situation very clearly; *it is the cost of the freedom* for Laila to hide some truths from her family and friends so that she can be emancipated from their restrictions and monitoring (lines 141-144). She acts deceptively in order to be able to act freely.

To conclude, despite the restrictions that surrounded these women's lives, their recounts of past also demonstrate that they created ways to fight these restrictions and act agentively, either as a boycott of the government or creating strategies to limit parental involvement in their lives. As Soraya suggested, although these acts may have been small ones, they still opened up spaces for them to draw their own paths or push the limits of their confinements. As Firuzeh also generalized this to whole country, Iranian women came up with various ways to fight the oppression in their homeland by studying and improving themselves, being more active in the society, and taking a stand against the state or the family.

In this chapter, I have discussed how the agentive actions and discourses of the participants of this study were influenced by their past experiences. As women

living under Sharia laws, these women had to fight against different authority figures to be able to act agentively and be the actor of their own lives. Throughout their lives in Iran, they were restricted by the Sharia laws about their appearance, relations, and their status in the society. Moreover, the traditional family structure in the country enabled their families and close circle to have the power to intervene with their lives and control their actions. All these past constraints have found place in the current discourse of the women as they narrated their lives in Iran, marked, among others by the use of obligation markers or modals of ability. Although they shared the effect of these political and domestic pressures repeatedly, they also elaborated on how they showed acts of resistance towards these impositions. Either by their actions or with their words, these women found ways to challenge their oppressors and regain their agentive selves. The next chapter will be a revision of whether these past experiences still play a role in the lives of these women in their current country of residence and if so, how these restraints affect their agentive actions.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF TRANSNATIONAL MOBILITY

In this section, I aim to investigate whether their move to Turkey could help the participants of this study break free from the effect of their past experiences, as most lifestyle migrants are reported to do so and reclaim their agentive selves. In the previous section, they recited a number of occasions where they had to struggle to be able to act in accordance with their wills and desires as young women in Iran. Consequently, during my meetings with them, I could observe that these women presented a link between their move to Turkey and their past constraints. Their mobility was motivated by their living conditions in their homeland and their desire to improve those conditions. In a new destination, they are now striving to create new spaces to enact their agencies. With these in mind, the first section of this chapter will discuss whether the regaining of their agentive roles correlates with the mobility of these women to Turkey; whether these two actions are related to each other. In the second section, I will elaborate on whether and/or how these women have started to regain their agentive actions back from the oppressing actors in their lives in a new country of residence. What I have also found out in the accounts of the women regarding their current life was how they referred to their linguistic abilities as enablers or challenges as factors that influence their actions. Considering that Turkey is an officially monolingual country, they have had to resort to Turkish at least in some cases in order to resolve their problems rather than counting on Persian, English, or other languages they know. Therefore, linguistic knowledge was also a big part of the emancipation process of these women. Consequently, in the third section, I aim to investigate whether living in an officially monolingual country have

influenced these women's actions and if so, in what ways as they have proceeded in their agentive journey in Turkey.

5.1 Lifestyle migration as an agentive act

In order to understand the underlying reasons behind their move to another country, I based my initial interviews around the participants' migration experiences; what motivated them to move to another country and specifically to Turkey. Although the three women involved in this study migrated to Turkey with different motivations, there emerges a significant underlying commonality, too: they all wanted to create a better future for themselves. Firuzeh, a woman in her late twenties who lived with her family in Iran, wanted to leave her parents' over-protective roof and travel the world. Laila, a very ambitious and confident woman wanted to create a better future and a career for herself in a new country because Iran could not provide it to her. Finally, Soraya, a married woman who missed the opportunity to get higher education because of early marriage and spent her life under the oppression of the Islamic regime, wanted to protect her daughter from a similar future. Alongside with their motivation to move abroad, these women also have similar reasons for choosing Turkey. The geographical proximity of Turkey and Iran is the leading factor that has motivated these women to move to Turkey. They can easily visit their families back in Iran. Other than that, the bureaucratic rapport between the two countries is another attraction of Turkey for these women. They can get a visa more easily in Turkey than other countries that they might have migrated.

With the purpose of learning more about their background in Iran and the motivational factors behind their migration, I inquired all my participants' migration stories in my first visits. During such a meeting with Firuzeh, I wanted to get to

know her and learn about her migration experiences. She shared her reasons for coming to Turkey and how she has been trying to build a new life in the country. I learnt that it had been one year since she arrived in Turkey and she had been doing various things since then. She has travelled in Turkey and participated in various projects and education programs. I was also informed that because of her family's protectiveness, she could not have participated in these projects or travels in Iran which is why Firuzeh wanted to leave her family's side and start travelling as she had dreamt:

Excerpt 13 [Interview, 11/12/2019]:

- 145 E: Peki Türkiye'ye ne zaman geldin?
146 F: Türkiye bir yıl, yok on üç ay oldu
147 E: On üç ay oldu? Oo çok güzel
148 F: Evet
149 E: Peki ne için gelmiştin, amacın neydi?
150 F: Okumak için
151 E: Hmm hmm
152 F: ve biraz da benim amacım biraz değişti. Ben seyahat etmek için,
153 seyahat etmeye başlamak için Türkiye'yi seçtim. Burdan başlayım
154 sonra farklı ülkelere gitmek. Aynı zamanda umm nasıl diyeyim...
155 Bir sürü politik **problemler** vardı, ekonomik kriz var bizde; baya
156 sizden daha kötü. O da tabi ki o da nasıl diyim
157 E: Etkili mi oldu?
158 F: Evet, o da etkili oldu. Biraz hızlı, buraya biraz hızlı gelmem için
159 etkili oldu ama kendi amacım ailemle, ne diyorsunuz?
160 E: Seyahat etmek mi? İstiyorsan İngilizce'de şey yapabilirsin, gelirse aklına
161 F: Umm
(.)
162 E: Ailenle birlikte mi-
163 **F: I separated with my family and start to live myself going to other**
164 **countries because of this I started from Turkey. At the first I came**
165 **here for two weeks. I start something some situation okay, it's okay for**
166 **me I can, I can come here for living short time, long time, I haven't long**
167 **term plan for myself. I just decided okay, it's me good for me and I**
168 **know the languages and stuff. It's okay for me. It's a neighbor of my**
169 **country's for the first step, it's okay. I will go to Turkey and after that I**
170 **can improve myself and I can go to other countries. It's my main reason.**
171 **After that, okay which way and how can I go stay there? In addition, I**
172 **love to study too, okay, it's a good opportunity for me. I can go and live**
173 **there and study there.**

- 145 E: *So, when did you come to Turkey?*
146 F: *Turkey one year, no it's been thirteen months*
147 E: *Thirteen months? How nice*
148 F: *Yes*
149 E: *And why did you move to Turkey? What was your purpose?*
150 F: *To study*

151 E: *Hmm mm*
 152 F: *and also my purpose was a little different. I chose Turkey to travel,*
 153 *to start traveling. I'll start from here, then going to other countries.*
 154 *Also umm how should I put it... There were a lot of political **problems,***
 155 *we have a financial crisis, quite worse than you. That, too,*
 156 *how should I put it*
 157 E: *was affective?*
 158 F: *Yes, that too was affective. A little faster, it made my moving here a little*
 159 *faster but my aims were with my family, how do you say it?*
 160 E: *Travel? If you want, you can do it in English, if you can recall it better*
 161 F: *Umm*
 162 E: *(.)*
 162 E: *Was it with your family-*
 163 F: **I separated with my family and start to live myself going to other**
 164 **countries because of this I started from Turkey. At the first I came**
 165 **here for two weeks. I start something some situation okay, it's okay for**
 166 **me I can, I can come here for living short time, long time, I haven't long**
 167 **term plan for myself. I just decided okay, it's me good for me and I**
 168 **know the languages and stuff. It's okay for me. It's a neighbor of my**
 169 **country's for the first step, it's okay. I will go to Turkey and after that I**
 170 **can improve myself and I can go to other countries. It's my main reason.**
 171 **After that, okay which way and how can I go stay there? In addition, I**
 172 **love to study too, okay, it's a good opportunity for me. I can go and live**
 173 **there and study there.**

Starting her account, Firuzeh presents as her reason for coming to Turkey *to study* (line 150). After her initial response to my question, she elaborates her answer by explaining that her purpose was *a little different* (line 152). This phrase shows us that Firuzeh is also aware that her mobility as a lifestyle and transnational migrant is very distinct from other types of immigrants, especially from the traditional ones. In lines 152 and 153, she explains that her underlying reason for coming to Turkey was actually travelling and Turkey was only the starting point for her prospective travels to other countries. In the following parts of the interview, too, she expresses her goal to live in other countries (line 170). Therefore, she is not just a traditional migrant who moves to another country out of necessity, but she is a transnational migrant, a traveler even, simply because she wants to travel.

However, still it cannot be said that this move to Turkey was out of nowhere. There were some factors that prompted her to live in another country as well. She lists these as the political and financial problems in Iran (lines 154 & 155) which

accelerated her moving process (line 158). Here, I should draw attention to how Firuzeh describes these factors only as accelerator for her movement. The political or financial turmoil in Iran always make themselves apparent in accounts of these three women but they cannot be taken as the main reason that led these women to move. They merely act as a facilitator for this mobility which is made clear in the continuing part of Firuzeh's accounts.

After listing her motivations, Firuzeh experiences difficulty in expressing herself in Turkish; she wants to say something about her family, but she somehow cannot (line 159), upon which I try to elicit *travel* since it seems related to the topic and I also suggest she switches to English if it would be easier for her to express herself that way (line 160). She takes her time thinking about what to say for a few seconds. When I try to form a question based on her accounts about her family, finally having pieced her answer together, Firuzeh switches to English (line 163) and starts explaining that she wanted to separate from her family and live in other countries and decided to start from Turkey. She clarifies that the reason why she chose specifically Turkey is because of the geographical closeness of Turkey and Iran and also the familiarity of Turkish (lines 168 & 169) since she also knows a different dialect of Turkish. As for finding a way to stay in Turkey, she resorts to education. She can *go and live there and study there*. Thus, education is merely a medium for her to reside in a country.

While talking about living in Turkey, her use of *seçtim*/I chose (line 9) in active voice, signifies an agentive action on Firuzeh's part, meaning that nobody or nothing else played a role in her decision-making. Throughout this account, she uses *I* as the subject of her sentences, positioning herself as the actor and agent of her own actions. In fact, in the following parts of the interview, she explained that even her

family did not know about her plans until she got the plane tickets. As the only daughter of a traditional Iranian family, Firuzeh was restricted a lot in her childhood and teenage years. She narrated how her family did not even allow her to travel to another city by herself. Therefore, by deciding to move to another country without sharing her plans with others signifies a reclaim of her agency from her family. By saying that she herself *separated* from her family (line 163), she also implies that she is the decision maker and actor of this move. She is the one that separated from her family in order to free herself from their wings. In the following part of her statement, Firuzeh explains how she planned her stay in Turkey by first coming here as a trial period and then after convincing herself, moving permanently. Yet, she also stresses that she did not have a long-term plan (line 166) from the beginning. As a courageous lifestyler, she only visited the destination country for a short-time and upon seeing the attraction of this country, she made her final decision. Yet, it should also be stressed again that Turkey is not Firuzeh's final destination; after improving herself (lines 170 & 171), she still plans to travel to other countries and have other adventures. For now, she resorts to studying to be able to stay in Turkey and then she will probably move to another country with another medium; be it study or work.

The neighboring position of Turkey with Iran is one of the primary attractions for all these women in their decision to live in Turkey. They can visit their family easily, and as Firuzeh also explains later, she used this benefit of the location as a way to convince her family as well. Another attraction for Firuzeh is language; she already knew Azeri which made it easier for her to learn the Istanbul dialect. Language is a highly useful tool for Firuzeh as a transnational migrant. As can be seen from the excerpt, too, she uses both English and Turkish in her interactions as

the situation calls which made her feel confident in moving to Turkey, according to her account, as well.

The geographic attraction of Turkey asserts itself in Soraya's accounts, too. The extract below is taken from my first interview with Soraya at their house. At the time of the interview, I did not know that Soraya and her husband had been in disputes for a long time. I only learned it after a few months into my fieldwork that Soraya had been resentful towards him since she got married at an early age and Arman did not allow her to continue her high education as he had promised he would. That day, we sat at their kitchen table in a separate room from Arman, drinking tea, and conducting the interview. Right when I asked her about her and her family's reasons for living in Turkey, she started telling me about the gender inequality in Iran.

Excerpt 14 [Interview, 26/10/2019]:

- 174 S: Çünkü Türkiye bize yakın. Hem bize yakın hem de böyle sıkıntıları yok,
175 devlet sıkıntıları böyle kapalı olmak zorunda. Böyle ayrı ayrı etmek kadın-erkek
176 şeyini hem de kadınlar İran'da çok şey yok. Her şey ıı erkek elinde.
177 O yüzden ben de çocuğum öyle olmasın diye, öyle bi yerde yaşamasın diye,
178 ıı ama çok da uzağa gitmeyim diye; ailemi görmek için zor oluyo.
179 Bura daha rahat geldi bize, daha iyi oluyo. Hem de havası çok güzel, orası havası
180 çok kirli olduğu için ben çocuğumun astım vardı
181 E: Hmm hmm
182 S: Tahran çok kirli olduğu için buraya taşındık. Tahran etrafına da gidebiliyorduk
183 ama oralarda çok imkanları az olduğu için beğenmiyorduk yani. Köylerde havalarda
184 iyi ama orda biz yaşamıyorduk yani
185 E: Şehrin içinde
186 S: Evet, yaşamak zor geliyordu o yüzden buraya taşınmayı tercih ettik.

- 174 S: *Because Turkey is close to us. And, to us, also it doesn't have such problems,*
175 *government problems like they have to be covered. To discriminate between men and*
176 *women and also women, in Iran they don't have a lot. Everything's umm in men's*
177 *possession. That's why, I, so that my child doesn't experience that, doesn't live in*
178 *such a place, umm but also, we don't move very far away; it would be difficult to see*
179 *my family. Here is more comfortable for us, it's better. And the air is also good,*
180 *because the air was polluted there, my daughter had asthma*
181 E: *Hmm hmm*
182 S: *We moved here since Tehran was very polluted. We could move somewhere around*
183 *Tehran, too but the facilities there were not so good, so we didn't like there. The air*
184 *in villages are clean but we didn't live there*
185 E: *In the city*
186 S: *Yes, it was difficult to live there so we chose to move here.*

Here, Soraya first suggests Turkey's closeness to Iran as a factor in their mobility. In seconds, she starts listing the underlying reasons behind their move: the oppressions in the country. Using modals of necessity such as *have to* (line 175), she implicitly points out that women do not have any agentive roles in their veiling which is one of the factors that led Soraya to another country. Turning a general question such as why she moved to Turkey into an account of gender inequality indicates how deeply Soraya feels about these matters. In Iran, *everything's in men's possession* (lines 176 & 177), meaning that Soraya did not have anything while living there; everything belonged to her husband. Therefore, her move to Turkey also represents her agentive role in gaining back her freedom piece by piece. While talking about how she does not want the same fate for her daughter, she uses the first person *I* (line 177); disassociating herself and her motives from her husband's. She is the one who wanted to move away from Iran to protect her daughter from oppression— and returning back to the geographic attraction of Turkey, she is the one that wanted to move here so that she can be close to her family (lines 178 & 179). Here, Soraya's agentive actions and motives make themselves visible whereas in the continuing part of her comments, she again speaks for the whole family: *Here is more comfortable for us* (line 179).

Soraya's utterances throughout lines 179-186 directly signal a mobility in search of better life conditions. She states that one other reason for their move was the air pollution in Iran and the effects of this pollution in their daughter's health. Although they could move to the rural parts of Tehran for cleaner air, they did not want to give up their comfort which would not have been possible in a rural area according to her (lines 182 & 183). Because the rural areas of Iran do not have enough resources and facilities as the cities, they decided to change their country of

residence rather than searching for other cities because either way, *it was difficult to live* in Iran for them (line 186).

Besides similarities between home and destination, which was the attraction of Turkey for Firuzeh, Laila also emphasizes the importance of being together with her fiancé and the key position of Turkey as a gateway. On our first interview, she explained how she and her fiancé had decided to move to another country to continue their graduate studies and the factors that affected their decision-making. At the time, I did not know anything about Laila's determined personality and her passion to improve herself, as she herself stressed many times, too. As I got to know her, I could see how she strived to build a successful career for herself and her boyfriend. It was very important for them to stay together because they started this migration adventure together and managed to create their new life by supporting one another both materially and spiritually. Moreover, they both had complementary skills and degrees which, in the following months, they even used to start a new job together. The following excerpt is taken from my second meeting with Laila where we talked about her migration to Turkey and her experiences to that day as a newcomer in the country.

Excerpt 15 [Interview, 18/11/2019]:

187 **L: After our economical situation, we tried to find umm a country which is more**
188 **accessible and have a s- close culture or close relationship somehow with Europe.**
189 **And to come together. It's very important for me to come together because most of**
190 **the Iranian I have seen for example one of partner get the visa and the other one**
191 **doesn't yeah, it's a problem, I think. Umm, we first of all we decided for Turkey.**
192 **And the second reason is that it was not affordable for me for apply for master's**
193 **degree for Europe. As you know they don't have so much scholarship for foreigners**
194 **and also for people with Humanities background.**

Different from the other two women, Laila chose Turkey as her destination not only because it is closer to her home but also because it has ties to the West. By *economical situation* (line 187), Laila means the economic turbulences and the

crushing effect of the sanctions on Iran. These sanctions restrict their connections to the rest of the world and lower their chances of academic progress. Therefore, it seems that the desire to have a relationship with the rest of the world motivated Laila and Adip to move to a more *accessible* (line 188) country as students who wanted to advance their academic development. Turkey is an *accessible* country not only because of its location but also because of its stance against the Iranian migrants, too. As Laila also stated, in many countries they may experience difficulty in acquiring a visa or scholarship. However, in Turkey, Iranians can even stay in the country for 3 months without a visa, which makes it a more desirable destination for them.

What is noticeable in Laila's speech is, how she almost always speaks collectively by using the first-person plural subject *we* (lines 187 & 191), including her fiancé into her accounts, and into her actions, as well. In fact, Adip plays a leading role in Laila's migration story. When he was an undergraduate student in Iran, he learned Turkish and even visited Turkey for a while. He made a lot of connections thanks to his Turkish instructor and developed a deep affection towards the country. As a descendant of Azeri Turks in Iran, he feels that Turkey and the Turkish culture is quite similar to his own home. Therefore, it is understandable that when they were planning to move to another country, he immediately suggested Turkey; a place where he feels like he is home. Thus, it can be implied that without Adip, Laila may not have moved to Turkey at all. In fact, in one of my meetings with both Laila and Adip, Adip himself indicated the same reasoning: "You alone... maybe you never decide to (...) I mean, do you think that you want to apply to Turkey, or..." which Laila also accepted.

Unlike Firuzeh, who made the decision of moving herself, Soraya and Laila had to take other people into account while making their decisions. As a married

woman with a child, Soraya was motivated by her family's comfort and future while leaving her country whereas Laila was influenced significantly by her partner's past experiences and suggestions. Therefore, it can be implied that external factors were also effective in the agentive actions of Soraya and Laila. In any case, it can be claimed that these women have all demonstrated agentive acts by changing their country of residence in order to improve their living conditions. Since their move to Turkey, they have done many things to improve their living conditions, among which education seems to hold the key position since it ties these women to the country strongly. Laila is a master's student and stays in Turkey to enrich her academic profile. Although not enrolled in a school, Firuzeh enrolls in different education centers to be able to get a student visa and extend her stay in the country; and finally, Soraya considers living in Turkey as an opportunity to start higher education. Thus, education can be regarded as a medium for these women to better their lives in various ways.

The excerpt below is from my ninth month of knowing Firuzeh. She called me and asked for help to apply for a Turkish university's master's program. She could not find anything on the school's website and wanted me to check it just in case too. As I was questioning what department I should search for, she told me that it does not matter since she was not intending to finish the program at all, since she will be moving to Germany:

Excerpt 16 [Phone call, 14/08/2020]:

- 195 F: Ya ben işlerime bakıyorum, yurtdışına gidicem. Ona **apply** yapıyorum. Yani
196 bi altı aydan sonra yani yani zaten, **okay**?
197 E: Hmm hmm
198 F: Onun için sadece buna kayıt yapacam, başlaycam yani daha ilk nasıl diyim
199 ilk altı aydan sonra bırakacam yani.
200 E: Hmm anladım
201 F: Sadece benim burda kalmak için yani ıı mecbur kayıt yapım yani. Bi de iş
202 konusunda da nasıl diyim iş konusunda da bize zaman zor yani bize iş konuş- umm
203 kart var ya mavi kart iş için
204 E: Evet

205 F: çok zaman sürür o gelsin. Bi de fazla para alıyorlar bizden mesela. Diyor sen kendin
206 sigortayı ödeyeceksin şimdi ()
207 E: Hmm hmm
208 F: O şimdi uygun değil yani

195 F: *I am just making some arrangements; I will go abroad. I am **applying** for it right
196 now. I mean, I'll go after around 6 months, **okay**?*
197 E: *Hmm hmm*
198 F: *That's why, I'll just enroll at this, I'll start it but how to say it after the first six
199 months I'll drop out.*
200 E: *Hmm, I got it.*
201 F: *I'm just enrolling out of umm necessity so that I can stay here. And about the job,
202 how shall I put it, about the job it's difficult for us, the time for us, job, talk-umm
203 you know the card, the blue card for work,*
204 E: *Yes*
205 F: *that takes too long to get. And they take too much money from us. For example, they
206 say you have to pay for the insurance now*
207 E: *Hmm hmm*
208 F: *It's not helpful right now, I mean.*

Firuzeh's accounts clearly show how she makes use of education as a way to ensure her stay in Turkey and nothing more. She tries to enroll in a higher education program only *out of necessity* (line 201), to guarantee a student visa which is received easier than a work permit which can take months to receive. Thus, this enrollment is not something she willed to act on, but something that was somehow forced on her by the bureaucratic system. However, Firuzeh's use of the subject *I* as the agent of these actions as in *I will go abroad* or *I'll drop out* (lines 195 & 199) clearly indicate that she still has an active role in this enrollment process. Even though the bureaucratic system restricted her ways for staying in Turkey, she still created a way for herself as the agent of her own migration story.

The fact that Firuzeh aims to move to another country and how she plans her move ahead only for a few months share a resemblance with her initial move to Turkey. As an adventurous individual, she aims to live in other countries and follows this transnational dream step by step by the help of education. In Germany, too, she plans to enroll in a program since finding a job will be more challenging for her due to the country's laws about language:

Excerpt 17 [Interaction, 04/09/2020]:

209 E: Sen nâpıcaksın orda okula mı gideceksin yoksa iş mi?
210 F: Okula evet okula gidicem iş B2 istiyor B2 biraz zor şimdilik (...)
211 iki tane üniversite buldum, dizayn konusunda

209 E: *What will you do there studying or working?*
210 F: *Studying, yes. You need B2 for work. B2 is a little difficult for now (...)*
211 *I found two universities on design*

A few weeks after her phone call to request my help with her enrollment, Firuzeh and I met in her neighborhood. During this meeting, she mentioned her moving plans to me only in passing and I could only inquire her about the issue very shortly. That is why the excerpt above presents a very short exchange about Firuzeh's moving plans. In line 209, I question what she intends to do when she moves to Germany; how she will manage to stay in the country. In the following line, Firuzeh explains that she will again resort to studying in order to ensure her residence in Germany, too because she will need at least Intermediate level German in order to be hired and receive a work permit. Her linguistic level, which was an advantage when she moved to Turkey, turns into a disadvantage in Germany where the conditions for employment are hindered not by bureaucratic procedures but by linguistic demands.

While Firuzeh utilizes education as an enabler for her mobility, Soraya regards it as a path to her freedom and self-dependance. In Iran, women can only work or study if their husbands allow them, therefore, without Arman's approval Soraya could not study or socialize at all. Now, in Turkey, she started studying for the university entrance exams and constantly states her passion for studying and how it is very important for a woman to be able to stand on her own feet.

