

Received: 19 November, 2025

Accepted: 13 March, 2026

Published: 12 June, 2026

Adolescents, Migration, and Identity in Bandar Anzali: A Qualitative Comparative Study of Literature, Language Education, and Place Attachment

Seyedeh Keyhaneh Kafshchi

Department of English Language, University of Jiroft,
Jiroft, Iran; kafshchi@iau.ac.ir

Roohollah Reesi Sistani

Department of English Language, University of Jiroft,
Jiroft, Iran

Cite this article:

Kafshchi, S. K., & Sistani, R. R. (2026). Adolescents, Migration, and Identity in Bandar Anzali: A Qualitative Comparative Study of Literature, Language Education, and Place Attachment. *Cultura Científica*, (24), pp. 564–581.

Abstract

The present study investigates the intersectionality between cultural identity, place attachment, English-language education, and imagination of migration in Bandar Anzali, Iran. The study employs a qualitative comparative approach, which involves integrating migration scholarship with student essays, interviews, and fieldwork carried out within a local educational setting. Using key ideas from postcolonial and narrative theories, especially the *Third Space* by Homi Bhabha, the notion of migratory imagination suggested by Arjun Appadurai, and the narrative identity theory by Paul Ricoeur, the paper analyzes how students create meaning around concepts such as belonging, migration, and imagination of the future. The analysis has revealed that the local adolescents view

English language not just as a subject matter studied at school, but also as a symbolical threshold linking their current lives to opportunities and potential migration in the future. Additionally, the results have shown how conditional forms of belonging and dual identity are constructed in the context of strong ties with the local area alongside an uncertain outlook for social, academic, and economic futures. Finally, by comparing the local case studies with selected migration literature, the paper reveals the relevance of the novels to the lived experiences of adolescents in a migration-prone area.

Keywords: migration, cultural identity, english language, third space, adolescents, educational policies

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary studies of migration no longer consider it as mere movement from one place to another but analyze it as complex, social, and cultural processes that transform people's conceptions of belonging, home, identity, language, and attachment to place [1–3]. Literature that reflects migration experience has become particularly significant for studying the cultural and emotional sides of movement and settlement. Such narratives explore the transformations that individuals experience due to migration as well as their renegotiations of identity, language use, and belonging to place and culture.

Adolescents, who form their identities in connection with families, friends, schools, and visions of future, experience migration in a special way. Even before actual migration occurs, young people may perceive movement as part of their identity or as a condition of transition towards a different self, a process similar to what Bhabha has called "the Third Space". This kind of imagining migration could be explained by the idea of migratory imagination suggested by Appadurai, who claims that mobility is constructed in relation to language, imagination, media, and memory of the past. Particularly, for individuals living in peripheral regions or countries with limited opportunities, English is often the core element of imagining a better life abroad and participating in an international community.

Moreover, the concept of hybridity and in-between spaces introduced by Bhabha helps understand how migrants and potential migrants negotiate their identities between their place of origin and a distant country or a globalized culture. Migration and diaspora in general may be seen as an in-between condition in which identity is neither disconnected from the local place entirely nor fully absorbed by a new culture. This in-between state is not always experienced only by actual migrants. On the contrary, it may influence the mind of adolescents who dream of migration in the future.

The present study analyzes adolescent perceptions of migration and the process of learning English in the port city of Bandar Anzali, Iran. Adolescence in Iran has already been the focus of various psychological studies and there have been attempts to understand how children and adolescents from Iran perceive immigration or emigration. However, there is no literature that combines the analysis of migration and the process of learning English by adolescents from small Iranian cities. This gap in the scholarly discourse is crucial since teenagers' perceptions of migration are not created only under the pressure of socioeconomic factors, but also through cultural narratives, language lessons at schools, family expectations, and representation of a different life.

As a culturally rich coastal town, Bandar Anzali, located at the northern coast of Iran, has a unique history, geography, and social atmosphere. The city has many aspects of local traditional culture and at the same time is known as a migration place, especially in relation to the oil industry [4]. This combination of a local place and migration tradition makes it possible to use Bandar Anzali as a context for analyzing young people's imaginations of leaving their native places.

The article will compare selected examples of literary texts that discuss migration with narratives of adolescence from Bandar Anzali. The qualitative methodology will include close reading of the literary texts, thematic analysis of student essays, semi-structured interviews with adolescents, teachers, and school counselors, and participant observations in classrooms.

The theoretical basis of this study includes the concepts of migratory imagination, Third Space, and narrative identity. Migratory imagination, suggested by Appadurai, implies the ability to imagine migration, which may be shaped by culture, language, media, and memories of the past [3]. The Third Space is a concept that was elaborated by Bhabha, who claims that migrants' and potential migrants' identities are formed by their in-between experience, which involves simultaneous negotiation of local cultures and languages, global aspirations, and hybrid belonging [4]. Narrative identity, developed by Paul Ricoeur, treats identity as an accomplishment that emerges through narration, experience, and temporality [5]. This concept helps understand adolescents' narratives and essays about migration and the future in terms of identity construction.

The following research questions will guide the analysis and interpretation of adolescent narratives and literary texts:

1. How do selected literary narratives of migration construct experiences of spatial disconnection, cultural in-betweenness, and identity negotiation?
2. How do the narratives of adolescents in Bandar Anzali, in the context of English-language education, reflect, resist, or reframe the patterns identified in the literary narratives?

By answering these questions, the study seeks to make a contribution to migration studies, literary studies, and language-education research in three ways. Firstly, it will examine the migration imagination of young people in a particular local Iranian context. Secondly, it will demonstrate how language education may become a place where migration and attachment to local traditions are negotiated. Thirdly, it will illustrate how literary narratives of migration may help to reveal the stories of adolescents who imagine themselves migrants before leaving.

The study will argue that English education in migration-prone contexts requires a complex approach because it is not just a learning experience, but also a cultural process in which young people imagine their migration. For this reason, educational programs should pay attention to the cultural, narrative, and symbolic sides of learning English. Rather than

limiting this language to a symbol of departure, English-language education should be organized in a way that will enable students to see it as a means of cultural dialogue.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CULTURAL IDENTITY, PLACE ATTACHMENT, AND MIGRATION NARRATIVES

The notion of cultural identity has been extensively criticized and rethought in postcolonial studies, cultural studies, and narrative theory. Instead of seeing identity as something fixed, given, and internal, Stuart Hall and Paul Ricoeur, among other researchers, understand it as historically situated and narratively constituted [5, 6]. From this point of view, identity is formed through language, memory, encounters, dialogues, and relations with others. Moreover, identity does not belong to people; rather, it is produced through their activities and negotiations.

For adolescents whose identities have yet to develop completely, cultural identity may turn into an area of conflict when the issue of migration appears. Migration becomes part of identity when young people start perceiving their future as moving to a different place, learning English to get more knowledge and opportunities, or becoming a member of the global community.

Literature dedicated to migration is very helpful in exploring this aspect of identity because it illustrates how migration influences self-perception. In the novels *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, and *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, protagonists struggle with the problems associated with migration. Namely, they must negotiate belonging to their communities of origin and new communities as well as experience the disjunction between languages used before the movement and those employed after it [1, 2, 7]. English in this case turns out to be an important language of change, cultural exchange, and identity negotiation.

The second concept that is important for this study is *place attachment*. According to humanistic geography, a place is a meaningful environment formed through people's experiences of it, emotions associated with it, and memory accumulated in it [8, 9]. This definition allows to treat place attachment as a complex emotional bond with an environment, a kind of emotional anchoring in a certain place. In narratives devoted to migration, place is often associated with strong emotions, attachment, and even trauma. When migration happens, the stability of places changes and young people experience loss of a familiar environment.

Thirdly, critical approaches to language education play a role in this study, especially those developed by Paulo Freire and Alastair Pennycook, among others. According to these scholars, language education is socially and culturally situated. That is, language classes reflect power dynamics, ideology, and cultural aspirations [10, 11]. Learning English may represent a desire to leave the local community and participate in international life. English, however, can become a tool for communicating the local experience as well. This situation creates an interesting cultural and emotional tension that adolescents need to cope with.

The present study uses these three concepts – identity, place attachment, and critical language education – to analyze how adolescents in Bandar Anzali imagine migration and negotiate it through language education. Student essays and interviews are treated as narrative acts. They allow exploring the strategies used by young people to organize their thoughts regarding migration and their future life. By means of comparing literary narratives of migration with the narratives of adolescents, this study seeks to reveal the symbolic meaning of migration.