Excerpt 18 [Interview, 25/10/2020]:

212 S: Tamam diyorlar mesela erkek para veriyor, kadın evde çalışıyor falan diye.
213 Hiç anlamı yok bence, artık bu dönemlerde yani, hiç şeyi yok. Kim demiş

214 kadın çamaşır yıkaması gerekiyor, evi süpürmesi gerekiyor falan diye?
215 Bu ortak işler, ikisi de olur. Hem de kadın öteki taraftan böyle bir şey,
216 böyle hakları almak istiyorsa çalışması gerek yani. Yoksa haklarını alamaz.
217 Eğer çalışmazsa, dışarda çalışmazsa, mecbur evde çalışacak. O zaman ağzı da
218 kapalı olacak ahahha. Hiçbir şey söyleyemez. Ama eğer haklarını almak istiyor,
219 çalışmak zorunda. Çalışmak zorunda, güçlü olmak zorunda. Güç de ne var,
220 parada var, derste var. Onlardan güç alacak yani. Başka türlü olamaz.

212 S: *They say okay man gives the money and woman works at home. There is no sense in*
213 *this I think, in these days I mean, it doesn't apply. Who says woman has to do the*
214 *laundry, sweep the house? These are shared duties; they can both do it. And if the*
215 *woman wants something like this from the other party, if she wants to gain these*
216 *rights, then she must work. Or she can't gain her rights. If he doesn't work, doesn't*
217 *work outside, she must work at home. Then, she'll have to keep her mouth shut haha*
218 *She can't complain. But if she wants to gain her rights, then she must work. She must*
219 *work; she must be powerful. Where does the power come from, it comes from money,*
220 *it comes from education. She'll gain her power from those. There is no other way.*

This excerpt is from an interview about gender roles and women rights in Iran. As she always had to ask money from her husband for everything and her husband never helped with housework, Soraya was already very sensitive about the woman's role in the household. At the time of this conversation, Soraya was complaining how Arman could not cater for and take care of himself. Therefore, during the interview, too, Soraya addressed this issue implicitly (lines 212-214). Her accounts reflect on how women are obliged to give away their agentive roles when they do not have self-reliance (lines 215 & 216).

Soraya believes that an understanding such as men work, and women do the housework is outdated and should not apply to today's societies and that both men and women must share the workload both outside and at home. However, since these outdated practices continue to be performed, women must take control of their lives themselves. Throughout her account, Soraya uses words such as *gerek* or *mecbur* meaning *must* or *have to* (e.g., line 216) to indicate that women are positioned as necessitated or obligated to act in certain ways and not complain about it by *keeping their mouth shut* unless they gain their own power (line 217). Even the act of gaining rights is stated with an obligation marker because it is something forced upon women

as a result of the society's conventions. By using *woman* or *she* as the actor of her sentences, Soraya generalizes her own situation on fellow women and aligns herself with them. This generalization also indicates that Soraya's experiences are a common fact among women, and they also feel a shared imposition among themselves to gain their freedom and power. For Soraya, this power is strongly related to being outside of the boundaries of home, away from her husband's shadow. Finding power in money and at school reflects everything Soraya ever wanted in life to be the agent of her actions. Without an education or a job, she cannot stand up to her husband; she must follow his wishes because he provides for the family. Without an allowance from Arman, Soraya cannot buy anything; therefore, she must be with him and she must cater for him without complaint. Studying represents a way to gain her power over her husband and be the agents of her own actions for Soraya. It is not just a medium to stay in Turkey; rather, it is a liberation that was enabled only by her move to Turkey.

The excerpts above demonstrate both shared and distinct aspects of these three women's move to Turkey. Although they may have been motivated to leave their country for different reasons such as travelling, academic pursuits, or the oppressions of the political regime; all these women have one thing in common: they all wanted to build a better life and a future for themselves in another country. What sets them apart from other groups of migrants is their trajectories in this mobility; as opposed to traditional migration, these women are not struggling to build a new life for themselves or leave their old life behind. Their only aspiration is to live their life as how they imagine it.

The mobility of my participants can also be described as a fight to own their actions against the government, their families, or the society. Starting from their

decision to move, each of these women have created new areas to act on or become the actors of their actions rather than being directed by external or obligating factors. Studying, in particular holds a significant place in the lives of Soraya, Firuzeh, and Laila while they strive to better their lives. Studying mediates their transnational mobility or enables them a way to act agentively against different constraints.

5.2 Reconstruction of agency as a gradual act

The previous chapter dealt with conflicts over agency between the participants of this study and different social and political parties in their native country. Their move to Turkey represented an attempt to reconstruct that agency away from the oppressive power figures in their lives. Although leaving their country means that they can live away from the shadow of the government and the society, they still do have ties to their past, especially to families and partners who also constrained their wills and actions. This section will be an examination of how these three women have strived to reconstruct their agency in a new destination against those constraints that they had faced in the past.

Upon their move to Turkey, the participants of this study acted in different ways to take back their free will and reconstruct their agentive selves. This regaining of agentive actions echoed in their discourse starting from our first meetings as well. In the course of the fieldwork, each of these three women recited countless times how they gained their freedom and agency back from the society or from their families step by step. Firuzeh, who was shamed and even declared faithless by her relatives because of her clothing, started to dress more freely in Turkey. When she was living under her family's roof, she could not go out without her parents' permission or could not even have a boyfriend because her family frowned upon

dating before marriage. When I compared her accounts of the past and her ongoing lifestyle in the time of the fieldwork, I could observe that she was running a life that was the opposite of how she had lived in Iran. Now, she was able to go out at night, walking around the streets or jogging by the seaside and seeing her friends whenever she wanted. She could dress in accordance with her own taste instead of her family's prompting and pressures. I never saw her in headscarf; she had abandoned hijab upon her arrival to Turkey. Nowadays, she was dressed in less conservative outfits; pairing shorts and sleeveless bodies instead of wearing long clothing. Even in our first meeting, Firuzeh described the discrepancy in her lifestyles by comparing how she used to live in Iran in the past and how she was now able to live in Turkey. She shared her experiences of being shamed by her circle because of her appearance which went beyond the concerns of hijab. Her relatives and even her friends criticized her style not only because of her liberality, which was discussed in the previous sections, but also because she did not follow the steps of the traditional Iranian women who were associated with their flamboyant fashion sense.

Excerpt 19 [Interaction, 11/12/2019]:

- 221 **F:** **I like here, I like Istanbul actually. I like here, I like living here because I**
 222 **experience new things. For example, umm at the least it's umm you can't imagine,**
 223 **we haven't umm how can I say Tur- when I came here, I start while seven months**
 224 **ago, I started running and I participated some marathons, but I couldn't run as well**
 225 **as here in Iran. Because of some...** Baskılar var orda,
 226 E: Hmm hmm
 227 F: kolay değil.
 228 E: Tabi ki
 229 F: Koşucu var, koşucu kadın var orda baya da var ama bir şeyler öyle kolay değil
 230 İran'da. Burda ben rahat geziyorum. Bi şey daha söyleyim. Mesela, ben söyledim
 231 süslemek çok var İran'da.
 232 E: Hmm hmm
 233 F: Ben burda gerçekten burda kendimi iyi hissettim. Burda kendimi güzel hissettim.
 234 İran'da hiç hissetmiyordum. Neden? Ben süslemek kendim çok sevmiyorum.
 235 Var şimdi, demiyorum yok ama fazlası hiç sevmiyorum. Mesela nasıl diyim,
 236 başımı boyatıyım, tırnaklarımı
 237 **E: Nail art ()**
 238 F: Onları çok sevmiyorum. Burda ilk defa diyorum, burda ilk defa. Hıh okay.
 239 **For example, maybe you wake up from the, wake up late, and you don't want to**
 240 **make any...**
 241 **E: You don't want to wear any makeup.**
 242 **F: Yeah, it's okay. Here... But in my country, no.**

243 **E:** (surprised) No?
244 **F:** Yeah. For example, they say, Oh, you're so ugly. () And it's our culture. Maybe
245 maybe it's your culture but because I'm foreigner, I don't feel this here. Yeah, We
246 judge more each other. (...) In Iran, yeah, if you haven't any makeup, my friends,
247 close friend: you look so bad, doesn't take any side for you. Please make little, make
248 makeups then go to work. I don't like, you know?
249 **E:** I understand that, yeah
250 **F:** For example, here my boyfriend, I had I have I have right now. I had a boyfriend
251 here böyle diyor, sen ne çirk- yapma ya ben sevmiyorum ama böyle gerçekten
252 diyorsun heheh. İran'da öyle değil, o kadar yapıyorlar ki.
253 **E:** Anladım.
254 **F:** Mesela diyorum, ilk defa ben burda, nasıl diyim, kendim umm oturup kendim
255 geziyorum, seviyorum. Rahatım yani. Ama İran'da o yok.
256 **E:** Kendin gibi olabiliyorsun?
257 **F:** Evet, rahatım burda.

221 **F:** I like here, I like Istanbul actually. I like here, I like living here because I
222 experience new things. For example, umm at the least it's umm you can't imagine,
223 we haven't umm how can I say Tur- when I came here, I start while seven months
224 ago, I started running and I participated some marathons, but I couldn't run as well
225 as here in Iran. Because of some... *There is oppression there,*
226 **E:** *Hmm hmm*
227 **F:** *It's not easy.*
228 **E:** *Of course*
229 **F:** *There are joggers, jogger women, there are a lot of them but some things are not that*
230 *easy in Iran. I can walk around easier here. Let me tell you one more thing.*
231 *For example, I told you, there is a lot of dressing up in Iran.*
232 **E:** *Hmm hmm*
233 **F:** *I, here, I really felt good about myself here. I felt beautiful here. In Iran, I never*
234 *felt it. Why? I don't like to dress up too much. I do it, I don't say that I don't*
235 *do it, but I don't like too much of it. For example, how to say it, dye my hair,*
236 *my nails...*
237 **E:** **Nail art?**
238 **F:** *I don't like those things. I'm telling you, here, here for the first time aha okay*
239 **For example, maybe you wake up from the wake up late, and you don't want to**
240 **make any...**
241 **E:** **You don't want to wear any makeup.**
242 **F:** **Yeah, it's okay. Here... But in my country, no.**
243 **E:** (surprised) No?
244 **F:** Yeah. For example, they say, Oh, you're so ugly. () And it's our culture. Maybe
245 maybe it's your culture but because I'm foreigner, I don't feel this here. Yeah, We
246 judge more each other. (...) In Iran, yeah, if you haven't any makeup, my friends,
247 close friend: you look so bad, doesn't take any side for you. Please make little, make
248 makeups then go to work. I don't like, you know?
249 **E:** I understand that, yeah
250 **F:** For example, here my boyfriend, I had I have I have right now. I had a boyfriend
251 here *he says that you look ugl- don't do it I don't like it but you really say that*
252 *hehehe it's not like that in Iran, they put on makeup so much*
253 **E:** *I understand*
254 **F:** *For example, I say that for the first time, I, here, how to say, myself umm sitting*
255 *myself walk around; I love it. I mean, I am comfortable. But I don't have that in Iran.*
256 **E:** *You can be yourself*
257 **F:** *Yes, I feel comfortable here.*

Before this conversation, Firuzeh first talked about how Turkey is similar to Iran in the sense that its economic and political stand is not always stable. After

discussing this topic for a while, she then starts explaining how, in contrast, she loves living in Istanbul because the city offers her new experiences. Throughout lines 221-225, she discusses how living in Istanbul has allowed her to start jogging *at the least* (line 222) and even participating in events like marathons in the past seven months that she has resided in the city. As she also states in lines 224 and 225, she could not do these activities in Iran as freely as she does in Istanbul. While she starts to explain her reasons for not being able to run freely in Iran, she takes some time to think about her sentences. After deciding that she could not explain it in English, she switches to Turkish and starts giving her reasons in line 225. Similar to Soraya's accounts in *Excerpt 14*, Firuzeh, too, shares the accounts of oppressions in her country even during the first meeting. As was presented in the previous sections, these accounts of oppressions and societal pressures continued to take place in Firuzeh's discourse in the following discussions throughout the fieldwork as well. In this conversation, after her first claim of oppressions in Iran (line 225), Firuzeh expands the topic by explaining how it is not easy for a woman to go jogging or act freely because *some things are not that easy in Iran* (lines 229 & 230). Later accounts demonstrate how much Firuzeh's life has changed since her move to Turkey. First of all, she can walk around the city more easily (line 230), meaning she can go running at a time and in clothes that she chooses herself without anybody else's intervention. The second change she mentions, starting with line 233, is all about how she has gained freedom in her appearance and how this gain has improved her self-esteem as well. She has finally started feeling good about herself and feeling beautiful without the critical stares and snarky comments of the others which were discussed in *Excerpt 7*. Even her discourse has gone through a change while she discusses her new life in Turkey. Now, it includes descriptions with more positive

connotations such as *comfortable* (line 257) or *easy* (line 230). Her accounts of the past are always transmitted with modals of obligation or sentences that put her into a passive position. Contrarily, her accounts of the new life positions her as the actor of her own actions as she states it with modals of ability. She decides whether to act in a certain way or not, and she acts on based on her own wills.

As she recounts in this excerpt (lines 233-236), Firuzeh does not like to dress up in a flashy style or wear excessive cosmetics unlike the overall Iranian women as she suggests. She informs me that she was criticized heavily in her country for not wearing makeup just because she did not want to or did not have the time to apply it (lines 238-248) while it is an accepted action in Turkey (line 242). The clarification request *No?* in line 243 reflects my surprise upon learning that others intervene with her makeup style and even bully her for it. Considering that this was my first meeting with Firuzeh, my surprise is also understandable since I had not expected her to share such striking and intimate details of her past with me. Upon my question, she continues to explain how she was judged and insulted by others and she links these conflicts to the Iranian culture. Whether this is a cultural issue or not does not seem to be clear, but it is certain that Firuzeh finally feels free from the constraints of criticism and reprimands from her close circle. In my opinion, although it is of course related, this freedom may not be solely related to her living in a different culture now. Rather, it may be also linked to her solitude, away from her close circle. Currently, she does not have anyone from her past who can criticize her; her family, friends, or relatives are not with her anymore. If they were, they might still find a way to reprimand her for her clothing perhaps. Therefore, her independence in her clothing and freedom from restraints is not only because she lives in different culture now, but because she lives alone in this new culture. She has gained independence

from her family and close circle, which has also enabled her to regain her agentive self. Of course, this regaining of agency free from her past constraints has enabled her to regain her self-esteem as well. She now feels more beautiful, more comfortable with herself because she does not live in her controlling culture and nor does she live with her controlling circle.

After talking about how she was forced to conform with her close circle's expectations of the ideal woman image, Firuzeh again changes the focus of the conversation to how she feels in Turkey now. Lines 250-252 demonstrate how she is also influenced by her current boyfriend's comments about her appearance. He does not like makeup on her and expresses his opinion to Firuzeh as well. Although this may be considered as a critical comment on her appearance too, Firuzeh does not seem to mind it, probably because they both think the same way about this issue. Firuzeh's final remarks about her appearance clearly demonstrates her newly gained freedom and confidence about her actions and appearance. *For the first time* in her life, she can feel comfortable and do whatever she wants which she does not *have in Iran* (lines 254-257). Firuzeh's remarks about her independence demonstrates how much she was pressured in the past that she now feels freer with even small gains in her life. In the past, she was forced to wear hijab and her actions were restricted either by the governmental laws or by her family members. Now, free from their bans and comments, she can act more independently, going anywhere anytime or dressing in accordance with her own fashion sense rather than religious constraints or societal expectations. Her new destination is a safe haven for her where she can be the agents of her own actions and decisions not only because it is less restrictive than her own homeland, but also because she left the oppressive people behind.

While Firuzeh's close circle was judgmental about her looks, Laila's family was more concerned about her safety and chastity, as she stated in a number of discussions. They were very protective of their daughters in line with their traditional lifestyle and they did not allow Laila to date anyone. Although her parents were restrictive towards their daughters' actions when they were living together, similarly with Firuzeh, Laila too has gained some independence once she left her family's roof. She started living with her boyfriend, which was not possible in her homeland, and wearing less conservatively as well. Despite that, her statements in the course of the fieldwork show that even though she is now away from her family and her traditional culture, she has continued to feel their influence on her life for a long while even in Turkey. Through the middle of the research, I learned from Laila that it took a long while for her to abandon her scarf completely. I had always assumed that she abandoned hijab altogether when she arrived in Turkey, but it turned out that she could not leave the habits and beliefs that had been imposed on her by her family that easily. One day, when I visited Laila and Adip in their workplace, I learned from Laila that her mother associated hijab with protection from trouble and harassments, a belief that Laila herself had also internalized. The excerpt below unfolds Laila's description of how she abandoned hijab and overcame her predisposed fears.

Excerpt 20 [Interaction, 12/09/2020]:

- 258 **A:** When I meet Laila, yeah okay Laila is I mean umm fashion you know wants to
 259 I mean to be fashion more but when she arrived in Turkey, she wanted to stay in
 260 same form but passing time, because of the family, because of the I think, I
 261 thought because of the family, but yeah you
 262 **L:** He means that when I arrived here, I had a hijab. I covered my head. But after
 263 a while, I just realized that because in Iran they, they just advertise that hijab like
 264 prevents you any for example umm
 265 **A:** Any, I mean, bad experience
 266 **L:** (.)
 267 **A:** Hart- hurts
 268 **L:** Hurts for example anybody hurts you, bad guy,
 269 **A:** You mean,
 270 **E:** (.)
 271 **L:** sexual harassment like these things.
 272 **A:** () or something

273 **L:** When I came here, I just try to search more () out, I just see that okay that lady
 274 doesn't have a hijab but nobody care about her nobody look, stares her for example
 275 mostly...
 276 **E:** Hmm hmm
 277 **L:** Mostly. (...) it doesn't have any function anymore
 (...)
 278 **E:** So for a while, you actually had your hijab
 279 **L:** For a year
 280 **A:** For a year
 281 **L:** I actually had my hijab but then after just
 282 **A:** Unveiling hijab, I mean you know
 283 **L:** One day I wake, I told him I don't want hijab anymore
 284 **A:** Okay, no problem but tell it to
 285 **L:** shocked hhehe
 286 **A:** Okay but
 287 **L:** (imitating Adip) Are you okay honey?

The excerpt above is one of the few examples where Adip was also included in our discussions. His existence affects the course of the interactions immensely since he also brings out a male perspective to Laila's accounts and experiences. In this excerpt too, right when we were talking about their relationship in Iran, he opens the discussion of how Laila decided to take off her headscarf rather than leaving this issue to her. Through lines 258-261, he tries to explain how Laila was hesitant to take off her hijab because of her family's influence, but somehow, he cannot express himself clearly. Realizing Adip's struggle and my confusion, Laila jumps in and elaborates on Adip's comments. I learn that when she first arrived at Turkey, she did not immediately take off her hijab, unlike Firuzeh and Soraya, because of the promotion of hijab in Iran as a protection from harm (lines 262-271), specifically from *sexual harassments* (line 271). Later exchanges also revealed that her mother also agrees with this belief as is indicated by Adip in line 260. In the remaining part of the conversation, as Laila unfolds her explanations, Adip chimes in repeatedly, completing her sentences or helping Laila to translate a certain word from Persian to English (lines 266-268). Although his actions seem like a helpful endeavor, at the time, they were a little interruptive as well because I could not focus on Laila's statements since I had to follow both of them as they spoke. Because she realizes that

too, Laila frequently tries to take her turn back so that she could recount her own story.

Contrary to what Laila was made to believe, upon her move to Turkey and her observation of the society, she realized that the absence of hijab does not actually attract any bad looks or actions from the others. Here, her stress on the word *mostly* twice (lines 275 & 277) is noticeable. She is aware that there are such cases in Turkey as well, but they are not as common and normalized as they were in Iran. Here in Turkey, *mostly, nobody cares about* women's dressing and stares at her, according to Laila's observations. Of course, realizing this must have made Laila more confident and less scared on the streets as well. For instance, I never saw her scared outside any time of the day even though they live in a very vibrant part of Istanbul. In time, before we even met, Laila finally seems to have found the courage to not only roam the streets freely, but she could do it without a scarf as well because it didn't *have any function anymore* (line 277). In Iran, she was wearing the scarf because she was imposed to do it, yet in Turkey, she resumed this merely as a habit and a continuation of her parents' impositions. The moment she realized that wearing a scarf did not have an effect or function on the protection of women, she could finally be free of its restriction and thus her family's influence as well.

In the remaining part of the conversation, after short intervals, I directed a statement to Laila asking for more details about the issue. She told me that she wore the hijab for a whole year before actually having the will to take it off. At this point, I learn from Adip that Laila's hijab was an *unveiling hijab* (line 281) which covered her hair but not her face. This shows that Laila already wanted to part from her hijab, only, she achieved this incrementally. Yet, after a while, as the aforementioned realization about the function of hijab dawned on her, her taking off her scarf

occurred at once as well. What can be noticed in Laila's expressions is how she always builds her sentences in the first person singular, signaling that she is the only performer of her actions now. She does not even refer to her family or the society at all. It appears that she has left all the oppressing powers and actors of her life in the past and become the only subject in her actions. Laila's utterance in line 283, *One day I wake, I told him I don't want hijab anymore*, clearly demonstrates Laila's regaining the control of her own life and decisions rather than leading her life under the intrusion of her family. She took control of her own actions and followed through with her decisions as soon as she made them, which according to Laila, even surprised Adip (lines 285 & 287).

For Firuzeh and Laila, the regaining of their agentive roles in their new destination occurred in the form of the absence of their hijab and the influence of the Sharia and their traditional lifestyles. They could finally abandon their old habits and selves and become the subject of their own lives. They no longer have to answer to their families or the laws for their dressing or relationships. For Soraya, this regain also includes a liberation from her husband's authority. As stated earlier, having married at an early age has barred Soraya's intentions to study and work as a result of her husband's discouragement. This discussion of early marriage has always found a space in Soraya's discourse along with her yearning for education and independence. In all my visits, I could observe that Soraya was always thinking about her past. Either intentionally or implicitly, she was always bringing the subject to how she could not study because of her early marriage and had to become a stay-at-home mother. She felt regret for not studying before marriage. Soraya explained to me that only recently did Arman let her study. I could observe the reason for his indulgence was their move to Turkey. Soraya's discussions of the past always

emphasized Arman's role as a power figure in the household and a lack of agency on her part. The topic of preparing for the university exams was only mentioned in her accounts of the present life in Turkey. In fact, in my introductory visit at their house, she told me that she had just began to prepare for the university entrance exams and she was searching for sources to help her prepare. Throughout my fieldwork, she continued to study for the university exam, and she even entered the exams of two schools as a trial to see whether she could actually pass. I could see that she was really motivated to prepare for the exam; everyday she was getting up at a very early hour to study before everyone woke up. She was always texting me to ask questions about the exam topics and opening up to me about her concerns about failing the test. I encouraged her to keep her morale up and answered all her questions as much as I could. Thus, a very big part of my interactions with Soraya was either about her resentment towards her early marriage and not being able to study or her endeavors for the upcoming university exams. In one of my visits through the end of my research, she again started discussing how she was restricted by her husband and how much she would have wanted to study when she got the chance. We were talking about how women have to fight for their rights or get the support of others in order to succeed in life because they were always constrained. Upon my comment on this issue, she exemplified her own case and narrated how she had to confront her husband in order to regain her rights.

Excerpt 21 [Interaction, 25/10/2020]:

- 288 E: Önü kesildiği için, kimse yardım etmediği için başaramayan da çok
289 kadın var
290 S: Evet, aynen benimki de zaten öyle oldu. Bu zamana kadar izin vermedi.
291 “Yok hayır izin vermiycem diye diyordu.” Sonra çokça şey yaptım. Çok kavga
292 ettim. Çok falan diye. Oo o kadar uğraştım uğraştım sonunda bi bana tamam dedi.
293 E: Çok çabaladın
294 S: Çok, evet.
295 E: O zaman sen de bu özgürlüğü elde edebilmek için...
296 S: O kadar dedim: sen bana izin vermedin, izin vermedin, izin vermedin diye hehehe.
297 Her seferinde şey oldu ben de diyordum onu. Hahahah. Ama ne güzel olurdu ki

298 daha erken, yirmi yaşında çocuk olmadan.