It is essential to note that the purpose of this comparison is not to equate literary and non-literary narratives but to find similarities between them and use literary texts as models for analyzing adolescent experiences. For example, Gogol's feeling of alienation in *The Namesake*, multicultural negotiations in *White Teeth*, and mobile and displaced subjects in *Exit West* are interesting as interpretative frames through which young people's narratives about migration may be interpreted.

3. METHODOLOGY

For this qualitative interpretive study, there has been a combination of elements from literary and cultural studies, as well as language education research. As such, it makes use of two types of narrative data: literary narratives about migration and autobiographical accounts of Bandar Anzali's teenagers. The research does not aim to make quantitative generalizations, nor does it seek to establish cause-effect relations between concepts under investigation. On the contrary, the focus is on how literature and local schooling represent notions such as migration, identity, language, and place.

A combination of close textual analysis and thematic narrative analysis is the appropriate methodology for answering the stated research questions since they involve questions of identity and imagination rather than quantifiable variables. In this regard, literary works will serve as a point of comparison rather than as an explanation of students' experiences of migration imagination. As for the latter, they will be investigated through the use of students' autobiographical essays, interviews, and field notes.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary qualitative research design involving narrative inquiry, postcolonial literary analysis, and critical approach to language education. First of all, it explores the representation of issues such as displacement, in-betweenness, cultural hybridity, and shifting place attachments in the selected literary narratives. Second, it uses semi-structured interviews with local adolescents, English-language teachers, and school counselors to uncover what they think about migration, English-language education, local belonging, and imagination of their future lives.

As already stated, literary texts will serve as a basis for comparison rather than explanation of findings. To be more precise, a comparative framework will involve both thematic (attitudes to English-language education, views on migration) and narrative patterns that may reflect processes of identity negotiation and conditional belonging in students' autobiographies.

3.2. RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The fieldwork took place among secondary school students aged 12 to 18 living in Bandar Anzali, a port town in northern Iran located close to the Caspian Sea. Bandar Anzali was chosen as the research setting due to its cultural uniqueness, history of external contacts, and special importance in terms of questions of mobility, identity, and youth aspirations.

Purposeful sampling was applied to choose students and educational professionals that would help address research questions about their attitudes to migration imagination and English-language learning. Variation in the respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, urban vs. rural residency, and economic background, has also been considered. The resulting sample included:

- 20 secondary school students, out of which 10 girls and 10 boys have been recruited from three schools;
- 4 English-language teachers;
- 2 school counselors.

The sample size was appropriate for the study design, i.e., exploratory qualitative research aimed at interpreting individual experiences rather than representative findings. The inclusion of teachers and counselors facilitated analysis of adolescents' narratives in the wider context of the local educational system.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION

Three types of qualitative data have been collected in the course of this research:

1. *Semi-structured interviews*: Students, English teachers, and school counselors have participated in a series of interviews covering topics like attitudes to migration, perceptions of English-language education, imagination of the future life in Bandar Anzali, attachment to their hometowns, parental expectations, and symbolic meanings of mobility;
2. *Student essays*: Students were asked to write short essays with the following prompt: "My future in Bandar Anzali: Will I stay or will I migrate?". Student essays were analyzed as autobiographical narratives;
3. *Field notes*: Observations and reflections about local educational institution, classroom discussion, informal interviews, and other aspects of the school culture have been recorded in researcher's field notes.

3.4. SELECTION OF LITERARY TEXTS

The literary aspect of the research included an analysis of selected English-language migration narratives, focusing on the problem of migration, language, cultural hybridity, in-between identity, and transformation of belonging. Such novels as *The Namesake*, *White Teeth*, and *Exit West* have been chosen due to their thematic emphasis on the relationship between migration, language, cultural memory, and in-between identity. The selected texts do not claim to represent migration literature, but rather present strong narrative instances of the themes discussed in field data.

Close reading has been used as the main tool of literary analysis, focusing on such aspects as characterization, spatial dislocation, naming, linguistic transitions, cultural memory, and the construction of home. These topics will be used further in discussing the findings from the adolescents' essays and interviews as comparative categories.