- 288 E: *There are a lot of women who couldn't succeed because they were inhibited or*
289 *weren't supported by anyone*
290 S: *Yes, that is exactly my case. He did not let me until now. "No, I won't allow you,"*
291 *he said. Then, I did lots of things. I fought a lot. A lot because. I tried really*
292 *really hard and finally he said okay.*
293 E: *You worked too hard.*
294 S: *A lot, yes.*
295 E: *Then, you, to gain this freedom...*
296 S: *I told him so many times you didn't let me, you didn't let me, you didn't let me*
297 *heheh. I told him every time. Hahahaha. But, it would have been so much better*
298 *if it were earlier, around age twenty, before I had a child.*

Upon my remark on women's being discouraged and inhibited in life, Soraya reflects on her own experiences with Arman. Her utterance *He did not let me until now* (line 290) signals Arman's agentive role in her life as the subject of Soraya's actions. She could not act on her wills because he did not provide that opportunity to her. Moreover, the expression *until now* also suggests how recently Soraya could gain this freedom. Starting from line 291, Soraya narrates how she has confronted her husband about this issue throughout their marriage. After this point, the subject of Soraya's sentences and actions becomes herself and she explains how she fought to gain back her liberty. She finally owns her own actions against her husband's restrictions who finally had to yield Soraya's authority back to her. Lines 296 and 297 demonstrate one more time how her resentment was reflected on her discourse. Over the years, she always reminded her husband how he discouraged her (i.e., *you didn't let me* in line 296), somehow, she used her discourse as a way to fight Arman's authority and reclaim her own.

Although Soraya was oppressed throughout her marriage, even this act of fighting Arman with her words show how she did not surrender her freedom to him. Throughout the years, she challenged him until he finally submitted to her wills and determination. It took years for Soraya to regain her agentive role and achieve her

dreams but finally, only recently, she has reclaimed her independence and her dreams.

This section was an overview of how their move to Turkey enabled the participants of this study to reclaim their agency from the constraints in their past. Since their migration, they have acted in various ways to confront their past and overcome the restrictions enforced on them. Firuzeh and Laila could finally leave their families' overprotective roof and the shadow of the Sharia oppression. Life in Turkey has enabled them to abandon their hijab and to become the subjects of their own actions without the public oppression. Both these women could build their romantic relationships openly without feeling the impositions of the Guidance Patrol or their parents' traditions. While Soraya could also take off her hijab and dress freely in Turkey as stated in the previous sections, she also had to overcome her husband's control over her life.

5.3 Language learning as a restricting and emancipating action

Sections 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrated how the participants of this study facilitated their migration to Turkey as an act of regaining their independence from external forces. In their new destination, they have improved their lives in various ways, from breaking their ties with the Sharia impositions to limiting the domestic pressures imposed on them. As stated in Section 5.1, while bettering their lives and assuming more agentive roles in a new country, they used education as a mediator as well. They enrolled in schools to obtain a student visa and be able to stay in the country or to gain their independence in their household as was the case for Soraya. Living in a foreign country and creating new roles and ties for themselves have raised a need for these women to communicate in different languages, too. Because Turkey is an

officially monolingual country and because these women do not live in a particularly close-knitted Iranian communities in Istanbul, they have had to resort to languages other than Persian in order to conduct their affairs, which has led to new concerns for the agentive actions for these women, too.

In Iran, all these women spoke Persian both at home and outside in order to conduct all their affairs. Although Soraya and Firuzeh come from Turkish background, living in Tehran influenced them to speak monolingually in Persian; despite the multilingual setting of the country and the city in particular, society uses Persian as lingua franca to be able to communicate among different groups. Since Firuzeh grew up as a bilingual speaker of Persian and Azeri, her family abandoned the latter in time, yet she still remembers and benefits from Azeri. Soraya, on the other hand, had never learned her region's Turkish dialect. Laila is from a Persian descent and grew up as a monolingual speaker and learned English in the later years. In addition to their native languages, these women have brought various languages in their repertoires and have used these languages in distinct ways in their new country of residence, too. They all know English in different levels and have been learning Turkish, too. All these languages have helped these women better their new lives and reconstruct their agency in their new home. Throughout the study, I could observe their endeavors to improve their linguistic competence in different languages and benefit from their linguistic repertoires to create new spaces for themselves to act on.

Firuzeh explained to me that she could learn Turkish relatively easily thanks to her background in Azeri and Persian. Because these two languages share commonalities with Turkish, either in the syntactic or lexical levels, she could transfer her knowledge and improve her Turkish very fast. I met separately with Firuzeh and Laila around the same time and could see what Firuzeh meant by faster;

Laila's knowledge in Turkish was very limited whereas Firuzeh was speaking very competently. Because I was impressed with her level of Turkish, I wanted to inquire more about this issue and directed some questions to her regarding her use of the language. Her remarks showed me how the mostly-monolingual context of Turkey had influenced Firuzeh's language use in her new destination as a way to socialize with the local community and to conduct her businesses.

Excerpt 22 [Interview, 12/12/2019]:

- 299 **E: So, you think there's some similarities and this makes it easy for you. And do you**
300 **use Turkish in your daily lifestyle then?**
- 301 **F: Yeah, yeah, everywhere I speak Turkish because, because I umm, as you know**
302 **Turkish people don't like to talk English and I think all of you, your English level**
303 **is good but you're afraid to talk English because of this thing it makes me trouble**
304 **if you want- if I want to talk English with all people**
- 305 **E: Hmm hmm**
- 306 **F: Sometimes you get exhausted, you know English, but you don't want to.**
- 307 **E: Yeah, that's the case the Turkey even though I mean many people don't know it and**
308 **the ones that know it. They don't want to speak.**
- 309 **F: Yeah, yeah... They don't want to speak English and because this, I prefer to talk**
310 **Turkish**
(...)
- 311 E: Ama sen böyle gayet hani Türkçeyi de öğrenmişsin, İngilizceyi de öğrenmişsin.
312 Öyle daha rahat olmuştur senin için.
- 313 F: Benim kursum üniversitede Türkçe dili.
- 314 E: Hmm hmm
- 315 F: Mesela ben Türkçe konuşmaya da mecbur kaldım. Bi de mesela benim genelde,
316 genelde Türkçe konuşuyorum ama akademik Türkçe çok değişik, farklı
- 317 E: Evet
- 318 F: Mesela ilk aylarda ben gerçekten böyle değildim. Ne diyorlar bunlar üniversitede
319 bir sürü mesela teknolojiyle ilgili çok bir şeyler nasıl diyim çok değişik şeyle
320 ilgili benle konuşuyorlar,
- 321 E: Evet
- 322 F: akademik konuşuyor, ben böyleyim. Hiç anlamıyorum. İlk haftalarda gerçekten
323 hiç anlamıyordum. Bazı zamanlar anlamıyordum, kendim yazıyordum İngilizcesine
324 bakıyordum internetten ne yazmış mesela öyle de yapıyordum. Ama genel
325 konuşmakta tabi ki Türkçe konuşsan çok hızlı işin ileri gidecek. Çünkü herkes
326 İngilizce bilmiyor.
- 299 **E: So, you think there's some similarities and this makes it easy for you. And do you**
300 **use Turkish in your daily lifestyle then?**
- 301 **F: Yeah yeah, everywhere I speak Turkish because, because I umm, as you know**
302 **Turkish people don't like to talk English and I think all of you, your English level**
303 **is good but you're afraid to talk English because of this thing it makes me trouble**
304 **if you want- if I want to talk English with all people**
- 305 **E: Hmm hmm**
- 306 **F: Sometimes you get exhausted, you know English, but you don't want to.**
- 307 **E: Yeah, that's the case in Turkey, even though, I mean, many people don't know it and**
308 **the ones that know it. They don't want to speak.**
- 309 **F: Yeah, yeah... They don't want to speak English and because this, I prefer to talk**
310 **Turkish**
(...)

311 E: *But you, like, really, I mean learnt Turkish, and you learnt English. It must*
 312 *have been easier for you.*
 313 F: *My course at the university in in Turkish.*
 314 E: *Hmm hmm*
 315 F: *For example, I was forced to speak Turkish. And also, I usually, usually speak*
 316 *Turkish, but academic Turkish is very distinct, different.*
 317 E: *Yes*
 318 F: *For example, in the first months, I really wasn't like this. What they say at the*
 319 *university, for example they speak to me a lot about technology, how to say it*
 320 *about a lot of different things,*
 321 E: *Yes*
 322 F: *They speak academically and I'm like this. I don't understand anything. I really*
 323 *understood nothing in the first weeks. Sometimes, I didn't understand it and I was*
 324 *writing it myself and looking up for its English online to see what is written, I was*
 325 *doing things like this. But speaking in general Turkish, of course, you can conduct*
 326 *your business faster if you speak Turkish. Because not everyone knows English.*

Firuzeh's statements show that even her language use is directly related to agency; it is not shaped by her desires only, rather she has to shape her language use based on the society she currently lives in. Her observation that *Turkish people don't like to talk English* has led her to exercise Turkish more than English everywhere in her life (lines 301 & 302). This also demonstrates that leaving her past constraints have presented new agentive concerns for Firuzeh. Now, she has to adapt to the linguistic practices of her surroundings in order to handle her affairs. This can be difficult considering English is not practiced enough in a majority of contexts in Turkey even though some individuals know the language, which Firuzeh seems to have realized as well according to her remarks in lines 302 and 303. Even if she wants to speak English, it can be seen that the control or the right to choose the medium of interaction does not completely belong to Firuzeh. Her comments in line 306 *you know English, but you don't want to*, indicates that when it comes to her interactions, other parties are the agents of their exchanges. They decide in which languages the conversation will pursue and if they do not want to speak English, Firuzeh has to conform to their choice, too. This of course creates many problems for an immigrant; she may not finish her errands as easily or may experience problems due to misunderstandings. I remember that many times, even though she is fluent in

Turkish, Firuzeh asked me to handle some issues because of my native status. I searched university websites for MA programs or helped her get a hospital appointment. As she also states in this excerpt (line 306), she repeated many times how exhausting it was to speak Turkish at times when she could handle her problem in English more easily. Of course, as she did not have a lot of people around her to talk in Persian, she was also missing her native language as well. At one time, she complained about how much she was frustrated with talking in Turkish with her then-boyfriend. Although her language use is generally determined by her interlocutors' knowledge or willingness to speak English, Firuzeh still has some control over her choice as she also states in lines 309 and 320. It can be seen that Firuzeh's control over her language use is generally context-dependent. She *prefers* to speak Turkish in daily life while using general Turkish since it helps her handle her business more easily (lines 325 & 326). Contrarily, at school for example, she does not have the agency to switch another language as the medium of instruction is Turkish (lines 313-316). Because of the academic language choice of the school, she was *forced to speak Turkish*, an obligation she had to follow at school, but not in her daily life. Firuzeh recounts some problems she encountered at school a result of the language requirement of the institution. Because academic Turkish was more complicated for her, she experienced difficulty in following the lectures. Yet, as discussed in Section 4.3, all obligations come with an act of emancipation or strategies to elude them. Here, too as she narrates, Firuzeh used English translation as a way to follow and understand the lectures (lines 322-325).

This excerpt also demonstrates the effect of purpose in learning a language. While Firuzeh focused on general Turkish and became competent in it, she faced challenges in academic Turkish because she had not studied it before. In fact, in a

discussion about her intentions to learn Spanish, she explained this issue in detail. I learned that she had learned English for academic purposes but for Turkish or Spanish, she was more inclined to study and improve her daily language skills as that would help her adapt to society more. Thus, for Firuzeh, language learning and practice is highly influenced by her surroundings and her objectives, which influences her will and agency as well. She practices Turkish because it is the easiest way to communicate with the Turkish society and handle her errands.

As opposed to Firuzeh, who wanted to conduct her interactions generally in Turkish, Laila was always very hesitant and distant towards the language. When I first met her, she was not very optimistic about building a future in Turkey, she was hoping to move to the West after her MA. During that time, she expressed her reluctance to integrate into the society because she was not planning to stay long in the country. She did not want to make friends or connections and despite the fact that she, too, experienced problems because of her language barrier, she still did not want to practice any Turkish. Of course, Laila was luckier than Firuzeh in the sense that she had her boyfriend Adip who was almost native-like in Turkish. On many occasions, she reported that she was not learning Turkish since she could count on Adip to help her. While this may seem like an advantage on her part, it also made her dependent on Adip. Without him, she could not act on anything, especially on issues related to official paperwork. She needed his help even in the marketplace, which did not seem compatible with her self-sufficient nature. I learned how Adip even had to rush to another city to help Laila enroll in a short-term university program because she could not communicate with the staff in her first days in Turkey.

Excerpt 23 [Interaction, 09/11/2019]:

327 **L: When I arrived in Turkey, the problem is that umm they use English only**
328 **in classes, really only in classes. In the university staff, they cannot talk in**
329 **English. Even in the registration office, you know you have some internationals,**

330 E: Yeah
 331 L: you open up to them. You know I paid eight hundred dollars for the university,
 332 eight hundred dollars and they cannot speak English with me. It's so silly...
 333 E: yeah, and it's one of the best universities in Turkey and you know the medium of
 334 teaching is in English so you would expect of course to
 335 L: Yeah, I shocked, I really shocked... I expected when you are talking, I imagined...
 336 okay, this university is taught in English so they can speak English.
 337 E: Hheh
 338 L: Normally it should. But when I faced, I really shocked, I really shocked. I called
 339 Adip: "Come, come from Istanbul. I cannot register. Just come" Because I panicked.
 340 E: Of course
 341 F: I cannot do anything. I cannot understand anyone.
 342 E: In the end, how did you register?
 343 F: He helped me.
 344 E: He helped? He came...
 345 F: He came from Istanbul heheh. I only had five days and in the first three days,
 346 I struggled with the... I cannot understand

Lines 327-338 describe Laila's surprise upon realizing how little Turkish people use English even in a surrounding with English speaking community and international students. As her observations also indicate, Turkish people use English only when necessary, such as during lessons, and speak strictly in Turkish in other contexts (lines 327 & 328). As she criticizes the staff for not practicing English, I also supported her because, as Laila also suggested, it was an international university and was expected to meet the expectations. Laila's expectation that the staff *normally should* speak English (lines 329, 336, and 338), also highlights the status of English as a lingua franca. If they *open up to* international students, then they should speak English in order to communicate with them. A similar expectation could be seen in Firuzeh's comments as well. She, too, takes it for granted that people should speak a common foreign language, i.e., English. As newcomers to the country, their expectation seems to have been able to interact in this lingua franca without any difficulty in all areas of life, whether it be daily interactions, academic ones, or formal ones. This anecdote shows that her reluctance to learn Turkish may hinder or restrict her capacity to fulfill her tasks efficiently when she has to contact people for those tasks. The remaining part of the excerpt also demonstrates Laila's dependence

on her boyfriend in order to conduct her affairs because she *cannot do anything* (line 341) without his help with Turkish. She even called him to where she was from Istanbul in order to solve her problems with registration, which raises the question what she would do if Adip was not in the country with her. This situation also supports Laila's comments about migrating together with Adip in *Excerpt 15*, that it is very important for her to come together (line 189). Moving together enables them to support one another in different ways, such as helping with their communicative troubles.

The vitality of being together showed itself for Laila at other times as well, especially when there was a possibility that Adip would have to return to Iran. It was in January 2020, when Laila and I improved our rapport and started meeting regularly. This meeting revolved around Laila's concern with the new visa regulation that was announced by the Turkish government. Although it was a speculation at the time, the Turkish government was aiming to restrict visa regulations for the Iranians and to limit the renewal of tourism visas. Because Adip did not have a work permit or a student visa at the time, Laila was concerned that he might get deported. She was worried that they would have to be separated. Moreover, she was also thinking about what she would do without Adip in Turkey. Istanbul was an expensive city, and she would not have been able to afford expenses by herself. Without Adip and his competence in Turkish, Laila would not have been able to handle her affairs or contact officials when necessary. I remember how worried and afraid she sounded when talking about this issue and how much I strived to comfort her. I reminded her that it was a low possibility for this regulation to pass and in the off chance that it happened, I was always ready to help her with Turkish or any other thing that I might be helpful with. My fieldnotes from that day also reflects Laila's distress:

Excerpt 24 [Fieldnotes, 05/01/2020]:

Another thing that was stressing Laila was that Adip's visa was expiring, and they did not know what to do. Because the Turkish Government is working on a new regulation that will hinder immigrants from renewing their tourist visas to remain in the country, Laila is worried that Adip may not be able to renew his visa and get have to get deported. Because he left his job and he is not a student, he cannot get a work permit or a student visa. Thus, his only option was to renew his touristic visa which may be impossible now. Adip is Laila's only connection to the Turkish world because she depends on his Turkish to handle everything. She is worried that if Adip gets reported, she will not have anyone to help her when she needs to speak Turkish or that she will not be able to pay the rent by herself.

Laila's experiences with the registrar's office and my notes suggest that although Laila exercises agency when she decides not to learn Turkish, this act of agency also restricts her in a way. She cannot communicate with others and this hinders her a lot, especially during serious matters. Because she refuses to make friends, she does not have anyone but Adip to help her in case of a problem which also makes her co-dependent on her boyfriend. Adip's existence is a relief for Laila because it takes away the necessity for her to practice Turkish, yet it also handicaps her agentive role without realizing. She must depend on him to carry out tasks that require interaction, otherwise she cannot do act herself.

While Laila was not willing to spend time on learning Turkish, Soraya was very eager to improve her communicative skills in the language, just like Firuzeh. Because she was not very proficient in English and because she helped her daughter with her homework, Soraya has improved her Turkish very fast. At the time of the fieldwork, she was enrolled at a Turkish course and was at B2 level. Her aim was to complete the course with at least C1 level because she wanted to speak the language properly. Even when she was preparing for the university exam, she was studying in Turkish, reading the textbooks and solving tests in her second language. On many occasions, she asked me questions about Turkish grammar, and she also had the highest score at her course. I could see that excelling at Turkish course had also motivated Soraya to study more. She was always proud to announce that when she

studied, she could achieve her goals easily. When asked how she learned Turkish before enrolling the course recently, Soraya always claimed that she did not spend much effort on it. Apparently, she just listened to the others and also learned the language while helping Ester with her homework. While Soraya wanted to improve her Turkish and enroll at a university, her husband Arman was more interested in improving his already more than mid-level English. Whenever I visited their house, I would see Arman sitting at the dinner table, his laptop in front of him, studying English vocabulary. He had a very elaborate system to practice vocabulary and sentence structure cross-linguistically. He would translate the words and sentences in English to Persian and Turkish in order to improve both of his foreign languages. Arman would reflect his enthusiasm to the family as well; he would always talk about the importance of learning English in a global world and would encourage Soraya and Ester to practice it as well. During a visit for a lunch appointment, he inquired my experiences with learning English while Soraya was in the kitchen. Upon her entrance to the living room, he changed the subject to how it would be very beneficial for Soraya to study English just like him. I could see that this was another tension between them; he was imposing this idea on her while she refused his imposition with her own reasons. This tension made me realize that Soraya's language learning experience was also agency-related since the decision of learning one language did not depend on her wills only, but it was an act of resisting to her husband's persistency as well. My notes from that day reveal the tension about the linguistic aspirations of the couple:

Excerpt 25 [Fieldnotes, 27/12/2019]:

When Soraya returned from the kitchen, Arman started talking about her English and commented that although Soraya learns languages fast, she does not have the confidence to speak. I felt that Arman tries to convince Soraya to speak English as well, but Soraya just wants to focus on the university exam. They tossed the issue back and forth for a while. Arman suggested she could practice English while cooking and Soraya complained that she was not as free as him because of housework, errands,

Ester, and her exam. These discussions were all in English because Arman wanted to practice it with me, and Soraya was competent enough to follow the conversation. She added that she can focus on English after she starts college.

Arman considers English as a gateway to the rest of the world; for him, if you know English, you can travel, find a job, communicate with people more easily. Yet the problem is that he does not let Soraya do these. Even if Soraya knows English, she would not be able to work anywhere without a degree. That is why Soraya is focused on passing the exam and starting a university rather than studying a foreign language. Compared with the past, she does not immediately accept Arman's actions or rules, rather, she argues against his propositions with her own reasons. She insistently acts against his wish on this issue and displays her own power. When Arman suggests she can even practice English while cooking, she addresses the contrast in their positions. Arman does not do any house chores or even help Soraya. She must handle all the domestic tasks alongside the outside chores. She finally voices her own wishes and objections more clearly and confidently against her husband which also shows how much more agentive role she has assumed in the house.

Though Soraya did not consider studying English at the time, if she were to go to college, she would have to learn it even more because she was thinking about studying English language teaching. I did not know whether she would pass the exam or whether Arman would allow her to actually enroll, but I always encouraged Soraya and helped her during her preparation process. She always asked me about the college life, the exam, how to become a teacher in Turkey, etc. In a similar discussion, I reminded her that even if she started the school, she would actually need to learn English and she should be even prepared for the Preparatory school. This led her to inquire about the Preparatory programs and I shared my knowledge

with her. I was also wondering myself why she wanted to study ELT when she did not even want to study English. Finally, getting a chance, I directed my question to Soraya, and she started listing her reasons to me.

Excerpt 26 [Interaction, 12/02/2020]:

- 347 E: İngilizce öğretmeni olman nerden çıktı Soraya?
348 S: Hem bi baktım İngilizce bilmeyen şimdi öyle düşünüyor hiçbir şey bilmiyor gibi. Her
349 şeyi okumak istiyorsun İngilizce, internette araştırma yapıyorsun İngilizce. Bu çok
350 şey oldu hem de Türkiye’de çok umm İngilizce öğretmeni yok. Ben, yabancılar daha
351 çabuk işleme başlayabiliyorlar diye gördüm. Arkadaşım, kaç tane arkadaşım var.
352 Hemen gelince şey yapabildiler, iş bulabildiler İngilizce öğretmeni. Hem de onlar
353 çok da, bazıları hiç iyi de değildiler.
354 E: Hmm hmm
355 S: O kadar şey de değildi ama şey kabul ettiler onları. O yüzden hem de umm bi şey
356 kitap bakınca mesela İngilizce şey seviyorum okumayı. O yüzden. Şey oldu.
357 E: İngilizce’yi de seviyorsun?
358 S: İngilizce’yi seviyorum değil. Umm önemli olduğu için öğrenmek istiyorum
359 E: Hmm
360 S: Ama her şeyi girersen tabi yavaş yavaş yani şimdi bana söylersen Türkçe seviyorsun,
361 o kadar değil ama yavaş yavaş. Tam öğreniyor seviyor. İlerliyor seviyor yani.
362 Mesela ben umm sevmek, sevmemle alakalı okumak istersem psikolog hehhe
363 okumak istiyorum. Ama psikolog da zaten yine de İngilizce’ye bağlı.
364 E: Hmm hmm
365 S: Eğer yeni şeyde okumak istiyorsun, yine İngilizce araştırman gerekiyor. Yani
366 İngilizce bilmeden sadece Farsça okumak kitabı, kitaplar okursan hiçbir şey
367 öğrenmezsin zaten. Doktorluk okumak zaten yine İngilizce’ye bağlı. Her şey
368 İngilizce’ye bağlı.
369 E: O yüzden sen de en azından bunu biliyim diye düşünüyorsun
370 S: Evet, öyle yani, İngilizce öğrensem zaten kendim umm kitapları okuyabilirim. Yani
371 umm psikolog kitapları alıp kendim okuyabilirim.
372 E: Hmm
373 S: Yani Farsça okuyorum ama o kadar her şey, bence tam yazmıyorlar her şeyi,
374 sansürlüyorlar her şeyi. O yüzden mesela kitap alıyorsun, büyük bir psikolog ama
375 her şeyi sansür olmuş. İstedığı şeyleri yazmışlar.
376 E: Anladım
377 S: Öyle. O zaman her şey bağlı oluyor, yani mecbur heheh

- 347 E: *What made you want to become an English teacher, Soraya?*
348 S: *I saw that someone who doesn't know English is considered to know nothing.*
349 *Everything you want to read is in English, you search on the Internet, it is in.*
350 *English This made a lot, also there aren't umm a lot of English teachers in Turkey.*
351 *I saw that foreigners can find a job faster. My friends, I have a few friends. Upon*
352 *their arrival they could easily find a job as English teacher. And they, they weren't*
353 *even good at it.*
354 E: *Hmm hmm*
355 S: *It wasn't a lot, but they were hired. That's why and umm something I like for*
356 *example reading English. That's why. It did*
357 E: *So, you love English, too?*
358 S: *It's not like I love English. Umm I want to learn it because it has importance.*
359 E: *Hmm*
360 S: *But of course, once you start, everything slowly, I mean, if you tell me, you love*
361 *Turkish, not that much but gradually. When you get better at it, you like it I mean.*
362 *For example, me umm love, if I want to study something based on my love,*
363 *psychologist hehe I'd love to study that. But psychology depends on English too.*

364 E: *Hmm hmm*
 365 S: *If you want to read something new, you still need to search it in English. I mean,*
 366 *reading the book just in Persian without knowing English, if you read books that*
 367 *way, you won't learn anything. Medicine also depends on English. Everything*
 368 *depends on English.*
 369 E: *So, you think I should at least know this*
 370 S: *Yes, I do, if I learn English umm I can already read books. I mean, umm I can get*
 371 *psychology books and read them myself.*
 372 E: *Hmm*
 373 S: *I mean I read in Persian but not everything, I think they don't write everything, they*
 374 *cancel everything. That's why for example you buy a book, it's prominent*
 375 *psychologist but everything's censored. They wrote whatever they wanted.*
 376 E: *I understand*
 377 S: *That's the case. So, everything depends on it, I mean, necessarily heheh*

Soraya's comments on English directly signals the status of English as a lingua franca, similarly to Firuzeh and Laila. However, she elaborates on the topic even more, listing how English can be helpful for a person. Her comment *someone who doesn't know English is considered to know nothing* (line 348), clearly emphasizes the status of the language as a mediator to handle everything in life. Without the knowledge of English, you cannot reach other information, either. Everything one can search for is transmitted in English (line 349) and if you do not speak the language, then you cannot transfer your knowledge, either. Another advantage of English, based on Soraya's observations, is that English speakers can find jobs more easily. Especially for foreigners, it is a more accessible way to teach English even though their level is not very good (lines 350-353). Because in Turkey, any person from a different nationality is generally accepted or promoted as a native speaker of English, foreigners in general are more likely to find a job in schools, which Soraya also realized. While explaining this issue, Soraya's language use in the modals of ability as in *daha çabuk işleme başlayabiliyorlar/ foreigners can find a job faster* (line 351) indicates how the knowledge of English enables these people to act more easily. They can find a job faster than someone who does not know English because knowledge of English is a demanded and promoted resource for them. Based on her utterances in line 356, I interpret that she loves English as well, which she

contradicts and explains that the reason she learns English is not out of personal interest but out of necessity. She wants to learn it because *it has importance* (line 358). Her reasoning in lines 360 and 361 also shows how accomplishment motivates Soraya to act more on a subject; *when you get better at it, you like it* (line 361).

It can also be seen that Soraya's language learning experiences are strictly dependent on external factors rather than her own wills. Therefore, her agency is shaped not based on her interests, but based on what may enhance her chances in the world. She can learn more information with English or act more independently in Turkey thanks to her knowledge in Turkish. In their first months in Istanbul, they had to depend on Mr. Faysal with all the necessary affairs. Even in the market, they had to consult to him without action on buying something. Now, she can even go to the bank herself and handle most of her business alone without help. Therefore, while her language learning does not arise from her own agentic decisions, knowing these languages do reveal an agentic persona in Soraya. As she explains in the following part of the excerpt, she may not be interested in English, but knowing English can enable her to learn more about her interest as well. Throughout lines 362-377, she recites that in order to learn about her field of interest, psychology, she still needs English because everything is censored in Persian. They may omit some information or even change it in accordance with the Sharia nature of the country. This censorship also demonstrates how the government can constraint the citizens not only in religious or political issues but even in more specific areas of life. They cannot even reach correct knowledge or true education because of the government's restrictions.

Soraya's last remark *o zaman her şey bağlı oluyor, yani mecbur / so, everything depends on it, I mean, necessarily* (line 377) somehow summarizes the

language learning experiences of all these three women; even when they have agency, they learn these languages out of necessity. They act on learning these languages not only out of free will, but because these languages will open up new fields to act agentively for them. Firuzeh learns Turkish because it enables her to handle everything more easily in a mostly monolingual country. Laila's refusal to learn Turkish handicaps her chance to act by herself and makes her dependent on others to solve her problems. For Soraya, learning Turkish enables her to study for the university exams and reach her independence from her husband. English, on the other hand, allows Soraya to reach information that she would have been able to in Persian. While Turkish helps these women in their daily interactions mostly, they need it for official or academic settings as well, in which case they may still encounter difficulties. As for English, all of the participants of this study see English as a lingua franca that may help them in a new country of residence or to reach information. As newcomers to a foreign country, they make use of their linguistic repertoire as much as they can either by transferring the knowledge of their native languages to learn Turkish or trying to get by using one of their foreign languages, English or Turkish, context-dependently to solve their problems and handle their affairs.

This chapter was an overview of the current agentive struggles of my participants in their new destination. I discussed how their search for a better life urged these women to act and migrate to another country and how this migration movement have enabled these women to abandon their past restrictions. Although the majority of their oppressors were left behind in Iran, these women still struggled to embrace and reveal their agentive selves in various ways. In their endeavor to assume an agentive identity and better their lives, their linguistic repertoire was also

as effective as other enabling or restricting factors. While having the knowledge of the native language in the country enabled them to handle their businesses more easily and open new areas for themselves, lacking this knowledge or the fact that the natives are not willing to engage in another shared language led these women to strive to complete their affairs and reach their goals, impeding their agentive improvement. In the next chapter, I aim to reflect on the future plans of these women to better their lives and whether they can express their agency while planning and building their future as lifestyle immigrants and how they deal with restricting powers while constructing their new lives.

CHAPTER 6

WOMEN AS AGENTS OF FUTURE

Similar to their past and their present, the participants in this study experience concerns about constructing their future accordingly with their own wills and desires. While building a future in a new country, they fight to regain their agency at the same time. Whereas in the past, they were constrained by their government and families, in a new residence, these constraints have significantly lessened, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, their experiences as immigrants and the fact that their families are still a part of their life have created new concerns for these women in their efforts for the future. All these challenges have affected the actions of these women and motivated them to create ways to deal with these factors and shape their prospective lives. In line with these challenges and their efforts to overcome them, the women have also evaluated their options in a consecutive destination, where their future may be more improved in a new country. Therefore, this chapter will focus on what these women have been planning in order to better their future and how their discourses are influenced by these plans and efforts. In the first section, I will discuss how the bureaucratic processes influence the future intentions and actions of the women as immigrants. In line with the previous chapters, the second section will be an overview of how these women intend to handle their domestic concerns while planning a future with their partners or away from their familial restrictions. The final section of this chapter will review whether these women are still considering new acts of immigration to new destinations with the intention of bettering their lives and if so, whether they can take the necessary steps to act on their wishes.

6.1 Prospective challenges related to immigrants

As discussed in the previous chapters as well, the participants in this study all came to Turkey to build a better life and future in a new destination. This better life came in many forms, including but not limited to freedom to dress as they want or leaving their parents' monitoring. Besides being free of their past constraints, with their move, they also aimed to open up new fields for themselves to act on. They have tried to achieve this in many ways as well. Soraya started preparing for the university exam and having more independence in her house. Firuzeh participated in many activities and had a relationship. She took on different hobbies throughout her time in Turkey. Laila, together with her fiancé, focused on her education and career and even started up a new business. In the course of their efforts to construct their new lives, this time, they were constrained by the bureaucratic procedures in Turkey. Laila struggled to open her business for a long time because of the regulations in Turkey or Firuzeh could not renew her visa because the process was moving too slow.

With their move to Turkey, Soraya and her husband aimed to build a better future for their daughter. They wanted her to get a better education and live her life away from the Sharia influence. As a family, they needed stability, a comfortable house and a job to maintain the family. However, while building their future in Turkey, they encountered with some difficulties that hindered them from maintaining the life that they had initially planned. For instance, Arman was a business owner in Iran, he wanted to resume his business in Turkey as well, but it was very costly for him to relocate his company in Istanbul. Laws in Turkey made it very difficult for immigrants to run their own businesses; it was more costly for them and they had to follow a lot of strict regulations. Arman found these regulations very challenging and could not risk the costs, so unfortunately, he could not resume his job as a business

owner. This caused the family some financial concerns; now their income had to come from Iran whose currency had constantly been losing value against the Turkish lira. Therefore, they had to arrange their spending very carefully based on the currency rates. In fact, at one point, Soraya told me that a lot of her acquaintances were moving back to Iran because life became unaffordable for them due to the exchange rates. She was concerned that they had to live the same fate and return to their home country. Consequently, another concern for Soraya and her family was to ensure their stay in Turkey. They could not risk going back once they had settled since it would be too costly and also it would distort Ester's life again. Luckily for Soraya and her family, they also received plenty of help in Istanbul. My gatekeeper, Mr. Faysal, was a friend of theirs and he guided them with many of their concerns. In order to ensure their residence in the country, he helped them buy a flat in Istanbul; because they now acquired an estate, they could receive a residence permit more easily. He helped them find a school for Ester and answered all of their questions in the course of their settling. Even today, if they encounter an issue that they cannot resolve, Soraya or Arman immediately call Mr. Faysal to get his opinion as well. With his guidance, Soraya and Arman can act more securely. In fact, Mr. Faysal even suggested a few schools to Soraya as an option for her education.

Although they have residence permit, Soraya and her family has still been concerned about their future in Turkey because they do not have citizenship. Residence permit must be renewed at regular intervals and each time, they have to wait for a long while to complete the process. Of course, this makes them feel insecure about their stay in the country since they fear something might go wrong and they may not receive their permit. Another concern for them is the instable laws and regulations in Turkey. Because immigration laws are constantly changing, they

have to keep up with them very carefully since they might be affected by the changes as well. Soraya believes that all the rules and regulations are just a way for the Turkish government to exploit the immigrants, taking their money at each time they enact a new law. She has complained about this issue many times because she is not content with the uncertainty in their situation. In fact, this uncertainty seems to have influenced Ester and her discourse, too. During one of my visits when Ester was present on our meeting outside, as her mother was talking about her plans for university, Ester suddenly intervened, commenting that Soraya wants to become a citizen after she finishes university. I did not know this was possible, but Soraya explained to me that the easiest ways for an immigrant to become a citizen in Turkey was either to buy property of certain value or finish higher education in a Turkish university. Because I knew that they already had a flat, I asked why they still were not accepted as citizens, which is when Soraya started complaining about the instable immigration laws in the country:

Excerpt 27 [Interaction, 25/10/2020]:

- 378 E: Sizin şu an aldığınız ev vatandaşlık için olmuyo mu?
379 S: Hayır. Umm şimdi iki yüz elli bin dolar, önceden bir milyon dolardı bizim
380 zamanımızda. İki yüz elli bin dolara indi. Biz o zamanda, o şey kural ispatlama
381 zamanından sonra öyle ev almalısın
382 E: Anladım
383 S: Şimdi biz almak istersek bunu satacağız
384 E: Tekrar alıcaksınız
385 S: Bi daha tekrar. Bu az, iki yüz elli dolar olmaz.
386 E: Anladım.
387 S: Öyle.
388 E: Sürekli değiştiriyorlar
389 S: En hızlı şey bu. En rahat yani.
390 E: Evet, tabi canım
391 S: Öbürler umm
392 E: 5 yıl daha geçmesi gerekiyor
393 S: Türkiye'nin şeyi çok kötü umm vatandaşlarınız yani başka ülkeler daha zor
394 alıyor ama daha rahat vatan-
395 E: Hmm
396 S: Burası daha rahat alıyor ama vatandaş vermiyor. Parasını alıyor, her şeyini
397 alıyor ama
398 E: Hmm
399 S: Orda yok. Benim akrabalarım İngiliz biri İngiliz'de, biri Fransız'da biri şey umm
400 Almanya'da. Gidip yani zor alıyor ama giderken hem iş veriyor hem vatandaş
401 veriyor hem her şeyi veriyor yani. Ev veriyor diye ama burası değil

- 402 E: Hmm, anladım. Burda sanırım sadece gelmeye izin veriyorlar
403 S: Sadece gelmeye izin veriyor
404 E: Gerisi
(...)
405 S: Ne iş yapmaya izin veriyor, hiçbir şeye izin vermiyor yani. Çok zor. Yani para
406 almak istiyor böyle heheh. Tamam gelin, paranızı harcayın bir süre. Mesela
(...)
407 mesela bir süre şey dediler, evi olmayan
408 E: Hmm hmm
409 S: Artık şey yapamaz dediler, turist olarak şey vermiyoruz
410 E: Hmm hmm
411 S: İkamet izni vermiyoruz dediler. Hiçbir insan İran'a döndü. Sonra bi daha tekrar
412 veriyoruz dediler. Hemen bu altı ayda. Bi sürü yine para alıp bi sürü şey alıp yine
413 gönderdiler. Bir sürü ev aldılar ona göre. Ooh ne kadar ev aldılar. Çünkü dönmek
414 istemiyorlardı mecbur ev almak zorunda kaldılar çünkü ev alan
415 E: Kalabiliyor
416 S: Ev alanlara ikamet izni veriyoruz demiştiler. Umm ev aldılar bir sürü, böyle
417 şey oluyor. Şimdi yine tamam veriyoruz demişler
418 E: Hehe
419 S: Bir sürü böyle geliyor. Ama başka ülkeler böyle değil yani
420 E: Evet
421 S: Ben izin vermiyorum ama verirken de çalışabilirsin. Burda çalışma izni yok daha.
422 Ayrı alman gerekiyor
(...)
423 Mesela benim arkadaşım. Amerika'ya gidip iş verdiler ev vermişler her şey. Hem
424 kendi hem çocukları bir. Hem kendi hem eşi hepsi çalışıyor yani, ordan para
425 alıyor. Dolar olarak ben eğer Amerika'ya gitsem İran parasıyla ne kadar
426 yaşayabilirim? Burada bize göre böyle zor oluyor yani
427 E: Evet
428 S: İrandan para geliyor diye lira olarak para kazanmıyoruz o yüzden zor oluyor.
- 378 E: *The house you bought, does that not work for citizenship?*
379 S: *No. Umm now it's two hundred and fifty dollars, before it was one million dollars.*
380 *In our time. Then, it went down to two hundred and fifty dollars. We, then, you have*
381 *to buy the house after the time of the confirmation.*
382 E: *I understand*
383 S: *Now, if we want to buy a new one, we'll have to sell this one.*
384 E: *You'll buy a house again.*
385 S: *One more time. This one is cheap; it won't be two hundred and fifty dollars.*
386 E: *I understand.*
387 S: *That's the case.*
388 E: *They constantly change things*
389 S: *This is the fastest way. The easiest, I mean.*
390 E: *Yes, of course.*
391 S: *The others umm*
392 E: *Five more years have to pass*
393 S: *The bad thing about Turkey is umm your citizens, I mean other countries*
394 *accept more difficultly but they more easily confer citizen-*
395 E: *Hmm*
396 S: *Here, they accept more easily but they don't confer citizenship. They take the money,*
397 *they take everything, but*
398 E: *Hmm*
399 S: *It's not like that there. My relatives, one is in English, one is in French, other is*
400 *umm in Germany. They go, I mean they accept more difficultly but they grant job*
401 *and they grant citizenship and everything, I mean. They grant a house but here, no.*
402 E: *Hmm, I understand. Here, I think they only allow migrating.*
403 S: *They only allow coming here.*
404 E: *The rest*
405 S: *They don't allow working, they don't allow anything, It's hard. I mean, they just*

406 *want to take money hehe. Okay, come, spend your money for a while. For example*
 (...)
 407 *for example, for a while they said that if you don't own a house*
 408 E: *Hmm hmm*
 409 S: *You can no longer, they said, we won't give touristic*
 410 E: *Hmm hmm*
 411 S: *We won't give residence permit, they said. People went back to Iran. Then, again*
 412 *they said we'll confer it. Just in these six months. Again, taking a lot of money*
 413 *they sent them. They bought houses accordingly. Oo how many houses. Because*
 414 *they didn't want to return; they were obligated to buy a house because if they own*
 415 E: *They can stay*
 416 S: *They said we'll confer residence permit to those who own a house. Umm they bought*
 417 *a lot of houses, it's like. Now, they again said, okay we'll give residence.*
 418 E: *Hehe*
 419 S: *A lot of people move here that way. But other countries are not like that.*
 420 E: *Yes.*
 421 S: *I don't let you to come but if I do, you can work. Here, there is no work permit yet.*
 422 *You have to get it separately.*
 (...)
 423 *For example, my friend, she went to America and they gave her a job and a house,*
 424 *everything. Both her and her children. Both her and her husband they all work, earn*
 425 *money there. In dollars. If I go to America, how long can I live with the Iranian*
 426 *money? Here, it is difficult for us, I mean.*
 427 E: *Yes*
 428 S: *Because our income comes from Iran, we don't earn money as lira so it's difficult.*

Upon my question about whether the flat they bought did not ensure their citizenship, Soraya starts explaining the immigration laws for citizenship to me (lines 379-389). I learn that when they bought their flat, the law was to buy a property at the worth of one million dollars. Now, with the new regulations, immigrants can buy a property around two hundred and fifty thousand dollars and become citizens, which is the fastest way to become a Turkish citizen. Since their flat was not worth a million dollars at the time, and it is not worth the required amount now either, they still have not been able to become citizens in Turkey. As I try to interpret and comment on these regulations (lines 388 & 392), Soraya starts complaining about these rules on the basis that Turkey differs immensely from other countries when it comes to immigration laws. In Turkey, moving and living in the country is very easy for Iranian citizens, they can even get a touristic visa and extend their stay in the country regularly. Whereas coming to the country is relatively easy, ensuring your stay is not, as Soraya also states (line 396). She criticizes that while the government

demands money for all the procedures, they do not grant citizenship or any other necessities. Contrarily, in the Western countries, they do not accept Iranians very easily because of the conflicting image of Iran and the sanctions, as my participants explained, but when they do accept Iranian citizens as immigrants, they grant citizenship along with housing and employment (lines 399-401), which makes it easier for those immigrants to build their life and better their future. Lines 405 and 406 demonstrate Soraya's frustration with the system in Turkey, indicating how they only care about exploiting the immigrants' money without providing them with essential resources to maintain their life. Other than migrating to the country, *they do not allow anything* for those immigrants to be able to better their lives (line 405).

Similar to Laila's situation in Excerpt 24 (Section 5.3.), Soraya, too, discusses how the latest visa regulations have affected the Iranians and their actions (lines 407-417). Because the government decided to disallow the extension of touristic visas to stay in the country for all the immigrants, many Iranians had to return their homeland. In order to ensure their future in Turkey, these people had to invest in real estate and spend a considerable amount of money. After only a few months, the government retracted this law again, accepting the immigrants in tourist status (line 417). Soraya's final remarks also reflect her concerns for the employment. While in other countries, they provide migrants with employment (lines 419 & 421), in Turkey, you have to acquire it separately, which is a very wearisome process. Immigrants can apply for work permit only after being hired and then have to wait for the permit sometimes months on end, during which time they cannot receive their salary. Soraya compares her situation to a friend of hers in America (lines 423-428), elaborating on how she could acquire housing and employment in her new country of residence whereas Soraya had to buy her house to be able to stay in the country and

was not provided with any financial support. She draws attention to how she and her family must support themselves with their income from Iran, which is not stable. Their size of income fluctuates based on the currency rates, which forces them to limit their expenses. I remember that on many occasions, she had to calculate her expenditures for a number of times before purchasing something, so *it is difficult* (lines 426 & 428) for them to maintain their life in Turkey in the way that they had expected.

As can be seen in the excerpt, the bureaucratic procedures and regulations in Turkey clearly influence the actions of immigrants in the country. Because the laws may suddenly change, they cannot build a stable lifestyle for themselves. As part of this large group, Soraya and her family have also experienced the challenges of being immigrants in Turkey. They have not been able to claim citizenship, which always threatens the permanence of their residence in the new country. As Soraya recites, a new law may suddenly force them to move back to Iran or spend money in order to guarantee their stay in Turkey. Although they have freedom to build a new future for themselves, their actions are still limited by the restrictions of a new government. They do not have the same rights as the citizens of the country, which limits their financial stability at the least. Soraya's utterances clearly demonstrate the limitation on the agency of immigrants by the immigration laws in Turkey. Many steps in their lives are controlled by the allowance of the government which does *not allow anything* (line 405) according to Soraya; the expressions *allow* or *let* are used repeatedly, demonstrating the power of the government and immigration laws in the lives of these new residents. They can act only to the extent that they are given permission to act; while they can live in the country, they cannot work as easily. Similarly, when explaining all these regulations, Soraya always puts the government

or the laws in the subject position which again signals their agentive position in the lives of these migrants. On the contrary, the actions of immigrants include modals of obligation indicating their lack of independence and ability to act (e.g., *they were obligated to buy a house* in line 414).

Similar to Soraya, Firuzeh too experienced problems with the bureaucratic procedures. As stated previously, she could not receive her residence permit in time, and she had to apply for schools instead, just so she could extend her stay in the country. This is a common strategy used by young Iranians to guarantee their life in Turkey. Adip did consult to the same solution when he could not get a work permit, and he actually resumed his study, too. Other than these bureaucratic challenges, Firuzeh experienced problems with employment, too. As Soraya also complained, immigrants in Turkey are not offered a resource of income in order to maintain their lives. Consequently, Firuzeh had to change jobs every so often in order to make her living because she could not find a stable job. In fact, she complained about this issue even in our first meeting and continued to have these problems throughout the fieldwork. She told me that she was not offered insurance for the jobs that she had applied, or they criticized her level of Turkish even though it did not affect her job performance. Although she was a university graduate, she could not find a job in her field, either. Firuzeh relates her problems with employment to Turkish people's approach to the Middle Eastern people and how they discriminate against different groups of immigrants. From her perspective, she is belittled because of her nationality while Westerners are more respected and preferred in professional contexts. During an interview, when I shared my surprise about how quickly she had integrated into the society upon learning about how she had improved her linguistic skills in Turkish and how much she had improved her life away from Iran, she corrected me stating

that she was still experiencing problems with building her life because of her employment situation. The excerpt below shows Firuzeh's narration of how she is restricted in professional life because of her nationality.

Excerpt 28 [Interview, 11/12/2019]:

429 **F:** Not very well... I have a problem about finding job. As you know, as a foreigner,
430 find people, person you have some problem here because they don't care about
431 insurance and when they know you are a foreign person, exactly I told you, you are
432 not from UK you are not from German. The salary, it's not good.

(...)

433 Because I am from third world, she's from UK and she came here for a short term
434 project. She stayed here for three weeks and she told me I want to come back. She
435 means living in Istanbul, I don't want to go back to UK after that. Okay, after that,
436 okay why because here it's cheap. Living in UK, you have to work more and more.
437 and more it's expensive renting house other things's more expensive. I actually
438 like to prefer to come here and find a job bla bla bla

439 **E:** So, you were talking about how it's difficult to find a job when you're not from a
440 certain nationality. Why do you think that the case is like this?

441 **F:** Because as I see, not I'm thinking, I saw these things because of this umm I say
442 this. Maybe it's not as a, how can I say umm İran'dan geliyorsun burda çalışıyorlar,
443 iyi de çalışıyorlar yani. Bu benim için böyle, bu kural değil. Mesela, genelde böyle
444 belki değil, benim için böyle oldu. Mesela, benim konuşmamı çok, nasıl diyim... It's
445 not as a result for all Iranians, just for me, it's happened like it.

446 **E:** Şeyden dolayı olabilir mi, Batılı Doğulu gibi bir ayırım yapıyor olabilir mi?

447 **F:** Evet, bizde var o ya, İran'da da öyle. O ki Avrupa'da yaşıyor, benim için biraz
448 daha iyi geliyor, biliyorsun. O İran'da da var biraz. Ama İran'da çok... Nasıl diyim...
449 Göçebe yok, böyle şeyler yaşamayız biz. Ama burda mesela fazla var. Mesela
450 Bazıları İranlıları Arap biliyorlar. Mesela, sen Arapça konuşuyorsun? Hayır ben
451 Arapça konuşmuyorum. Çoğu insanlar da beni Arap görüyorlar. İranlıları öyle
452 görüyorlar evet.

429 **F:** Not very well... I have a problem about finding job. As you know, as a foreigner,
430 find people, person you have some problem here because they don't care about
431 insurance and when they know you are a foreign person, exactly I told you, you are
432 not from UK you are not from German. The salary, it's not good.

(...)

433 Because I am from third world, she's from UK and she came here for a short term
434 project. She stayed here for three weeks and she told me I want to come back. She
435 means living in Istanbul, I don't want to go back to UK after that. Okay, after that,
436 okay why because here it's cheap. Living in UK, you have to work more and more.
437 and more it's expensive renting house other things's more expensive. I actually
438 like to prefer to come here and find a job bla bla bla

439 **E:** So, you were talking about how it's difficult to find a job when you're not from a
440 certain nationality. Why do you think that the case is like this?

441 **F:** Because as I see, not I'm thinking I saw these things because of this umm I say
442 this. Maybe it's not as a, how can I say umm They come from Iran and work here,
443 they work well, too. This is for me, it's not a rule. For instance, generally maybe it's
444 not like this, but for me it was. For example, they saw my speech very, how to say...
445 It's not as a result for all Iranians, just for me, it's happened like it.

446 **E:** Can it be because there is a discrimination between Westerners or Easterners?

447 **F:** Yes, we have it in Iran, too. She who lives in Europe, I regard her as better, you
448 know. We have it in Iran, too. But in Iran, it's... how to say... There are no
449 immigrants, we don't experience these things. But here, there are a lot. For example,
450 some people think that Iranians are Arabic. For example, you speak Arabic?

451 *No, I don't speak Arabic. Most people consider me Arab. They regard Iranians*
452 *like that, yes.*

In this excerpt, Firuzeh recites how and why she experienced difficulty in finding employment. Especially when employers learn that she is an immigrant, they try to exploit her by hiring her without enough salary or even insurance (lines 429-432). According to her accounts, because she is from a *third world* country (line 433), she is not treated with the same interest as a Westerner. While Westerners can enjoy Turkey to the fullest and even do not want to leave the country because life is much easier and affordable for them (lines 433-438), Firuzeh cannot benefit from similar ease because she is an Easterner who is despised in the society. Upon my inquisition into why she thinks this way (lines 439 & 440), Firuzeh gradually switches to Turkish because she experiences difficulty in expressing herself in English. She corrects my remarks by stating that these are not just mere thoughts, rather she *saw these things* (line 441) and experienced in her life. She also emphasizes that this may not be the case for all Iranians, but still, for her, the attitude in the society prevented her from earning her livelihood. Because I want to get a clearer understanding of the discrimination discussed by Firuzeh, I ask her about my guess towards the subject, whether this discrimination is actually based on race or not, which she confirms (lines 446 & 447). Firuzeh even compares this situation to Iran, explaining that they have a similar case in there too, Westerners are regarded with more superiority while the others are disregarded. Yet, as Iran does not have as many immigrants as Turkey, this discrepancy in their attitude is not encountered that commonly. Finally, Firuzeh shares her discomfort in being mistaken for an Arab. As she recounted later on, in Iran, especially after the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, there is a common dislike for Arabs. Iranians feel distant towards the Arabic people and

the language and they even do not like to mention them. Therefore, being mistaken for an Arabic person makes Firuzeh offended and probably defensive.

Although Firuzeh's utterances or word choice do not signal an act or lack of agency directly, it is clear that these negative experiences have affected how Firuzeh has been living her life. For instance, during this conversation, she told me that she had to apply for many jobs in the service industry, which is not a sector in her field. The laws about employment and the fact that work permit takes too long for immigrants made her resort to other solutions rather than working in her area. Moreover, because of the discriminating attitude of employers, she could not even resume those jobs. I remember her tutoring or babysitting for low wages just to afford her expenses. Having a job and a stable payment could enable her to construct her life in the way that she had wanted, but instead, the employment situation in Turkey hindered her noticeably. I remember Firuzeh wanting to move out of her apartment which she shared with two other women and not being able to do this because of financial concerns.

According to Firuzeh, the act of discrimination occurs not only in terms of nationality, but also linguistically. In the following parts of our discussion, she explained to me that because employers prefer to hire people who speak English, her friends do not even feel the need to learn Turkish since it will not be helpful for them in the professional area. This situation also demonstrates how the employment status of the immigrants even influences their linguistic choices. Although Turkish is more useful for them in daily life, they still insist on not speaking it for professional purposes. Although they make this decision to not learn the language themselves, their act is still not a completely agentic one since it is also influenced by these external factors, mainly the chances of being employed. Because of the instability in

her financial situation, Firuzeh explained to me that she does not intend to stay in Turkey in the long term. Eventually, she plans to move to another country in order to improve her opportunities and resources. As I explained in my notes:

Excerpt 29 [Fieldnotes, 11/12/2019]:

The reason that she feels she cannot depend on Turkey can be linked to the fact that Firuzeh herself does not have a stable job or income that she can depend on. So far, she has had difficulty finding a job and the ones she found were low-paying, so she is not very hopeful about her financial security in the future.

Although Firuzeh's plans for a further migration move may seem like an act that lacks agency because her decision is a result of her conditions, it also shows her agentive role, because as was discussed in *Excerpt 13*, Firuzeh had been planning to travel and live around the world for a long time. Thus, since the beginning of the fieldwork when Firuzeh stated she could not depend on Turkey because of her financial concerns, she has finally made the necessary moves and took the necessary actions to fulfill her dreams. While the financial and discriminative conditions in Turkey restricted Firuzeh's acts in some ways, she still found a way to construct her future in the way that she had planned. It can be said that the fulfillment of her dreams and the actualization of her actions started by her move to Turkey, and they will continue to occur in the future with her move from the country to another destinations.

Contrary to Firuzeh who plans a future in another country, in the course of her life in Turkey, especially after the political turmoil in Iran in late 2019, Laila decided to stay in Turkey and build her future here. She thought that instead of getting a PhD, she could first improve a project of hers and try to start her own business. While doing that, she too encountered bureaucratic obstacles discussed earlier. Similar to Firuzeh, Laila had financial concerns and worked as a tutor as well, but because of the pandemic, her workplace closed down, putting her in more

financial trouble than before. Yet, despite all these problems, the most challenging obstacle for Laila has proved to be language barriers, combined with political concerns. Previously, Laila did not feel the need to learn Turkish since she did not aim to live in the country in the long run. She could get by on English at school and count on Adip for other issues. However, once making the decision to settle, she has started to feel the need to integrate into the society and become a part of it, which means that she has had to start learning the language as well. Starting with Spring 2020, Laila started studying Turkish with the help of Adip. She was more enthusiastic than before and was studying regularly. Of course, she was improving slowly in the language, but she was also building ties with new people, engaging with the society more and more. Based on our messages and phone calls during the lockdown period, I could see that she was committed to her plan to stay in Turkey and build a better future for herself. She and Adip searched for ways to assure their stay at which point Adip also started another master's program. Inspired by a teacher at Laila's school, she created a project and took a step to start her own business with Adip. They were working day and night to create this business and find an investor for their project, and she was very hopeful for her business idea. It was around this time that I received a message from Laila stating that she was very upset with her classmates' behavior during an online lesson. I learned that they started a conversation in Turkish and Laila could not follow them, which made her feel left out. When I called her, she sounded very depressed and hopeless. She was almost giving up her plans in Turkey because she was losing faith that she could ever learn the language or be accepted by people. I tried my best to cheer her up and comfort her, explaining that it was bound to take time to learn Turkish or make friends, but she was very worried that she might not build a future here because of these

difficulties. As she elaborated on her stress, I realized that there was more to the situation than just linguistic barriers. Rather, she seemed to be concerned about her national identity, as well.

Excerpt 30 [Interview, 18/11/2019]:

- 453 **L:** I haven't seen any bad behavior, you know. People are not generally bad but
454 the things I worry about is umm accepted by the people as a as a, I don't know
455 how can I say as a part of the society.
- 456 **E:** Hmm hmm
- 457 **L:** As a for example you think when I have my own business, do they accept me?
458 Do they accept me as a boss or a employer umm I'm worry such a thing. And even
459 if I don't somehow, I didn't umm I couldn't for example have my own business, do
460 they accept me as a employee?
- 461 **E:** Hmm hmm
- 462 **L:** Could I found job here? Do I have any umm bright future here? You know umm
463 my first year of master degree finished, almost finished. Just one month, not a big
464 deal. And I only have one year, I should think about the further steps.
- 465 **E:** In where I worked, there were a lot of foreign employees. I mean, we all had a
466 very good relationship, we always you know, got together, did some activities
467 outside the job. And we had a good relationship at work, as well. So, I mean there
468 are cases like that, too.
- 469 **L:** But from which country, you know. Sorry to interrupt you. But the thing is that
470 my nationality,
- 471 **E:** We had...
- 472 **L:** it hasn't very good brand for me. For example, I have a friend, let me say Italy.
473 When you compare him for example with me, people are more open-minded rather
474 than for example a person from Iran.
- 475 **E:** Hmm
- 476 **L:** You know, I can feel it. I can, I really feel the people distinguish between a
477 person who came from for example Europe
- 478 **E:** Hmm
- 479 **L:** But a person from our neighbor countries
- 480 **E:** Hmm hmm
- 481 **L:** They do not behave same, in the same way. And umm I really worried about these
482 things. What happen, what will happen about my future? Am I, can I find a job? If
483 umm you think I will learn Turkish, okay??
- 484 **E:** Hmm hmm
- 485 **L:** Do I still have a chance to find job? Because of my nationality, I'm not sure.
- 486 **E:** Why do you think so? I mean...
- 487 **L:** I don't think umm, you know umm I quite not so optimistic about I don't know
- 488 **E:** Hmm hmm, I mean
- 489 **L:** Yani in general, in general, in my country let me say it exactly.
I mean
- 490 **E:** Hmm hmm
- 491 **L:** In my country, people are more willing to umm have a conversation or do
492 trade with the person from the West rather than person from the East, especially
493 Middle East.
- 494 **E:** And you
- 495 **L:** I think the same culture here. People are more open-minded to the West
496 countries rather than the Middle-Eastern people.

This excerpt demonstrates how Laila's concern about her future unfolds as she elaborates on the issue. This speech is similar to a monologue because she is trying to state her concerns in the form of a chain of thought. I learn that she feels distress despite the fact that she did not actually encounter a bad attitude from people (lines 453-455). Yet, her actual concern is not the politeness of others, rather it is their acceptance of her as one of them, as their friend, their neighbor or a colleague. She is primarily concerned about her career because it is one of the reasons why she left Iran, and if she cannot improve her career in her new home, then all her efforts would be in vain. Throughout lines 457-464, she expresses how she worries that she may not be accepted by her future employees or employers as an authority. In these lines, Laila's organized and future-oriented character shows itself as she has begun to worry about her future at least one year before graduation. She always plans her steps beforehand and likes to be prepared for every possibility. Therefore, the uncertainty in her situation increases her distress more and more. Knowing this, I try to ease her stress by explaining that I encountered with many foreigners in my workplace who did not speak Turkish and could still collaborate and socialize with their coworkers (lines 465-468). Upon my remarks, Laila reveals the underlying fear behind her stress, which is her image as an Iranian. Throughout the fieldwork, I witnessed Laila complaining about Iranians and the Iranian government. She does not support their conservative lifestyle and nor does she support their foreign policy. Because Iran is stigmatized with its Sharia laws and experiences of tension with other countries, Laila worries that this will affect her life and her status wherever she goes. This is in fact one of the reasons why she had to abandon her plans in the West. Now, in Turkey too, she fears that she might be stigmatized or excluded because of her nationality. Laila, similar to Firuzeh, believes that Turkish people tend to

discriminate against different immigrant groups and they favor the Westerners to the Middle Easterners. Because Laila's school and old workplace are all international institutions with students and staff from different nationalities, I can imagine that Laila could observe the relationship between Turks and people from other nations. Although, as she states at the beginning of the excerpt, she did not experience any bad incidents herself, she could still *feel the people distinguish* (line 476) between immigrants from the West and the East based on her observations (lines 476-479). The subsequent lines (481-85) also reflect Laila's doubts about her future; she is not sure *what will happen* even if she learns Turkish. Even knowing the language may not guarantee her future because of her nationality, which is why she not *so optimistic* about the situation (line 487). Because I want to understand her remarks more clearly, I ask her the reasons for why she thinks that way, upon which Laila starts aligning Turkey and Iran with each other in their approach to immigrants or different foreigner groups. Similar to Firuzeh, Laila too believes that there is noticeable distinction and discrimination in the attitude of Iranians towards foreigners; they tend to communicate or work with Western origin people rather than Easterners, especially Middle Easterners (lines 491-496). In the same vein, Turkish people too, interact with the Westerners in a more *open-minded* or tolerant approach, which makes Laila feel concerned about her future status in the country.

Despite the fact that Laila's utterances do not directly refer to an act of agency, again, her concerns and questioning about her future directly signal that her future is dependent on the aforementioned factors. If she plans a future in Turkey, she must first resolve and be sure about some issues. In most of her statements, Turkish people or her own nationality are in the subject position, proving their status as the determiners of Laila's fate and future (e.g., *do they accept me* in line 457 & *my*

nationality (...) it hasn't very good brand for me in line 472). Her prospective actions will be determined by Turkish people's acceptance of her and her nationality. As stated earlier, Laila's migration was also an act to create new and better career options for herself. Now, on the verge of starting her own business and settling in the country, these suspicions affect her psychology and her next steps directly. She may even abandon her dreams if she is not sure about these issues of acceptance. Her feelings of insecurity are reflected on the statements where Laila is the subject of her actions as well; they generally carry a meaning of probability or a dependence on luck. For example, especially while mentioning her career, she uses modals that express possibility as in *could I found a job here* (line 462) or *can I find a job* (line 482) or she refers to her chances to find a job as in *do I still have a chance* (line 485).

In conclusion, while these women strive to create a better future themselves in Turkey, they have met with a series of obstacles which have either directly or indirectly affected their agentive actions. While planning the further steps of their lives, they have always had to consider these hindering factors before acting on their plans. For example, although Soraya and her family are decisive in living in Turkey in the foreseeable future, they have had to struggle and adapt to the constantly changing immigration laws in the country. Moreover, because of the laws that hinder Arman from resuming his job in Turkey, they have had significant financial concerns; so much so that at one point Soraya was worried that they might have to return to Iran because they could no longer afford their life in Turkey. Another concern for these women was the controversy over their Iranian image. Both Firuzeh and Laila were convinced that they might encounter discrimination based on their Iranian origin since Turkish people tend to respect the Westerners while they despise the Easterners. Because of this possible discriminatory act, Laila and Firuzeh were

worried that their chances of being employed would be hindered or they would not be recognized in their workplace. All these factors have restricted the agentive roles of these women as they have been building a future in Turkey because they have always had to plan and act depending on these factors. Consequently, the experiences and concerns of the women have influenced and shaped their discourse either directly or indirectly as well. With the introduction of laws in their discussions, the terms *allow* or *let* have emerged in their utterances, which demonstrate the authoritative effect of bureaucracy in their lives. Moreover, with expressions related to their future, they have started to use structures related to possibility and chance more, reflecting the uncertainty of their future due to the discussed factors.

6.2. Familial concerns in building a future

Because their families' influence and domestic impositions are an inevitable part of these women's lives, they have to consider their parents or partners while constructing their future as well. Throughout the fieldwork, I noticed that my participants referred to their families repeatedly while talking about the future. Their plans generally included at least one statement about the parents or partners or other members of the family. It can be said that although they have somewhat abandoned the oppression of Sharia, considering that their families and the traditional lifestyle inflicted on them will always be a constant in their lives, these women cannot abandon the familial restrictions that easily. Soraya may always fight with her husband for her independence, or Laila may have to hide her relationship until she decides to get married and get her parents' approval. Therefore, the conservative family tradition in Iran not only encompasses the past and present activities of the

women in this study but it also directs their discourse and actions for the future as well.

The traditions and the effect of Sharia in Iran continues to capture and impact how families shape their lives and the lives of their children. Although none of Soraya, Laila or Firuzeh have extremely strict families, they have still had to struggle to own their actions and draw their own paths in life. While Soraya was not restricted by her parents, she was constrained by her husband's rules, or while Laila's parents were always encouraging her in her professional endeavors, they still intervened with her romantic relationships as a result of their traditional understanding. In the same vein, although Firuzeh could leave her relatives and their authority in her life, she is still dependent on her family in various ways, which allows them to meddle with their daughter's life easily. For instance, because Firuzeh does not have a stable job, she sometimes experiences difficulty in affording her expenses and resorts to her parents' financial support. Knowing that she is dependent on their support, her family sometimes intervenes with her spending as well. They suggest different ways for her to manage her life in Turkey whereas she plans to move to Germany. During an afternoon walk around Firuzeh's neighborhood, I learned that her parents even suggested buying a flat for her in Istanbul so that she would not have to pay rent every month. She was not very happy about the idea because she was not intending on settling in Turkey and complained about how insistent they were and how long she tried to dissuade them from this idea. My notes from that day discuss Firuzeh's family's attitude and how it may cause a disturbance in her plans:

Excerpt 31 [Fieldnote, 13/11/2020]:

After leaving the café, we decided to walk towards the beach. I really like that part of the neighborhood on our path because the buildings are old and they look very beautiful. I commented on that, stating I would have loved to live there. Firuzeh said she likes the arrangement of the neighborhood as well, with trees and lights. Then, she said that her parents are also planning to buy her a flat in Istanbul, which she finds funny. I learned that they found

this easier than her paying rent all the time but she suggested it did not make sense since she was trying to move to Germany. Moreover, if they bought a house for her, then they could come and live with her as well. She told me that she does not want to stay in Turkey, instead she wants to start her master's in Germany and continue travelling. Therefore, if her parents buy her a flat in Turkey, this will bound her to the country. She had spent a lot of time on the phone, convincing her mother that this was not a good idea. (...)

It can be seen once again that even a simple conversation can suddenly evoke a serious discussion for my participants. My mention of the neighborhood reminds Firuzeh about her parent's offer and she starts sharing her concerns about the issue. Because her parents support her financially, they believe that they can make an investment in her name which may affect her whole future in a foreign country. Despite the fact that their daughter is a grown up woman who can make her own decisions, they still feel the need to intervene with her life in some way and direct her future steps themselves as part of their protective nature. Having a flat in the country means that Firuzeh has ties to Turkey and cannot easily break them. Living in Germany and having a flat in Istanbul would not make sense, therefore her parents would probably expect her to remain in Turkey, where she will be closer to them. Living in Turkey, in a place that her parents bought, would also mean that they can come and visit Firuzeh whenever they wanted, which is something Firuzeh may not find very pleasing. I remember her telling me around the midst of the fieldwork that she did not even tell her family that she stays in a flat with roommates so as not to create an opportunity for them to visit her. She told them she was staying in a dormitory and that way; she could avoid visitors; not only her family but also her relatives who might come to Istanbul for travelling and want to stay at her place. Considering that Firuzeh is not a fond of parental control or her relatives' judgments, she may not want to have a place where they can easily visit her and intervene with her life. A similar concern was conveyed by Laila when her mother suggested buying a flat in Istanbul in order to be able to visit her. Neither of these women want to have

a parental authority in their life, nor do they want to plan their future based on their parents' wishes. Thus, they have resorted to hiding some details of their life rather than surrendering their agency.

The fact that Firuzeh's parents' decisions may affect her future so profoundly shows how powerful their authority is in Firuzeh's life still and how much parental impositions may limit her future actions. However, the fact that Firuzeh finds the power to reject their offer and insists on her plans also reveals her agentive persona. Even though she may still experience difficulty with her parent's involvement in her life, she can now speak up for herself and defy their impositions in order to construct her future by herself.

Conservative and traditional family life finds place in Laila's discussions of future, too; however, this time, her concern is not the parental involvement in her life, rather it is the male-dominant culture and laws in her country. She and Adip plan to get married one day as soon as they set things right with their business and open up to their families about their relationship. The issue for Laila, similar to Soraya's past experiences, is that males have the authority in marriage according to the Iranian traditions and laws. They are the head of the household and can decide the actions of the members of the family singlehandedly. They can ban their wives from studying or working and the laws can support their decision. Because Laila have observed this law in action in her society, she unavoidably feels hesitant towards marriage. She trusts Adip and loves him dearly and they do not plan to live in Iran, yet she still fears these laws as a reflex. In a discussion about marriages in Iran, she complained to me that most couples are not educated enough and they maintain the traditional lifestyle of the past, rather than improving themselves. By practicing the Sharia

tradition, they normalize the male dominance and oppression of women, which Laila elaborates in her remarks as follows:

Excerpt 32 [Interaction, 24/10/2020]:

- 497 L: **And you know we have a *تامکین* in our roots. *تامکین* means that you as a wife**
tamkin Tamkin
- 498 **has to obey each rules your husband wants.**
- 499 E: **Hmm**
- 500 L: **If he want- if he wants sex you has to do it. You has to do it. Because the man is**
501 **the boss of the family**
- 502 E: **Yeah. That's just, as you said it's like a rule from two hundred years ago**
- 503 L: **It is! It is.**
(...)
- 504 L: **That's why I do not like Iranian style of marriage. I afraid of it because I know**
505 **Adip is a good guy but afraid from government's rules. Because you don't have the**
506 **right of the education. Have independent travel. You cannot keep the children. And**
507 **you also... your husband can ban you for working in anywhere. If your husband**
508 **prove that your working outside is against the family benefits,**
- 509 E: **Hmm hmm**
- 510 L: **government sends a letter to your office and says that you are not allowed to**
511 **work anymore.**
- 512 L: **work anymore.**
- 513 E: **It's just like they are giving everything to the men and...**
- 514 L: **you become their slaves.**
- 515 E: **Yeah**
- 516 L: **Literally, you become their slaves.**

Laila's description of the Sharia tradition of tamkin shows once again how the intersection of laws and religion operates to constrain women and their actions. Her expression that tamkin is in their *roots* proves how well established this practice is in their culture and their lives (line 497). Women have to follow their husbands' wishes and orders without questioning his authority and without considering their own desires. Tamkin is a practice that directly eliminates women's agentive role in the society and their household. As I also referred to Laila's previous utterances (line 502), this is a very outdated, almost archaic practice that contrasts with the modern lifestyle that Laila would like to pursue. After agreeing with my comment in line 503, Laila resumed her explanations with an example from her own acquaintances. She shared the story of how her friend had to fight with her partner in order to gain

her rights and finally had to leave him. Laila links her fear of marriage to these examples around her because she has observed many women around her suffer in their marriage due to the government's inflictions; that is why she does *not like Iranian style of marriage* (line 504). Laila's emphasis that she trusts her boyfriend is also worth noticing. Adip may not act in accordance with tamkin rules but the government may enforce it on their lives as well. Throughout lines 505-508, Laila elaborates on how tamkin can restrict a woman's rights in her marriage; from surrendering her children's custody to her husband, to not doing anything outside the home without his permission. This was something that Soraya had to experience and struggle against, and now Laila fears the same fate as well. If her future husband follows these traditions, he can easily control and restrain her agentive role in every aspect of her life because the government is *giving everything to the men*; the right to work, the right to monitor the family members, and to decide their fate and actions (line 513). As Laila summarizes, women become a slave rather than an agentive actor even in their lives because of the male oppression in the form of Sharia traditions (lines 514 & 516).

Laila's statements prove once again how Sharia impositions that are applied in the household can affect the everyday lives of the Iranian women from a simple action to more serious activities. Even getting married and leaving their parents' traditional roof is not enough for these women to be free from restrictions. With marriage, there come new impositions that they must follow. This is a serious concern for Laila as she plans her future because she does not want to submit her power once again, especially after finally regaining her agentive persona in her new destination. Her word choices and language use emphasize the authoritative role of the government and men in women's life as she uses these two authorities in the

subject position and with either in direct verbs or modals of ability, e.g., *your husband can ban you for working anywhere* (line 507) because *the man is the boss of the family* (lines 500 & 501). Contrarily, while discussing women's actions, she refers to modals of obligation such as *has to* as in lines 498 and 500. As with the previous section, expressions and structures related to permission is revealed in Laila's speech as she conveys women's inability to act with the modals *cannot* (line 506) or *not allowed* (line 510). *Obey* is another expression used by Laila (line 498) which also demonstrates the lack of agency on women's part very clearly; women have to obey and follow their husband's rules and wishes rather than following their own path. This situation of course makes Laila worry about her future. So far, she has mostly fulfilled her dreams by careful planning and acting on her wishes. The next chapter of her life is to build a new family with her partner and run their business together. Yet, the oppressive lifestyle and laws in Iran throws suspicion on her. Of course, Adip is not a person that follows these outdated and restrictive traditions, but of course, because of her previous observations and their families' conservativeness, she feels hesitant on her plans. Using the word *afraid* repeatedly (lines 504 & 505) shows how severe these suspicions and hesitancies actually influence her emotions at the same time. She fears that upon spending years for her career, she may even be hindered from working because of the male-dominant family life and governmental implementations. Laila's last utterances, *you become their slaves* (lines 514 & 516) summarize the underlying reason behind her fears, too. Under the shadow of the patriarchal Sharia lifestyle, women are turned into powerless beings with no permission and space to act on even in their own homes, which is what Firuzeh ran from in the past and will do her best to run away in her future.

While Laila fears for her future due to marital concerns, Soraya's future plans are mostly fixated on her daughter, rather than her own actions. As a woman who was oppressed by her husband due to the tamkin rules, she does not want the same fate for Ester and encourages her to shape her own future. As discussed previously, because of Arman's rules and discouraging attitude, Soraya did not have a chance to study or demonstrate acts of agency throughout her marriage. It is only recently that she can finally stand up to her husband's rules and gain the control of her life back. Because she experienced the difficulties of being confined to a home, she strives to draw an opposite path for Ester. Soraya encourages her daughter to take up sports, arts, and any kind of interest that may help Ester improve her skills and gain a new space to act. Ester's education is also very important for Soraya, she always checks whether Ester has completed her homework or whether she can help her daughter in her lessons. Soraya's involvement in Ester's education is so much so that while helping Ester with homework, she even improved her Turkish at the same time. Soraya cares so deeply for Ester's future that she even opposes Arman at times when he wants to restrict their daughter's actions. In an exchange about how supportive her own parents were, Soraya started to compare them with Arman's parenthood and how she tries to limit Arman's interference with Ester in order to encourage her daughter to draw her own path. Compared with her husband, Soraya herself did not have very strict parents, in fact her parents encouraged all of their daughters to get a higher education and allowed them to study even in another city. Because Soraya got married early, she could not receive this opportunity. Now, she defies Arman's interference with Ester's decisions about her own education and supports their daughter to enroll at a university even in a different city in Turkey in case she wants that for herself in the future. The excerpt below demonstrates Soraya's supportive

side as a mother rather than an over-protective one, as is the custom with Iranian mothers, and also reveals her fighter nature that she could not use for herself but is ready to show for her daughter:

Excerpt 33 [Interaction, 25/10/2020]:

- 517 S: Mesela benim, Ester, benim zamanımda Ester şey diyordu, babası da aa başka bir
518 şehirde asla izin vermem. Ben noluyor dedim, tamam gitsin kendi başına öğrensin.
519 Kendi. Yapsın, öğrensin diye ben,
520 E: Hmm evet
521 S: Bence hiç sıkıntı yok çok da iyi bi şey (...)
522 E: Niye sence çok daha iyi bir şey?
523 S: Kendi ayağı üzerinde durabilir bence. Kendi şeylerini yapsın, kendi
524 sorumluluklarını bilsin. Eğer on yedi – on sekiz yaşında kendi işlerini yapmazsa,
525 tamam artık ne zaman yapacak?
526 E: Yani
527 S: O yaşta artık büyümesi gerekiyor, kendi işlerini yapması. Hatta şimdiden bence.
528 Eğer babası olmasa ben daha erken, çok şeyler vermiştim heheh
529 E: Bi de zaten aslında kız çocuklarının da o şekilde yetiştirilmesi gerekiyor. Kendine
530 güvenli olmalı.
531 S: Evet, hatta kız çocuklarının daha çok gerekiyor erkekten
532 E: Neden öyle düşünüyorsun?
533 S: Çünkü umm biliyorsun zaten hala böyle bir düşünce var, erkek (...) mesela hala
534 böyle bir düşünce var, erkek daha iyi diye erkek daha güçlü diye falan. Mesela bir iş
535 yapıyor, kadın bir iş yapıyor diyor aa aferin sana bir erkek gibi yaptın. O çok kötü
536 bir şey yani, ne, ne demek bir erkek gibi yaptın
537 E: Evet
538 S: O yüzden umm hep erkekler daha güçlü daha şey görülüyorlar.
(...)
539 S: Ben şimdi Estere çok çalışıyorum. Böyle insanların sözlerine bak, ne yaparsan
540 insanlar bir şey diyecek, istediğini yap, şöyle kendini geliştirmeyi yap, umm çalış ders
541 oku diye. Mesela babasına diyor bana bunu alır mısın, babası diyor şimdi almayım.
542 Aa nol- görüyor musun başkası sana almak isterse istemezse sen de alamazsın. O
543 yüzden ders oku, kendin al.
544 E: Evet
545 S: Başkasına yalvarma bana bunu al diye. Hiç kimse yapamaz. Hiç kimse senin
546 isteklerini, her şeyi istersen yapamaz. Çünkü herkes bir yere kadar yapabilir.
547 E: Aynen öyle
548 S: Evet. O yüzden kendin çalış, kendin yapabilirsin.

- 517 S: *For example, my, Ester, in my time Ester would tell that, and her father would be*
518 *aa no I won't allow her to go to another city. I told him, what'll happen, okay she*
519 *should go and learn by herself. Herself. I, so that she should do it, learn it*
520 E: *Hmm, yes*
521 S: *I think it's not a problem at all, it's a good thing*
522 E: *Why do you think it's better?*
523 S: *I think she can be self-sufficient. She should deal with her own affairs, know her*
524 *responsibilities. If she cannot live on her own at ages seventeen – eighteen, okay*
525 *then, when will she do these?*
526 E: *Of course*
527 S: *She must be grown at that age, handle her own affairs. In fact, even for now.*
528 *If it weren't for her father, I'd have given her a lot of responsibilities before heheh*
529 E: *Also, girls in fact should actually be raised that way. They should have self-*
530 *confidence.*
531 S: *Yes, in fact girls must have it more than boys*

532 E: *Why do you think so?*
 533 S: *Because umm you know there is still the idea that man (...) for example, there is*
 534 *still this thought, that men are better, men are stronger, etc. For example, she does*
 535 *something, a woman does something they say aa bravo you did it like a man. That's*
 536 *an awful thing to say, what, what does it mean you did it like a man*
 537 E: *Yes*
 538 S: *That's why umm men are always regarded as more powerful*
 (...)
 539 S: *Right now, I try my best with Ester. Look at these people's words whatever you*
 540 *do, people will talk, do whatever you want, improve yourself, umm study, learn, like*
 541 *that. For example, she asks her father will you buy me this and he says not now. Aa*
 542 *wha- see? If someone else want- doesn't want to buy something for you, you won't*
 543 *be able to buy it yourself. So, study, and buy it yourself.*
 544 E: *Yes*
 545 S: *Don't beg someone else to buy you things. No one can do it. No one can fulfill*
 546 *your wishes, all things you want. Because everyone can do things to a certain extent.*
 547 E: *Exactly*
 548 S: *Yes. So, study, work so that you can do these things on your own.*

After narrating how her family allowed and supported her sisters to study in different cities, starting with lines 517-519, Soraya starts explaining how Arman has an opposite attitude in these matters. When Ester stated such a wish, he openly stated that he would never allow it. Showing an act of resistance, Soraya opposed him and argued that she should be able to study in another city and become a self-sufficient person. She claims that this can be good for Ester to improve herself, stand on her own, and handle her own responsibilities. If she cannot achieve these around the time that she turns eighteen, then she may not get another opportunity in the future, just like her mother (lines 521-525). In fact, I learn that Soraya already encourages Ester to act on her own and would give her more freedom if it were not for Arman's authority (lines 527 & 528). Upon my support of her arguments in lines 529 and 530 where I also stated that young girls should be taught to have self-confidence to act on their wishes, shares her opinion that especially young girls should be raised that way more than young boys because men are always esteemed in the society and all successful actions are attributed to manliness (lines 531-536). If a woman succeeds on something, she is congratulated for acting like a man, which Soraya finds problematic. The fact that men are regarded as more powerful or successful can

discourage young women from taking an action. Therefore, Soraya does not want her daughter to be exposed to such discourses, which leads her to use her own discourse as a medium to motivate Ester. Soraya encourages her daughter and also warns her that people will always say something to discourage her from acting the way she wants; regardless, Ester should listen to her own voice and does whatever she pleases (lines 539-541). She should study and improve herself in order to earn her independence from external impositions, something that her mother could not succeed in her own youth. Soraya does not only give advice to her daughter but she also utilizes their daily experiences as a life lesson for Ester at the same time (lines 541-548). For instance, if Arman does not accept to buy her something she wants, Soraya immediately comments on the issue, using it as an opportunity to show Ester how important it is to be self-sufficient. She encourages Ester to focus on school and become a woman who can support herself so that she can buy whatever she wants rather than being dependent on a power figure to support her financially. This is something Soraya had to suffer in her marriage and even continues to experience. When she wants to purchase something or go somewhere, she should get Arman's permission and financial support, which strengthens his authority in the house while diminishing Soraya's.

Almost all of Soraya's remarks in this excerpt represent a rebellious discourse on her part towards her husband, the source of domestic authority in their home. However, this time, her resistance against this authority is not an act to regain her own agency, but it is to construct her daughter's. She does not want Ester to have a future that is similar to her own past, so she strives to take necessary actions or demonstrates her opposition with her discourse in order to turn Ester into an independent young woman. Instead of submitting to Arman's wills as she did in the

past, she argues against them, which additionally highlights her agentive persona. While standing up to Arman's rules, Soraya also inspires Ester to shape her own future and stand up to anyone that may suppress her. She discredits discouraging people's speeches and influences around Ester so that she will not lose her self-confidence. As previously discussed in *Excerpt 6*, Soraya had lost her confident identity because Arman always discouraged her, stating repeatedly that she could not achieve anything on her own. Now, Soraya tries to do the opposite of what she has experienced for Ester so that she will not lose her agentive nature in the face of oppression or discouragement. Ester should be able to do whatever she wants and buy whatever she wants, she must have action-wise and financial liberty to be able to act on her own based on her own wills and desires rather than her father's or the society's. Despite all these, even though Soraya does her best to eliminate Arman's authoritative stance in Ester's life, it can be also claimed that his presence still restricts her in some ways. As she puts forward in line 528, *if it were not for her father*, Soraya would have been able to liberate her daughter even more. Thus, although the restricting approach towards Ester and her actions is lessened thanks to her mother's endeavors, it is still existent to some limit. Soraya's language use while talking about Ester's actions and future is also worth noticing in that compared to her own past, Soraya now uses more positive expressions. For example, she uses more terms related to independence such as *self-sufficient*, or her own responsibilities; and she also uses more structures with evoking ability and possibility such as *can* as in *you can do these things on your own* in line 548. While using obligation markers such as *must*, she no longer refers to impositions, rather she refers to positive incidents as in *she must be grown* (line 527). Finally, Soraya's remark in line 536, *ne demek bir erkek gibi yaptın / what does it mean you did it like a man*, resembles

Laila's use of the expression *Sana ne? / What is it to you?* in *Excerpt 4* in that it also represents a challenging of other's authority and questioning of their statements. She somehow stands up to their obsolete understanding of men being the better creatures. In a way, this is also an act of resistance in the present since she defies this outdated world view with her discourse.

In this section, I have discussed how the participants of this study aim to shape their future while also tackling with the domestic interferences in their lives. All three of these women are striving to build a better future themselves and have even achieved that to some content. However, in order to succeed in their efforts thoroughly, they must still overcome their parents' or partners' authoritative attitudes and reconstruct their agentive selves in the future as well. In doing that, Firuzeh has had to oppose her family's meddling with her life and set a line between their support and interference. Instead of surrendering to their interference which may have changed the course of her future, she insisted on going on her own path. Contrarily, now that she is more independent from her family, Laila fears for her future in a marriage because she does not want to live under the tamkin rules. She plans a future with her boyfriend, where both of them are free to act as they will and improve their lives by supporting each other rather than restricting one another. Even though she trusts her boyfriend, she still fears from impositions that she may encounter in her household, which makes her hesitant to act on marriage. Finally, Soraya, ultimately having started to reconstruct her agentive self, does not fight for her own future, but her daughter's instead because she does not want Ester to be exposed to Arman's overprotective rules. She wants her to build a future with her confident soul, without needing anybody's approval or support. Their endeavor for an agentive future gains a place in the discourse of these women, too. For instance, because Laila does not feel

very optimistic towards marriage, she sets a more negative tone in her speech with her word choice and sentence structures. Contrarily, Soraya reflects her newly-found defiant identity in her statements and uses more expressions with positive connotations or expressions that signal ability rather than obligation.

6.3 Lifestyle migration as a prospective possibility

As discussed previously, what motivated these women to migrate to Turkey was their desire to build a better life for themselves. Whether it be leaving the political oppression in their country or creating better career opportunities for themselves, their mobilities were an act of agency in search of a better future. In their years in Turkey, they have found new spaces to act for themselves and have reconstructed their agentive identities by defying the authority figures in their lives. Yet, even in their new residence, they have not deserted their endeavors to improve their future, on the contrary, they have worked even harder to guarantee their current standards and better their tomorrow. Bettering their future does not necessarily mean staying in Turkey for these women; rather it also means having the chance to move away when they want, in order to fulfill their dreams and desires. As a result, in our discussions of future, they have always left the door open for a possibility of new mobility in search of re-constructing their future and improving their life standards.

The idea of a consecutive mobility is in fact not a new concept in the lives of the women; since the beginning of the fieldwork, I have heard them countless times talking about the possibility of moving away for a number of reasons. Soraya generally talked about this in a hypothetical manner because while moving to Turkey, their aim was already finding a place to settle. Yet, Laila and Firuzeh, either as part of their adventurous nature or because of their professional plans, always

talked about moving to another country where they could enhance their opportunities in life. Firuzeh has a venturesome approach towards life and does not want to be confined to one place. Moreover, especially for the reasons discussed in Section 6.1, she does not think she has a clear future in Turkey. Thus, she wants to try her chances in other countries as well, building a finer life than her past and present while also travelling and embarking on new adventures. In fact, throughout the fieldwork, I witnessed her efforts to learn another language, improve her skills, and apply different programs or countries to actualize her dreams. The fact that Firuzeh expressed these desires even in our first meeting shows how deeply she is invested in this idea and how focused she is on her future even when she is free from her past constraints.

Excerpt 34 [Interview, 11/12/2019]:

549 **F:** I can't count on Turkey. I haven't experienced in my life for example. I live in
 550 a country; our situation was good. During this years it's not good and I can't
 551 plan about my future in my country.
 552 **E:** Hmm hmm
 553 **F:** It makes umm me how can I say afraid about future and other things umm
 554 when I came here umm how can I say you are a bit better than us but I want to
 555 count on my umm your country about my future and about my visions, about
 556 my goals, I can't count on your country. (...) Because we are in---
 557 **E:** Aynı gemideyiz heheh
 558 **F:** Aynı gemideyiz. Because we are in Middle East. it's not about Turkey, Iran. We
 559 are all living Middle East. And you are- how can I say, we are go down and you
 560 come back Ya mesela kendim değişik bir ülkeye de gitmeyi de düşünüyorum şimdi.
 561 **E:** Hmm hmm
 562 **F:** Neden? Ben İran'da nasıl diyim çok () bilmiyorsun nolacak. Bir gemi, batık gemi
 549 ama. Bura da biraz öyle olur onu çok fazla yaşamak istemiyorum. Bak ben çok
 550 arkadaşım var değişik ülkelerden geliyorlar. (...) **For example, I came here I can**
 551 **go out freely I don't like to come back Iran again.**

549 **F:** I can't count on Turkey. I haven't experienced in my life for example. I live in
 550 a country; our situation was good. During this years it's not good and I can't
 551 plan about my future in my country.
 552 **E:** Hmm hmm
 553 **F:** It makes umm me how can I say afraid about future and other things umm
 554 when I came here umm how can I say you are a bit better than us but I want to
 555 count umm your country about my future and about my visions, about my
 556 goals, I can't on my count on your country. (...) Because we are in---
 557 **E:** We're in the same boat heheh
 558 **F:** We're in the same boat. Because we are in Middle East. it's not about Turkey,
 559 Iran. We are all living Middle East. And you are- how can I say, we are go down
 560 and you come back *For example, I'm thinking about going to another country now.*

561 E: *Hmm hmm*
562 F: *Why? In Iran, I was, how to say, () you don't know what'll happen. A ship, a*
563 *sunken ship though. Here is becoming the same, I don't want to go through that.*
564 *Look, I have a lot of friends coming from different countries. (...)*
565 **For example, I came here I can go out freely I don't like to come back Iran again.**

Before this excerpt, Firuzeh shared with me her content with living in Turkey, but also stated that it would not be her ultimate destination. Starting with the first line (line 549), she presents her reason, which is that she *cannot count on Turkey*. She compares Turkey to Iran in the sense that even though Turkey seems better, it is still going in the same direction as Iran. Because living in a country similar to the one she left does not make sense for Firuzeh, she does not expect a definite future here. She may not fulfill her goals in her new country of residence (lines 555 & 556), which makes her hesitant to depend on Turkey. As Firuzeh struggles to elaborate on her reasoning in line 556, I jump in, trying to help her and in order to refer to how Iran and Turkey are similar to each other, I claim *we are on the same boat*. Firuzeh agrees with me, but also continues her explanation stating that we are not only in the same boat, but we are also in the Middle East (line 559). This shows that the problems she mentioned are not exclusive to Turkey or Iran, rather it is the natality of our geographic position. The countries in the Middle East always experience a problem and as Firuzeh also proposes, if one country goes down, the others may follow it (lines 559 & 560). This can also be interpreted as she is not just trying to leave Iran or Turkey; she is trying to leave the Middle East and all its instability. The following lines demonstrate how Firuzeh is motivated to move to another country because of the status of the whole region and her friends' experiences abroad (lines 562-565). She does not want to spend her years waiting for the ship, her current location, to sink; instead, she wants to run away and actualize her intentions to travel the world and search for her fortune in other places. As she puts in line 565, she came here, to

Turkey where she can be free, but this mobility does not have to come to an end. She is free to not go back to Iran or to dwell on other countries.

Firuzeh's expressions towards Turkey and its status in the Middle East shows that her future mobility will not be an action only on will, rather it will also be a result of necessity. The fact that the countries in the Middle East are always at the risk of losing their stable status is one of the motivators for Firuzeh's prospective movement. Her language use also proves the influence of these factors on her actions; while talking about Turkey, she uses a depressing tone and even uses the word *afraid* (line 553) while mentioning her future here. As always, the use of the inability marker, *can't*, shows itself in a repeating fashion (lines 549 & 550). However, one noticeable point in her discourse while talking about the future is how it differs from her remarks about the past. When compared, she speaks more confidently about her future even during our first conversation together. Especially through lines 560-564, where she clearly states her desire to travel, she uses a more decisive tone. She does not refer to any modals or hedges, directly presents her plans to move or not return to Iran in the future (e.g. lines 560, 562, and 563). Therefore, Firuzeh's utterances reveal that since her arrival to Turkey, her sense of agency has showed an increase as well. Compared to her accounts of the past, her plans of future signal more a confident and action-taking side of her.

Firuzeh's comments about her future also signal an act towards lifestyle migration in that as her previous mobility, she plans this move not out of pure necessity but as an endeavor to improve her life conditions. This move, too, will be different from the traditional understanding of migration. She will not run away from a possible war, nor does she intend to become a refugee. The only underlying reason behind her move is her longing for better options in life; a better career, a better

education; a better lifestyle. The fact that she expressed this intention in the first meeting and actually has come very close to achieving it shows how much Firuzeh has been able to benefit from her agency since her move to Turkey. In fact, if it were not for the pandemic, she would have probably been in her new destination and would have finally achieved her new goal. As revealed in *Excerpts 16 & 17*, she has already taken the necessary steps and made the applications for her next move. However, because of the pandemic, the process has been moving more slowly. Around November, when we met very shortly at a coffee place, which was also the last visit of the fieldwork, she explained to me that she was waiting for the announcements regarding her acceptance and also resuming her studying for the language.

Contrarily to Firuzeh, Laila, who had declared so many times that she did not want to live in Turkey, had changed her mind and decided to stay in Turkey. She started to build a business and a settled lifestyle with her boyfriend. However, the fact that immigration laws are very strict and restricting in Turkey has also cracked the door for another possible movement ideas for Laila. Because registering her business in Turkey would be very challenging and costly, she and Adip decided to register in a European country instead, which meant that they would build new ties with another country as well. This does not definitely mean that they are planning another move, but still, they will have ties to another destination. Although Laila has never expressed a desire to move again after her decision to stay in Turkey, she is also not against the idea if it can provide better life standards and career options for her and Adip. In a conversation with me and one of my roommates, where we decided to explore some neighborhoods of Istanbul, Laila shared her opinion about the controversy over brain drain. Upon my roommate's suggestion that Turkey was

becoming similar to Iran in the sense that it had an increasing emigrating population, Laila opposed her, stating Turkey and Iran should not be compared to each other since Turkey was still preferable for Iranians. Later, while my roommate argued that it might affect a country very negatively because the country would lose skilled and educated citizens, Laila chimed in, claiming that as long as this could help the individuals and create an opportunity for them, they should use that chance.

Excerpt 35 [Interaction, 06/9/2020]:

- 566 **L:** Nowadays, it's a big wave of immigration in Iran. When I say big; from each
567 family, at least one person is already gone. Something like that.
- 568 **Eb:** Oh my god. That's a big problem. (...) But we are facing a similar case right here.
569 Like, people get the education and then, they wanna leave the country. That's a like
570 that's a huge problem because you lose like a umm () you know like well-educated
571 people.
- 572 **L:** Exactly
- 573 **Eb:** And that's actually what you need the most as a developing country
- 574 **L:** So, when you leave the country, what remains? The most stupid person.
- 575 **E:** Actually, just yesterday a person from the opposing party, she told the young
576 people not to immigrate to other countries to work to better the country they have.
577 And she criticized them (...)
- 578 **L:** It's not true. You know... Because in my opinion, you only live once. Okay? So,
579 when you have the opportunity to live in another country and have a better effect
580 for example, I can easily build my start-up here. I see that that's my potential to
581 build something that can affect for example entire Middle East. Okay? But if I live
582 in Iran, I only can affect what's around me. Even the government maybe not let me
583 to have a umm how can I say that? Be a market leader. Because they have lots of...
(...)
- 584 **L:** When you grow, they ask you okay, give my share. Give my share. If not, I will
585 say he works with the umm United State, they are a spy, etc. etc. something like that.

This interaction started with Ebru's inquiry about why Laila had immigrated to Turkey. Because it was the time that I first introduced them to each other, she was curious about Laila and Iran. As Laila narrated about her life in her homeland and how she was not satisfied with the government, she also informed us about the latest flow of immigration from Iran (lines 566 & 567). As can be expected, Ebru finds it very surprising and links this situation to Turkey stating that after their higher education is over, Turkish people also search for ways to better their lives in other countries (lines 568-571). For Ebru, this is a problem because our country can lose its skilled workers and educated population, who should be working to improve it

instead, according to her. Upon these discussions, in order to reflect on the general view in the county, I share a trend-topic comment by a Turkish politician, who held young people responsible for brain-drain in the country (lines 575-577). As I explain the politician's comments, Laila suddenly interrupts me and expresses her disturbance with these comments. For Laila, changing one's country of residence is not a problematic issue because an individual's life belongs to that person only and all individuals should be able to live their life in the best possible way (lines 578 & 579). At this point, Laila presents an example from her own, how she would not have been able to start a business in Iran and make her dreams come true. Contrarily, she had a chance of achievement in Turkey and even creating an effect with her business, which legitimizes her move. She informs us that in Iran, the government interferes with businesses and expect a share from their profits (lines 581-585). Because she did not want to experience the government's blockage, she chose to move away. These exemplifications also indicate that if she were to encounter a different blockage in Turkey, she would also consider changing her residence again. For Laila, her career and professional development is of high importance, therefore she is willing to act in any way in order to make use of her *potential* (line 580) and build her prospective career.

This exchange between my roommate, me, and Laila reflects Laila's approach towards lifestyle mobility even without her knowing. Her remarks in lines 566 and 567 demonstrate that this move by Iranians to different countries is not a rare phenomenon, rather, it is a very common practice in the society. In the same vein with Laila and the other participants of this study, the move of these mentioned Iranians is not out of despair, either. They migrate to other countries because they do not support the Sharia regime and they wish independence from the Sharia

impositions in their lives. Thus, their mobility, too, is an act for improving their life conditions. Her remark in line 578, *you only live once*, clearly reveals the underlying motivation behind Laila's move and all other actions; she wants to live her life to the fullest extent, without anybody's interference or restrictions. If she cannot achieve her dreams in one country, then there is no need for her to resume her stay there. In the same vein, she is currently building a life in Turkey and a career in another country in order to actualize her dreams and her potential to act in the world. Therefore, her adventures may even turn into a transnational act in the course of her search for a better future. In this case, too, Laila's possible mobility will not be out of her own wishes solely; it will still be a result of her conditions. She may choose to move away because she cannot find opportunities to improve her career in that country. Therefore, external factors as much as agency are a contributor to this move. Although Laila's comments about this wave of immigration indicates a lack of agency because of the conditions in Iran, her remarks about her own move signal an act and attitude of agency. Starting with line 578, her sentences are mostly constructed with direct verbs or modals of ability, which indicate that she seems more confident in her actions and sees an actual possibility in her mentions of the future; she can easily build her start-up or use her potential to benefit others. Contrarily, in the hypothetical case that she stayed in Iran; she recites how the government could block her success by either asking for a share from her profits or declaring her a traitor. While referring to the possible oppression of the government, she again resorts to the use of words that indicate restrictiveness such as *let* in line 582.

While Firuzeh and Laila consider another act of movement as part of their pursuit for the future, Soraya has always been distant towards the idea of changing

her current residence. Because they want Ester to have a stable life, they do not want to move from one place to another, trying their chances. Being young and adventurous provides Firuzeh and Laila with more flexibility, whereas having a family leads Soraya to pursue a more settled lifestyle. Normally, Soraya, too, shared her desire to travel and see the different parts of the world with me many times, however, her focus was mainly on the past instead of the future. She linked the reason why she could not travel to her early marriage; because she followed Arman's wishes, she visited the places that her husband wanted and since Arman had already travelled the world before marrying, he did not feel the need to do it during his marriage. Thus, Soraya's desire of mobility is not a future pursuit, rather a past-related resentment. Despite her content with living in Turkey, Soraya discussed many times, what would happen if she and her family were to live in another country. In each scenario, she expressed her reluctance in moving to the Western countries because of concerns for their differences with Soraya's worldview. At the beginning of the fieldwork, when I inquired why they chose Turkey for residence rather than another country, Soraya explained to me she found other countries too distant for herself, in terms of both geographical proximity and cultural similarity. She believed that Turkish people seemed more approachable and friendly despite their prejudices. Moreover, the fact that she was closer to her parents made Soraya feel at ease; she could visit them more easily this way. After almost a year, when I asked Soraya whether she would not want to go to another country, she shared the same views with me. At a walk around the bookshop, when we were searching books for Ester, she explained to me that she would want to travel but not settle in different places for a number of reasons, particularly regarding the culture and the location of their current residence:

Excerpt 36 [Fieldnote, 19/09/2020]:

When I was searching some books, Soraya rejoined me, told me that Arman called and asked where she was. She told him, we were finishing up book shopping and she'd be home in around an hour. Apparently, they were hungry and waiting for Soraya. Soraya started complaining about how impatient Arman is. Normally, she always leaves lunch for them before going out but she told me he is acting this way just to get her home. She criticized him for travelling everywhere when he was young but letting her to go to even a store by herself. She told me she would have loved to see America or Canada. Upon this statement, I asked why they chose Turkey over those countries to live. As she previously explained, she felt closer to the culture here, be it food or the living of the people. Moreover, she told me that she found the culture very cold in the West: "Hiç böyle yakın aile şeyi yok, çocuklar on sekiz olunca gidiyor. Anne, baba, öyle yakın ilişki yok. Hem de yani ben İstanbul'u seviyorum. Burda ne güzel, rahatsın. Her şey burda, başka yere gitmek istemem. Ama gezmek, gezmek isterdim. (...) Param olsun, gezeyim. Bak şimdi, eşim izin vermeden olmuyor. (...)" As with her previous arguments, Soraya focused on the cultural aspect of Turkey as an attraction for herself. She seems to find the Western culture too impersonal for the closely-knitted Iranian traditions and probably does not want Ester to experience that culture, either. (...)

When I was searching some books, Soraya rejoined me, told me that Arman called and asked where she was. She told him, we were finishing up book shopping and she'd be home in around an hour. Apparently, they were hungry and waiting for Soraya. Soraya started complaining about how impatient Arman is. Normally, she always leaves lunch for them before going out but she told me he is acting this way just to get her home. She criticized him for travelling everywhere when he was young but letting her to go to even a store by herself. She told me she would have loved to see America or Canada. Upon this statement, I asked why they chose Turkey over those countries to live. As she previously explained, she felt closer to the culture here, be it food or the living of the people. Moreover, she told me that she found the culture very cold in the West: "They don't have any close family thing, kids leave the house when they turn eighteen. Mother, father, they don't have a close bond. Also, I like Istanbul. Here's beautiful, you are comfortable here. Everything's here, I don't want to go somewhere else. But, travel, I would want to travel. (...) I wish I had money so that I can travel. See, now, I can't do it without my husband's approval. (...)" As with her previous arguments, Soraya focused on the cultural aspect of Turkey as an attraction for herself. She seems to find the Western culture too impersonal for the closely-knitted Iranian traditions and probably does not want Ester to experience that culture, either. (...)

My notes not only reflect on Soraya's views about living in different places, but they also demonstrate once again how Arman's involvement in her life limited Soraya from fulfilling her dreams. Normally, she is a very curious person, she loves learning about other cultures and countries, and I expect her to have wished to travel. However, because her husband did not allow her, she did not have a chance to do so. In fact, she cannot even go to the bookshop without Arman checking on her, let alone travelling abroad. Therefore, Arman's influence on Soraya's actions is visible in this situation as well. Just like his actions in the past, which had discouraged Soraya from travelling and seeing other cultures, his actions in the present also prevents her

from enjoying her time with friends or even from completing her chores in a timely manner. He always rushes her to get back to home.

When it comes to her prospective migration plans, although she does not completely refer to future in her explanations, her remark *Her şey burada, başka yere gitmek istemem / Everything's here, I don't want to go somewhere else* denotes a future reference. Her use of the aorist marker with the present connotation *istemem / I don't want* rather than its past counterpart *istemezdim / I wouldn't want* clearly signals a future act instead of a past one. Contrarily, her following remark, *Ama gezmek, gezmek isterdim / But, travel, I would want to travel* indicates her willingness to at least visit those countries, without having to live there. Thus, although Soraya is content with her future plans as a settler in Turkey, she can still resort to mobility as a tourist rather than a migrant. The comparison of Turkey and the Western other countries is also worth noticing in that, Soraya's preference also signals a lifestyle point of view. Although she finds those countries more facilitative for immigrants because they provide financial resources for the newcomers as well as discussed in *Excerpt 28*, she still prefers Turkey for personal reasons. The other options may be more suitable for them economically and bureaucratically, yet she prefers cultural similarities and the comfort of Istanbul to those factors.

Finally, Soraya's mention of money again reveals her lack of agency in the matter, she is willing to travel, but she does not have the necessary means to do so. Thus, despite her regaining of agentive roles in many aspects of her life, she can still experience acts of restraint from her husband. Over her years in Turkey, she has improved herself and started studying for her dreams, yet her struggles for agency are not completely over, especially until she gains financial independence from her

husband. Thus, in the future, too she may still fight to regain her rights and to build her own agentive life.

To summarize, the approaches of the women towards a new migratory act all differ from each other because of the differences in their plans of the future. Firuzeh has always wanted to travel, therefore, for her, the possibility of moving for another time seems acceptable. She wants to improve her living conditions even more than they are in Turkey since she does not regard Turkey as a stable country, either. Despite having decided to remain in Turkey, Laila is not completely distant towards another move, especially if this action can enable her to carry her profession to the next level. In fact, this was what motivated her to migrate to Turkey as well. Finally, for Soraya, a prospective move is not a necessary action since she has already built her life in Turkey with her family. Besides that, Turkey seems more approachable and livable for her than other possible destinations that Iranians mostly prefer. While their plans for a prospective mobility differ for these women, their motivator for this possible movement is still common: to build a better life. They will choose to migrate to another country or stay in their current country of residence based on whether this decision will help them create a better future for themselves, with better career options or living conditions.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the construction of agency by Iranian lifestyle migrant women in different contexts as young women and migrants in different time spans. Making use of their language use in naturally occurring interactions and semi-structured interviews, I attempted to understand and account for how these women constructed their agentive identities against different authority figures, institutions or people in their lives. With the detailed analysis and explanation of the data, I aimed to answer 3 questions:

1. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their past?
2. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their migration experiences?
3. How is agency constructed in Iranian women's discourse in relation to their future plans?

In order to provide an answer to these questions respectively, in each of the analytical chapters (Chapters 4, 5, and 6), I delved into the experiences of agency struggles or emancipation accounts of my participants and presented 36 excerpts where they discussed the negotiation of agency in their past experiences, present lives, and future aspirations. With a close analysis of the women's linguistic choices while narrating their experiences and thoughts, I attempted to locate and interpret how they reflected the existence or lack of agency in language in use. In this chapter, I aim to provide a summary and theoretical discussion of the findings of this study by referring to the analyzed data and its theoretical interpretations. Upon providing a

discussion of the findings, I will attempt to share my final comments on the limitations of this study and the implications for further research areas respectively.

7.1 Summary of the findings

In chapter 4, I examined the past experiences and agency construction of my participants since it had a noticeable impact on their current experiences and accounts. I noticed that, as young women in an Islamic state, these women had to fight with various actors in order to construct and exercise their agency. While the most commonly uttered of these actors was the state authorities who gain power from the religious laws, these women were also restricted by their family members or close circles in different ways. Realizing that, I focused on how my participants' agentive actions were limited by the state and their families and what reactions these women demonstrated against the limitations they encountered.

In section 4.1, I investigated how faith and law operated interdependently in order to impose certain rules in women's lives and consequently restrict their agentive actions. The women's narration of the past revealed that especially the hijab oppression, with the support of the state and its armed forces, had impacted and limited their actions and visibility in various ways. All my participants recounted how they were pressured to wear the hijab and behave in certain ways in order to be accepted as chaste and moral. Because their actions were monitored by the morality police, they did not feel free to act as they wanted, nor did they feel safe because of the harassment they could encounter due to their clothing or their actions. I also shared my observation that these pressures and their effects in the lives of these women were so unbearable that even simple and light conversations could evoke these memories and they would start narrating their experiences. In more than one

occasion, Laila explained to me how she and Adip could not meet in public spaces for fear of getting arrested, and Firuzeh recounted how she could not dress as she wanted because she feared the public's harassment and the police pressure. Based on the explanations and narrations of my participants, I interpreted that the interference of the state authorities in the lives and faith of these women must have been an important motivator in their move from Iran. Their constant comparison of their past and present living style and their description of Turkey as a more comfortable setting indicate how they were encouraged to leave their homeland in search for more comfortable and freer living conditions.

In the same vein, Section 4.2 focused on how familial pressures could play a role in the agency construction of these women. As a result of the traditional and conservative family lives in Iran, these women encountered domestic impositions to meet the expectations and demands of their parents, relatives or spouses. Laila and Firuzeh had to answer to their families for their every action and could not even go outside without their approval and monitoring. Their families always meddled with their clothing and romantic lives. In fact, Firuzeh's relatives even denounced her as a faithless person because she did not follow the same conservative lifestyle as them (Excerpt 7). Differently than these two, as a married woman, Soraya had to struggle not with her parents' but with her husband's rules and monitoring. Especially due to the age difference between them, Arman always tried to control the actions and living style of Soraya in various ways. He did not let her study or work so that she would be dependent on her. In fact, Excerpt 6 clearly shows how Arman's discouraging discourse affected Soraya throughout their marriage and made her dependent on her husband's decision-making rather than her own actions. Based on these interpretations, I concluded this section by drawing attention to the prevailing

power of faith and traditional lifestyle in the construction of agency in the lives of these women.

Finally, in Section 4.3, seeing that these women did not easily accept the oppression imposed on them, I focused on their experience of emancipation; that is, how they challenged the restrictions they encountered by these authority figures. Although there were many external constraints they faced, these women showed resistance towards the limitations in various ways. Soraya explained how she protested or boycotted the government in different ways by not voting or participating in political events. Even if her actions had limited power, she still used her voice and acts as a way to challenge the state authority. Firuzeh generalized this emancipation fight to all Iranian women, explaining how women try to improve themselves with education and career in order to break their chains and participate in the society (Excerpt 11). In this way, she also challenged the general view of Iranian women among Turks; oppressed and unfree. Rather, she emphasized how women create various fields for themselves to act against the state or the domestic powers. On the topic of domestic pressures, Laila explained how she challenged her parents' interference with her relationship by hiding it entirely. Because she had encountered their meddling in this issue before, she was now keeping her relationship a secret in order to live it freely. Thus, I explained, although there were various external factors limiting these women's actions, even by their reactions to these limitations, they could create new fields to act for themselves by making use of different strategies.

Seeing that my participants' past experiences influenced and even shaped their current lives, in Chapter 5, I focused on how their search for better life conditions motivated these women to change their country of residence and whether this movement enabled them to assume more agentive identities. In Section 5.1, I

investigated how and why these women moved to Turkey in order to better understand the underlying reasons behind their mobility. Through their narrations, I found out that although they all came to Turkey with very different reasons, the underlying motivation was all the same; that is, living a better life than their previous one. For Firuzeh this better life meant one in which she could travel the world and have adventures of her own. For Laila, a better life was one where she could live without any restrictions and improve her career. As a mother, Soraya's aspiration was to provide a better life for her daughter as well, a life where she would not experience government impositions in Iran. These women related their reason for choosing Turkey as their new home to its proximity to their homeland. This way, they could still be close to their families and visit them. I also shared my observations that specifically studying had an important place in the women's lives because it enabled them to mediate their transnational mobilities and assume more agentive characters. Excerpts 16, 17, and 18 demonstrate how Firuzeh applies for different schools in order to either stay in Turkey or move to another country while Soraya describes studying as one of the biggest opportunities for women to become independent individuals.

Based on the idea that my participants' mobility was an act of and act for agency in itself, in Chapter 5.2, I discussed how they started to reconstruct their agentive roles against the authorities of their past. I noted that, away from Iran, the influence of the state laws already lessened for these women. However, despite being far away, their families still influenced their living. Excerpt 20 specifically demonstrates how Laila could not easily be free from her parents' beliefs and influence over her and despite not believing in Islam herself, could not take off her headscarf for an entire year in Turkey. Soraya on the other hand, was still living with

her husband and still encountering his aims for restricting her. However, in time, she gained more independence thanks to her stubborn efforts. Similarly, in Excerpt 19, Firuzeh recounted how she felt more confident and independent about her appearance once she was away from the influence of her relatives who were forcing her to act in accordance with their own idealistic standards for women. Thus, I concluded, living in Turkey did enable the women to assume more active roles in their own lives without the public or political pressures of their homeland. By taking off their hijab and participating in more activities, they started to exercise agency more than in their past.

Finally, in Chapter 5.3, I drew attention to how these women mediated their actions as immigrants in an officially monolingual country. I noted that upon their arrival to Turkey, considering English language as a *lingua franca*, these women had relied on their knowledge of the language, but soon they realized that not many people in Turkey actually mastered and used English. This of course caused a problem in many areas for them from daily life to professional areas, from education to socialization. Because of the sociolinguistic structure of the country, they felt obliged to learn Turkish or experienced challenges because they lacked this knowledge. Both Laila and Firuzeh recounted various times how they had difficulty in finding a job or understanding lectures because they were not proficient in Turkish. Especially Laila, who did not know Turkish at all, experienced frustration many times because she could not communicate with anybody. She had to rely on her boyfriend's knowledge of Turkish in order to run her errands and official businesses, which made her dependent on him. In fact, Excerpt 23 revealed how Adip had to change cities in order to help Laila complete some official business upon her arrival to Turkey. Soraya, on the other hand, put greater importance to the

English language as well because it could enable her to access information and prestige in the society. In Excerpts 25 and 26, I demonstrated how even as a family, they cared deeply about this language and recognized it as an enabler for themselves in many areas such as education, career, and socialization. Thus, sociolinguistic conditions also played an important role in the life decisions and actions of my participants while they strived to build a life for themselves as immigrants in a monolingual country.

Finally in Chapter 6, I discussed how my participants' plans for future affected and were affected by their environment and other external factors. Section 6.1 was an overview of how these women, as immigrants, faced challenges either because of bureaucracy, their linguistic barriers, or because of their national identity. To elaborate, as Soraya recounted in Excerpt 27, because the visa implementations in Turkey changed abruptly, Iranians, along with other immigrant groups, had to follow immigration laws regularly and arrange their actions according to this changing atmosphere all the time. Moreover, they could not receive citizenship or even the residence permit as easily as in other countries due to the migratory laws in Turkey. All these factors created an uncertainty while my participants were planning their future lives in the country. Alongside the bureaucratic barriers, these women also encountered problems in building a career or adjusting to the social life because of their national identity. Firuzeh complained many times about how she could not find a prestigious job as a result of her nationality, immigrant status, and her linguistic knowledge. As Iranians, my participants described themselves as part of the bigger Middle Eastern society and claimed that because of this image, they could not reach many opportunities in various contexts. They narrated how they felt less lucky compared to the Westerners because Westerners were regarded with more respect

and status in the society. In fact, Laila, was very concerned for her future in any destination because not a lot of countries were willing to accept Iranian or Middle Eastern immigrants due to their controversial image. As can be seen in *Excerpt 30* also, she felt very discouraged about her future plans as a result of these considerations. Thus, I interpreted that all these external factors worked interdependently with each other in shaping the future of my participants.

Chapter 6.2 revolved around how these women planned to include their families into their lives while building their future. The data revealed that for Soraya, only consideration was her daughter's future since she did not want Ester to experience her struggles as well. As demonstrated in *Excerpt 33*, she encouraged Ester to assume a more agentive and independent identity from childhood so that she would not have to depend on anyone when she became an adult woman. Firuzeh, on the other hand, was still struggling to break ties from her family as they tried to meddle with her life decisions. She explained to me how she refused their offer to buy her a house in Turkey despite knowing she was planning a future somewhere else. Thus, I interpreted that although the familial pressure still continued in Firuzeh's life to some extent, she now started to defy this pressure and voiced her own desires. Laila's concerns for the future however shifted from parental pressures to marriage life. Because she and Adip were planning to get married in the future, she was concerned with the traditional marriage rules in the Iran culture and laws. The fact that men can hinder their wives from working or participating in the society frightened Laila so much that she was hesitant towards marriage despite trusting her boyfriend very dearly. After working so hard for her career and her independence, she could not risk being confined to her house by yet another authority figure. Therefore, I concluded that although the women had gained more agentive role after

their move to Turkey, there were still concerning domestic factors as they were constructing their future lives.

In the final section (Section 6.3), I discussed that these women's aims to better their future did not come to an end with their move to Turkey. Rather, as lifestyle migrants, they shared how they aimed to improve their future lives with the help of prospective mobilities or transnational ties. Laila argued how she was willing to travel further in order to achieve her dreams rather than being restricted in a destination. Consequently, she started her business in another country while living in Turkey. Firuzeh shared in Excerpt 34 how she felt insecure in Turkey because of the political and economic issues of the country and was hoping to move to another country. Differently than these women, having moved to Turkey with her family, Soraya was aiming to settle in here because she thought this country was more in line with their own culture and living style. Thus, as a lifestyle migrant she was planning to better her life in Turkey; that is, a life where she would not be restricted by political or familial pressures but would still feel close to her home. Based on the interpretation of these data, I concluded that although the migratory plans of these women were all very different from each other as a result of the difference in their future plans, they were still aiming to reach a better life and assume more agentive identities through their resistance to oppressive figures in their lives.

At the linguistic level, while recounting their past life, their migratory experiences or prospective plans, in order to represent the mitigation of their agency, my participants made use of various structures and choices. Specifically, their past experiences were structured with modals obligation, necessity or ability, reflecting their lack of autonomy and authority. In the same vein, they resorted to utterances in the passive voice which directly signals an agent-less action (Schlesinger, 1989 cited

in Duranti, 2004) on the part of the speakers. Other than these structures, the word choice of the participants were also revealing how depressive or pessimist their experiences or plans were. They described their lives in Iran with words with negative connotations such as *uncomfortable*, *slave*, or *necessity*. In recounting their current migratory experiences as well, they uttered words such as *difficult*, *don't know*, or *foreigner* reflecting the challenges they face or the uncertainty of their status as foreigners in the country. Therefore, the agentive identity of my participants found place in their use of language as well. With their linguistic choices, they set the tone or reflected the existence or lack of their agentive roles.

This section briefly reviewed each analysis chapter and their findings. In the next section, I aim to discuss how these findings can be accounted for from the theoretical perspective.

7.2 Construction of agency in interaction

One of the aims of this thesis study was to investigate how the participants constructed their agency in speech in relation to their immediate environment and broader sociopolitical structures. In order to achieve that, I focused on their use of various linguistic components including code-switches or lexical insertions, word choices, use of different auxiliary modals, the verb voice in their utterances, and so on. As stated in Chapter 1, the participants' accounts of agency in their interactions did not focus on a specific time frame. Rather, their agentive identity was interlinked with their accounts of the past, present, and future. Their present life and actions were a result of and a response to their past experiences while they were also influencing the women's future aspirations and plans. Thus, in the analysis and

discussion of the data, I referred to their past experiences in order to account for their current and prospective agentic identity.

While investigating the agentic identities of my participants, I focused both on the existence and mitigation of their agentic roles, as suggested by Duranti (2004). Approaching the concept of agency from Joseph's (2006) point of view as well, I always kept in mind that agency is not something that individuals definitely have or definitely lack. Instead, I analyzed my data understanding that agency is a slippery phenomenon (Block, 2009) that we can never fully and clearly locate or demonstrate. In fact, the data revealed that sometimes even the most agent-less situations can play a role in the agency construction of my participants. To exemplify, the fact that Laila kept her relationship a secret from her family was influenced by her parents' authoritative and over-protective nature, thus it was actually a limitation for her to exercise her agency and be in a relationship with whomever she wanted. However, keeping this secret also helped her resume her relationship with Adip and in a way, enabled Laila to act agentively in the way that she wanted. The fact that even a restriction can lead Laila to assume an agentic identity shows how blurry the line between the existence and mitigation of agency can be.

Another aspect of agency construction demonstrated in this study was the interlinked relationship of agency with external structures and habitus. In line with Bourdieu's (1977) and Giddens' (1976) views on the concept, I observed that the narratives and accounts of these women reflected their agency as a construct that influences and is influenced by internal factors such as their past experiences, desires, habits, or more broader structures such as the society, its roles and norms, or other social phenomena. In their accounts, the women did not only share their wills

and desires or past experiences, rather they also included how the society or their families influenced their action taking. The existence or the lack of their agency was not something that occurred out of nowhere for these women. Rather, their actions were the consequences of or a response to their family's support or restrictions or the government's implementations along with their own aspirations. Therefore, the sociopolitical context played an important role in shaping the agentive identities of the participants as well. For example, Firuzeh's application to higher education programs was a result of the delay in obtaining her visa; she encountered a situation that can limit her stay in Turkey and counteracted in order to solve the problem. Her decision of studying embodies her own wills and necessity together. Her action was a consequence of the visa problem but choosing to study rather than other possible solutions also reflects her own free will.

Just as the recursive relationship between agency and external and internal structures, these women also influenced and shaped their environment through their own action taking. They interpreted and (not) followed rules and norms, created new experiences, and interacted with people. All these actions also helped shape their habitus and other social structures. Soraya's decision to prepare for the university exam changed the order in her household and influenced the lifestyle of her husband and daughter as well. Willingly or unwillingly, they started to rely on Soraya less because she spared a time span for herself every day to study for the exam. With her newly gained more independent attitude, she caused Arman to change his actions and attitudes as well. Although he did not want him to continue education, as time passed, with the help of Soraya's efforts and constant reminders about this issue finally led him to support Soraya in her endeavors. Similarly, Laila's decision to settle in Turkey, which was a consequence of various external and internal conflicts,

changed the course of both her and Adip's lives. Their interpretation of and response to the Turkish laws for foreign businesspeople led them to register to another country and created transnational ties for them.

Additionally, Miller's (2010) observation that her research participants' agentive roles changed in line with their different positioning of themselves in speech was supported in this study as well. In my study, too, participants' discourse and attitudes changed based on their positioning in their accounts as students or a working person, a parent or a wife, or young women living with their family, etc. As Arman's wife, Soraya recounted and reflected many instances where her agency was restricted, however, as a mother, she was always more independent and decisive and even challenged Arman's authority with her words. Laila's tone was always more decisive when she was talking about her business but her voice was suppressed when she was recounting her experiences with the Iranian government or her family's pressures. Therefore, the women's actions and accounts were influenced by and reflected their different identity roles as well.

On the relation between agency and language, the findings of this study went hand in hand with the previous findings. Firstly, as Miller (2010) and Van Lier (2008) claim, locating agency in interaction proved to be challenging because there were no direct signs revealing the agentive identity of the individuals in speech. Instead, this study showed the importance of reading between the lines and linking the utterances to the larger social contexts in locating and interpreting agency. One particular word choice, a social event or a specific positioning could reflect agency of the speakers or the lack of it. Accordingly, the fact that participants' statements included different modality verbs and formation of passive or active voices revealed how the grammatical structures can signal agentive or agent-less roles of the

speakers (Bybee, et al., 1994; Schlesinger, 1998, cited in Duranti, 2004). The fact that participants did not only use one specific structure but rather made use of various strategies and structures in their narrations reveal the multifaceted aspect of agency in its reflection on language. Instead of focusing one particular aspect in language in use, investigating the different linguistic choices and productions of the speakers can shed more light into the understanding of the concept and help researchers interpret it more clearly.

The findings above demonstrate that the investigation of agency cannot be carried out from a single point of view. Rather, the concept should be analyzed within its interlinked relationship with various external and internal factors that may shape individuals' actions and may, at the same time, be influenced by those same actions. Because agency is not a definite concept that can be located and demonstrated with ease, its analysis in interaction should rely on the investigation of all these factors in order to be able to reach a more reliable interpretation.

7.3 Iranians as lifestyle migrants

One noteworthy finding of this study was the expansion of the definition and scope of the concept of lifestyle migration. Traditionally, the term referred to affluent Westerners in search of agreeable climates or more adventurous life experiences in more rural or exotic parts of the world (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). However, this study presented an insight into how the scope of lifestyle migration could be expanded into the non-Western contexts as well. While the apparent reasons of the participants for moving to Turkey were very distinguishable from the Western contexts since they seemed more socio-political oriented than individualistic aspirations, their underlying motivation was still a search for a better life. Because

these women's mobility did not include a safety concern or an economic endeavor, their migration trajectory differed significantly from the traditional migratory movements. Rather, their search for more secular, independent, agentive life could only be explained as a search for better living conditions. Additionally, the fact that these women chose a metropolis rather than a rural or exotic part of the world demonstrates that lifestyle migration can occur anywhere as long as the new space can provide better living conditions in line with the migrants' understanding of the term better. For the participants of this study, a metropolis where they could live new experiences and be in touch with the world is more agreeable than a rural area. Therefore, this study provided a more comprehensive understanding and interpretation of the concept of lifestyle migration while also shedding light on the new areas of mobilities in the migration research.

Moreover, the demographic profile and some migratory experiences of the participants of this study also resembled the mainstream lifestyle migrants and their life experiences. These women, too, came from affluent families and did not have extreme financial concerns. Instead, they only worked at temporary jobs in order to afford their expenses for the time being or lived on their savings, which was discussed in various empirical and theoretical works before as well (e.g., Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Korpela, 2020). Therefore, as Madden (1999) also suggests, their work life only existed in order to provide for their new lifestyles. In the same vein, these women's mobility could be taken as an act of adventure and spirituality since they (Korpela, 2009b) also demonstrated great courage in embarking upon an unknown adventure. Benson (2011) suggests that lifestyle migration is also a self-realization process of reflecting on past experiences and current living conditions. Similarly, as demonstrated in the analysis chapters elaboratively, through their

migratory movement, my participants, too, started a journey of self-realization by reflecting on their past experiences, current lifestyle, and even on their future endeavors. Thus, this study provided evidence that although the scope and context of the movement may differ from its existing definition, there are still prevailing similarities between these women's mobility and the previously reported accounts of lifestyle migration.

Apart from these similarities, this study revealed a very distinct and noticeable difference between the Western and non-Western contexts of lifestyle migration movement. Fechter and Walsh (2010) and O'Reilly and Benson (2016) point out that Westerner lifestyle migrants are highly advantageous and even more privileged individuals than the receiving community. They receive visas more easily, travel or handle their businesses more effectively, and they are regarded with high status in the society. Contrarily, this study revealed that the non-Westerner context drew an opposite picture where the migrants felt a distinct discrimination because of their non-Western migrant identity. The visa regulations or the residence permit processes were more challenging, their job applications were rejected because of their migrant status, and they were regarded as disadvantaged individuals who had to run away from their countries. I believe that this sharp difference can be studied with more detail since it can bring up new areas of discussion into the lifestyle migration studies from the perspective of ethnicity, national identity or racism.

Korpela's (2010) study in Varanasi, India had shown that lifestyle migrants started to describe themselves as more agentive actors since they were able to do something to change their lives rather than being passive individuals. In the same vein, the narrations and experiences of the participants of this study also proved that lifestyle migrants assume a more agentive identity in their new destination than their

previous lives. Running away from their prior constraints (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009) and creating new areas for themselves to act and gain visibility, these individuals become more agentive actors as a result of their mobility. Moreover, their processes of self-realization and agency construction do not come to an end with the migrants' arrival to the new destination. As the Section 6.3 also demonstrated, these are ongoing processes that can expand into the future plans of the migrants as well. With their newly gained agency and the benefits of the globalization (Germann Molz, 2008), these individuals become global nomads (D'Andrea, 2007) that can continue their movement and open up new areas for themselves to create a better life, more adventures, and a more agentive identity.

This section provided an insight into the discussion of lifestyle migration as a comparison of the existing literature and the findings of this study. In the next section, I will reflect on the multilingual practices of the participants in their daily life practices as migrants living in an officially monolingual country.

7.4 Reflecting on multilingual interactions in an officially monolingual space

Having mastered different languages at different times additional to their mother tongue, the participants of this study identified themselves as multilingual speakers. In line with their rich linguistic repertoires, they have demonstrated a multiplicity of linguistic practices and strategies in their interactions with me and other individuals throughout the course of the study. I observed that they could make use of their linguistic resources effectively according to the context and their linguistic needs. Their home language was of course Persian and they made use of English and Turkish at school, at work, or other social contexts. However, being migrants in an officially and populously monolingual country such as Turkey, they could not make

use of their linguistic repertoires as much as they had aimed. In fact, they often recounted a variety of troubles they had to encounter because of the monolingual social structure of the Turkish society. They reported not having been able to complete official or even daily business because they did not have a shared linguistic background with the majority of the society. Moreover, as a result of this lack, they could not even socialize as much as they wanted. In light of the participants' accounts and my observations of their daily interactions, in this section, referring to the related literature, I aim to discuss how being multilingual speakers in a monolingual social context affected the daily and migratory experiences, interactions, and agentive roles of the participants.

One of the first findings of this study regarding multilingual language use is the prevailing status of English as a lingua franca. Before their move to Turkey, the women all presumed that the Turks would have known and used English effectively when necessary. Although their assumption soon proved to be wrong, their surprise directly demonstrates how they took the status and privilege of English for granted. They could not believe that such influential language as English was not used commonly by a society. Moreover, especially Soraya's positioning of English as a medium to reach information and prestige also strengthens the power of the English language as a shared medium of interaction and privilege. Therefore, this study can also show the need for investigating on the topic of English as a lingua franca among different migratory groups and their approach to and assumptions on the subject as well. Additionally, this situation also demonstrated how the expectations of migrant groups can drastically differ from their real experiences upon arrival to the new destination.

A second finding demonstrated that although individuals may have the knowledge of a language, the target society may not recognize them as legitimate speakers of it and not grant them the right to speak or become a part of that group (Bourdieu, 1977; Miller, 2004). To elaborate, although the women knew English and Turkish in different levels, they could not practice these languages unless their interlocutors also used them. For example, although Laila knew English, because her classmates spoke Turkish among each other, she was left out of the conversation and her desire to become a part of that target group was restricted. Similarly, the fact that Firuzeh could not find a prestigious job because of her immigrant identity indicate that although the subject may have all the necessary qualifications to be accepted, the target society may still differentiate them on the basis of their migrant background and exclude them. This study also proved that if the target society or the interlocutors do not accept the migrants or grant them the right to speak, they can also limit their agentive roles (Ros i Solé, 2007). In such a situation, migrants may not interact in the society or handle their businesses without relying on someone else, which can make them dependent on others. Moreover, they may not find employment or socialize in the society. All these factors can constrain how the migrants act in order to fulfill their desires or necessary errands. Thus, I found in this study that the sociolinguistic, demographic structure of the receiving community and their stance towards migrants or languages can impact the actions and adjusting processes of the migrants as well.

One final note that should be drawn attention in this study was the impact of the researcher's linguistic repertoire on the course of the interactions. Although the participants and I could communicate easily with our shared linguistic resources, I did lack the knowledge of their native language. The fact that I, as the researcher, did not know the participants' mother tongue prevented them from using their primary

medium of communication. Therefore, they had to craft the necessary strategies and resources in their foreign languages, Turkish and English, in order to express themselves clearly. This of course limited them to some extent because they sometimes lacked lexical or syntactic knowledge to create a meaningful utterance. Luckily, as individuals who exercise multilingual practice in their lives, my participants made use of various strategies and switches among their known languages in order to make themselves understood. Their switch between Turkish and English was often very natural and effortless, as can be also seen in the transcription of the data, and enabled them to express their opinions clearly. Sometimes, they also resorted to the insertion of Persian because some specific concepts did not exist in neither English nor Turkish. In such cases, they provided an explanation of the concept in either of the languages after the insertion so that it was easier for me to understand it. Therefore, not only the linguistic repertoire of the participants but also the linguistic resources of the researcher is effective in the structure of the discussions and the multilingual practices of the participants.

This section provided an explanation on the daily multilingual practices of the participants and how these practices affect and are affected by different factors. In the next section, I will attempt to provide an account of the limitations of the study.

7.5 Limitations of the study

As also discussed in the Methodology Chapter (Chapter 3), there have been various issues that concerned me during the data collection of this study. One of the primary concerns for me was the Covid 19 pandemic which forced everyone to stay in lockdown for around 2 months in Turkey. During that time between March 2020 and

June 2020, I could not visit my participants at all. This of course disrupted the course of the study noticeably. It was around the time I was certain of my rapport with the participants and we started to have more heart-to-heart interactions than before. Therefore, not being able to see them during that time span created a problem for me in terms of the content of the data. I aimed to solve this problem by holding online meetings or phone calls with my participants. In fact, upon hearing my concerns, they also suggested having these conversations themselves. Thus, starting with late March, we met on some videocall applications, used chats more often than before and started having regular phone calls during which I recorded our interactions with the participants' permission. I also took daily notes and reflections of our chat messages in order to keep an organized record of that time span.

A second concerning point affected me both during the data collection and the transcription processes. Because I met my participants generally in public places, I could not record every interaction clearly. There were noises in the background, which made it very difficult for me to understand some utterances while transcribing them. Moreover, because we were mobile in some of the meetings, I could not record our interactions at all. Especially during shopping or walking around the beach, I relied on my fieldnotes rather than the recordings in order to remember and record the events and conversations. Specifically, after these types of meetings, I kept my notes immediately after parting from my participants and I also recorded my own voice as I recounted the events of the day for myself because it was easier and faster than writing notes. That way, I could transfer my thoughts, observations or reflections immediately after our meetings and could put them on paper more easily and without missing any details later on.

Another challenge for me during the data collection was actually the lifestyle of my participants and how it affected the regularity of our meetings. Living in a chaotic city as Istanbul and dealing with various activities all at once, sometimes they did not have enough time for our meetings. Mostly because we were all living very far away from each other, we had to arrange certain meeting points in order to travel easily. Soraya had so many responsibilities at home and was trying to focus on her exam preparation, thus she could not invite guests or go out very easily. Laila and Firuzeh was working, studying, juggling between projects, which limited their spare time extensively. Especially during final exam periods, Laila was always texting me and apologizing for not being able to meet with me. These situations sometimes worried me since I was concerned about the frequency and regularity of our meetings but in time, as we got more acquainted with each other, they actually tried to spare their time for me more and more. I suspect that being able to express themselves and having someone to talk to encouraged these women to meet with me more often, which eventually motivated them to spare their time as well.

Finally, I believe that the structure of our meetings and my lack of knowledge of Persian must have affected the course of the study as well. Because I did not speak Persian, my interactions with the participants occurred mainly in English or Turkish during all meetings. I believe it would have changed the nature of our interactions noticeably if I had known Persian since the women could have explained everything more clearly in their native language. Because of my lack of knowledge, sometimes they went between Turkish and English in order to express themselves more understandably. Moreover, because it was only the two of us in most of our meetings, the line between interaction and interview became extremely blurry for me. As women wanted to talk about an issue, I wanted to converse about it as well.

However, as a researcher, I was also curious about some aspects of their accounts. Therefore, while raising my questions or making my comments, it was really challenging for me to not change the structure of the meeting. If it was an interview, I was trying to make fewer personal comments about the issue and similarly, if it was a conversation, I was directing my questions more carefully in order not to transform the conversation into an interview.

Upon sharing the limitations that I encountered during the data collection and transcription periods of the study, I will conclude this chapter with my notes for further research possibilities.

7.6 Implications for further research

This study mainly focused on the interactions and experiences of Iranian lifestyle migrant women living in Turkey. Although their demographic characteristics varied from each other, experiences and accounts of the participants were generally similar. They all reported similar subjects as the actor of their restrictions or articulated similar desires in life; that is to be able to make their own decisions and act freely. In order to validate and generalize the research findings, I believe that a similar study with a larger group of women would be helpful. As stated earlier, I met with these women in one-to-one meetings, conversing and exchanging ideas only between each other. However, meetings where other agents are also included in the interactions or even focus group studies may reveal additional information and provide more sights.

A second point that could be noted for further research is the need to shift the focus of lifestyle migration research. As Fechter and Walsh (2010) note, lifestyle migration is an act that is primarily associated with the Westerners. However, as this study also demonstrated, individuals from the Eastern countries have also started to

migrate to different areas in the world for the purposes of improving their life conditions. Different than the traditional migratory movements, similar to the Western context, these individuals have been moving not out of necessity or for fear of safety but rather, they aim to better their lives and reach to more fulfilling life course than their previous ones. Although their understanding or interpretation of this better life may change, their mobility should still be considered a lifestyle movement and investigated under this framework.

Finally, Istanbul as a hub for all these migration movements (Biehl, 2014) may become the focus of more academic investigations and studies. As a meeting point for transnational mobilities (Biehl, 2015), Istanbul offers various areas for further research. An ethnographic investigation of how the intersection of these different cultures, languages, lifestyles, and socio-political changes affect the lives of the local people and the migrants can shed a light into the transnationalism and multilingualism studies in great extent.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. On lifestyle migration (*Yaşam tarzı göçü üzerine*)

1. What kind of an environment were you born in to? (*Nasıl bir çevrede doğdun?*)
2. What made you decide to come to Turkey? (*Türkiye'ye gelmeye nasıl karar verdin?*)
3. How long did it take you to prepare? (visa, residence, etc.) (*Hazırlanman ne kadar sürdü? (vize, oturma vb.)*)
4. How did you decide to live in this region? How did you find this apartment? (*Bu bölgede yaşamaya nasıl karar verdin? Bu daireyi nasıl buldun?*)
5. Did you consider working here? (*Burada çalışmayı düşündün mü?*)

B. On language learning and multilingual practices (*Dil öğrenimi ve çokdillilik pratikleri üzerine*)

1. How was your Turkish when you first came to Istanbul? (*İstanbul'a ilk geldiğinde Türkçen nasıldı?*)
2. How did you communicate with people when you first came? (*İlk geldiğinde insanlarla nasıl iletişim kurdun?*)
3. How did you improve your Turkish in time? (*Zamanla Türkçeni nasıl geliştirdin?*)
4. Which languages do you use in your daily life and in what contexts? (*Günlük yaşamında hangi dilleri, hangi bağlamlarda kullanıyorsun?*)
5. Have you ever received comments about your Turkish? (*Türkçen hakkında hiç yorum aldın mı?*)

C. On the government implementations in Iran (*İran'daki hükümet uygulamaları üzerine*)

1. What do you think about the Iranian government? Do you agree with their decision-making and how they rule the country? What do you think they do well and what do they do badly? (*İran hükümeti hakkında ne düşünüyorsun? Verdikleri kararlara ve ülkeyi nasıl yönettiklerine katılıyor musun? Sence neyi iyi yapıyorlar, neyi kötü yapıyorlar?*)
2. Are there people opposing the state's oppressions? What do they do to oppose? What happens to them? (*Devletin baskılarına karşı çıkanlar var mı? Karşı çıkmak için ne yapıyorlar? Onlara ne oluyor?*)
3. What do you think about Turkish people's perspectives on Iran? Did you receive any comments from Turks about life/politics in Iran? (*Türk halkının İran'a bakış açısı hakkında ne düşünüyorsun? İran'daki yaşam/siyaset hakkında Türklere herhangi bir yorum aldın mı?*)

D. On gender issues in an Islamic state (*İslamik bir ülkede cinsiyet roller üzerine*)

1. How did living in an Islamic state affect your childhood/ social life/ education/ career choice? (*İslam devletinde yaşamak, çocukluğunu/ sosyal hayatını/ eğitimini/ kariyer seçimini nasıl etkiledi?*)
2. What can you say about women's place in Iran? (*İran'da kadının yeri hakkında ne söyleyebilirsin?*)
3. How do Iranian women respond to the government's monitoring their life/clothing, etc.? (*İranlı kadınlar, hükümetin yaşamlarını/giysilerini vb. izlemesine nasıl tepki veriyor?*)

4. How do romantic relationships take place in Iran? How does dating take place?
Can you share it with your parents? Can you introduce your date to them?
(İran'da romantik ilişkiler nasıl oluyor? Randevulaşma nasıl gerçekleşir? Anne babanla paylaşır mısın? Onlara randevunu tanıştırır mısın?)
5. How has living in Turkey affected you as a woman? What things have you changed on yourself (clothing, social relationships, etc)? *(Türkiye'de yaşamak bir kadın olarak seni nasıl etkiledi? Kendinde neleri değiştirdin (giyim, sosyal ilişkiler vb.)?)*
6. What can you say about Turkish people's perceptions on women's life in Iran?
(Türk halkının İran'daki kadın yaşamına ilişkin algısı hakkında neler söyleyebilirsin?)

APPENDIX B

DATA TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTION GUIDE

Turkish: regular type

English: bold type

Persian: gray highlight

Turkish translation of an English utterance: *italic*

(.): pause more than one second

Adapted from Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008)

APPENDIX C

ETHICS COMMITTEE OF BOĞAZIÇI ÜNİVERSİTESİ RESEARCH APPROVAL

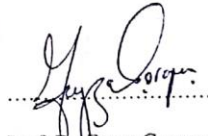
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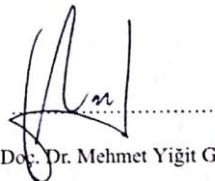
T.C.
BOĞAZIÇI ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Yüksek Lisans ve Doktora Tezleri Etik İnceleme Komisyonu


Sayı: 2020-03 11 Aralık 2019

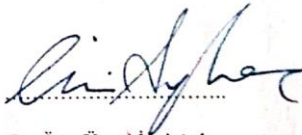
Elanur Sönmez
Yabancı Diller Eğitimi

Sayın Araştırmacı,
"Life-style migrants in Istanbul: The case of Iranian young adults" başlıklı projeniz ile ilgili olarak yaptığımız SBB-EAK 2019/77 sayılı başvuru komisyonumuz tarafından 11 Aralık 2019 tarihli toplantıda incelenmiş ve uygun bulunmuştur.


Prof. Dr. Feyza Çorapçı


Doç. Dr. Mehmet Yiğit Gürdal


Doç. Dr. Ebru Kaya


Dr. Öğr. Üyesi İnci Ayhan

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

**BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY FACULTY OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION
INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Project Title: Life-style Migrants in İstanbul: The Case of Iranian Young Adults

Researcher: Elanur Sönmez

Coordinator: Asst. Prof. Işıl Erduyan

B.U. Department of Foreign Language Education, İstanbul

Contact Information: elanur.sonmez@boun.edu.tr / 0212 359 4612 6946

Dear Participant,

This study is part of a thesis project investigating multilingual Iranian individuals living in İstanbul. Specifically, the study explores how multilingual Iranian adults in İstanbul use the languages they speak in their social lives.

I have reached you through our mutual contacts. If you agree to participate in this study, I will meet with you at times and places that you and I choose together. As I want to understand what you tell me better, I will take notes from time to time. I will also join you in other social places that you allow me to come with you. Based on your permission, and at days and times that you let me, I will turn on my audio-recorder when we are in a conversation. This is for me to understand the details in your language use better and listen to some parts again later. These recordings or the

notes that I take will only be analyzed by our research team, that s my advisor and me, but will not be shared with any third parties. You can listen to the recordings and take a look at my notes whenever you want.

All this information I obtain from you will later be used for analysis in my study. The data collected from you in this study might be used in presentations and publications that derive out of this study. You and other people around you that will be involved in recordings will be presented in different names in this study. Your real name or any other information that identifies you will not be used in this study. No personal information about you will be disclosed or shared with third parties.

This study will span January 2020-November 2020. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any given time. In the case of your withdrawal, we will delete the audio-recordings and will not use them for any other purpose.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me at any time during and after the study. You can reach me through this email: elanur.onmez@boun.edu.tr or via my advisor Dr. Işıl Erduyan (office phone: 0212 359 4612 6946).

Alternatively, to inquire your rights in this project, you can always contact Boğaziçi University Ethics Committee for Master and PhD Theses in Social Sciences and Humanities (SOBETİK) via: sbe-ethics@boun.edu.tr

Please indicate your confirmation for participation in the research by signing below.

I appreciate your support.

Kind Regards,

Elanur Sönmez

Authorization

Please mark:

- I have read and understood the research described above.
- I understand that I voluntarily participate in this study and I know that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that my speech will be audio-recorded at times that I confirm in the course of this study.

My signature below indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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