3.5. ANALYSIS OF FIELD DATA

Field data will be analyzed using thematic analysis according to the six-phase model put forward by Braun and Clarke [12]. It is believed that this type of analysis allows identifying explicit and latent themes across qualitative materials. The analysis includes the following steps:

1. familiarization with the content of interviews, students' essays, and field notes;
2. identification of initial codes relevant to the topic of migration, language, identity, belonging, and future imagination;
3. grouping of similar codes into preliminary themes;
4. identification of themes across various types of data;
5. definition and naming of final themes;
6. interpretation of the themes in relation to the theoretical framework and literature.

Student essays will be analyzed using narrative analysis, making it possible to treat them as identity-making narratives in which adolescents position themselves in relation to home, language, family, and imagined future. Interviews with teachers and counselors will be analyzed using the critical discourse framework in order to interpret how institutional language shapes migration-related themes and meanings.

3.6. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND TRIANGULATION

To improve the credibility of results, the study uses triangulation at three different levels. Source triangulation refers to the analysis of student interviews, students' essays, teacher and counselor interviews, and field notes. Conceptual triangulation refers to the simultaneous application of migration studies, postcolonial theory, place attachment, and critical language education frameworks. Finally, analytical triangulation refers to the validation of themes by looking at both field data and selected literary texts.

All stages of the analysis will be meticulously documented. Quotations from the data provided by participants are anonymized and de-identified to maintain their confidentiality.

3.7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the study targets adolescents, special care will be taken to protect the rights of participants. Participation will be completely voluntary, and written informed consent will be obtained from participants as well as their parents or legal guardians. Participants will be notified regarding the purpose of the study, uses of the data, and rights to withdraw.

All personal identifiers will be removed from the collected material. Students' names, school names, and other identifiers will be replaced with demographic descriptors such as age or gender of participants as required. Collected data will be stored safely and used exclusively for the purposes of this research. Finally, in order to make sure that the study will be relevant for the community, general results will be shared with participating institutions.

4. FINDINGS AND COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

4.1. MIGRATION NARRATIVES IN TWO SETTINGS: LITERATURE AND LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS IN BANDAR ANZALI

A study aiming at combining literature and social narratives raises one important methodological issue: how can the literary and social stories be compared without transforming one of them into another? In the current research, migration literature is not considered as an explanation of the phenomena observed among adolescents in Bandar Anzali, nor are students' narratives treated as mere illustrations of literary themes. Instead, literary and social narratives are interpreted in dialogue, revealing the similarities and differences between the two forms. This comparative approach makes it possible to discuss how such topics as migration, identity crisis, spatial dislocation, and language play out in both fictional and lived settings. In this regard, it would be accurate to say that the link between the two kinds of narratives is not superficial; rather, it exists at the level of narrative form, emotional structure, and identity construction.

Migration literature, including novels like *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri, *White Teeth* by Zadie Smith, and *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid, is characterized by an almost obsessive focus on the transformative nature of migration. Characters in these novels do not move from one place to another simply, but undergo a complex series of changes on the psychological and social levels: they lose certain characteristics, acquire others, adapt to the new culture and language, and rethink their identities. As a result, the subjects tend to occupy a liminal state, being neither entirely 'here' nor entirely 'there,' neither

detached from their origins nor absorbed by a foreign culture. This liminality appears to resonate with the narratives constructed by Bandar Anzali adolescents, who often express uncertainty, a wish to leave the place of residence, a fear of losing cultural identity, and conditional belonging to their town.

Language plays the role of an important link between literary and lived narratives. In the selected novels, language is often doubled: it serves as a communicative resource, enabling individuals to adjust to the new environment, but also increases emotional and cognitive distance from the original language and culture. A similar situation occurs in the field data. Among interviewed students, English is not seen as merely a school discipline or means of intercultural communication; rather, it is interpreted as the key to another world, a space of identity reconstruction and future realization. According to one of the participants, "I like English because I think one day I can use it to go abroad, maybe for studying or for a better life." As it is evident from this statement, language functions not only as a cognitive resource, but also a medium of imagined self-transformation.

In other words, the analysis does not stop at the identification of similarities between the selected literary works and field data. On the contrary, it aims at tracing a complex pattern in which language, place, and identity are interrelated and co-evolve, shaping each other in a dynamic way. The following sections offer a reading of two literary narratives and their implications in terms of understanding students' narratives.

Name, belonging, and identity in *The Namesake*.

Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* [1] tells the story of Bengali family immigration in the United States. At the same time, the novel offers a sophisticated account of identity, naming, cultural memory, and belonging. Gogol, the protagonist of the book, is not satisfied with the name he received from his parents, since it does not seem to be appropriate for the place where he currently lives. Lahiri's description of the name as "neither Indian nor American" [1, p. 76] is an example of the ambivalence of the subject's identity: he neither belongs to the Bengali-American community nor to mainstream US culture. This dissatisfaction gradually grows into a deep feeling of detachment, which is also related to the name. This feeling is caused by the inability of the protagonist to accept or understand the name, which turns into a "scratchy tag of a shirt" [1, p. 107], an element of personal identity. The idea of the name as a "scratchy tag" is an example of Bhabha's concept of the Third Space, where identity becomes fluid and negotiable [4].

Changing his name to "Nikhil" in college appears to be a step towards personal autonomy and self-invention. Yet this act does not solve Gogol's problems completely, since the idea that "there is no such thing as a perfect name" [1, p. 111] indicates that the subject cannot achieve full autonomy by changing his name alone. In other words, identity is not reconstructed through a single act; it is constructed throughout the entire process of repeated acts of narrative and renarrativization. The concept developed by Hall may be used in this regard: identity is not a static entity, but a continuous process of becoming [6].

Another significant theme discussed in the novel is private and familial names. Personal nicknames are regarded by Lahiri as a "persistent remnant of childhood" [1, p. 26], implying that they include affective elements which are difficult to translate into public discourses. They represent the subject's belonging to family, childhood memories, and cultural traditions, thus revealing a particular dimension of migrant's identity.

At the end of the book, the protagonist decides to read the work of a famous writer whose name he bears. This choice represents the passage from rejecting to renegotiating his name, and it shows that identity can be reconstructed through interpreting the past and relating it to the present and future. The process of reconstructing identity may be interpreted as cultural translation, which, according to Bhabha, means that a person does not return to the roots, but recreates his identity through the process of language and memory [4]. Thus, Lahiri's novel illustrates the complicated process of constructing identity in the Third Space.

Themes discussed in *The Namesake* resonate with findings from the fieldwork performed in Bandar Anzali. The collected data revealed that the adolescents' narratives are often similar to Lahiri's text in that they describe an identity crisis related to language and belonging. Although the adolescents in Bandar Anzali are not immigrants themselves, the idea of migration appears in the background, affecting their feelings about language and future prospects.

In the narratives of Bandar Anzali adolescents, English is often associated with "another world." According to one of the students, "I love English because I feel that one day it will help me go abroad, maybe for study or a better life." As in the case of Lahiri's hero, language opens up new perspectives and allows imagining the self in a new setting. However, migration does not imply giving up the place of origin and forgetting about it. According to some of the adolescents, the place in which they live is valuable, and their willingness to leave depends on improving the situation in this place: "I will migrate if there are better conditions for studying and working here."

In both Lahiri's book and adolescents' stories, the past is never abandoned. It does not simply disappear, but is transformed, interpreted, and re-negotiated under the pressure of the present and the future. In Lahiri's book, the protagonist returns to his old identity through reinterpretation rather than acceptance. In the same way, the adolescents do not give up their current place of living and identity; rather, they re-imagine this place in terms of improving the socio-cultural conditions of life.

In summary, the comparison of Gogol's narrative with Bandar Anzali adolescents' narratives demonstrates how identity evolves in the Third Space. While the circumstances of Lahiri's protagonist and adolescents in Bandar Anzali are quite different, Bhabha's theory helps to understand this phenomenon through the concept of the in-between. In this regard, it would be inaccurate to treat the adolescents' narratives as merely field data; they are also cultural texts reflecting wider issues of migration, language, and identity.

Displacement, separation, and identity transformation in *Exit West*.

The narrative constructed by Mohsin Hamid in his novel *Exit West* [2] differs from the previous example in that it focuses on migration rather than naming or place. The author uses a unique stylistic technique to portray the process of moving: magical doors replace conventional borders, making the movement itself easier but increasing the emotional pressure of leaving. Thus, the book discusses not only migration as a process, but also its psychological consequences, which are also discussed by many Bandar Anzali adolescents. Namely, migration is perceived not just as a change of location, but also as a painful detachment from the native culture and place of residence. Hamid's phrase "murder from our lives" [2, p. 94] reveals this emotional side of migration. In this regard, Hamid's novel may be considered in dialogue with Bhabha's concept of the Third Space, a liminal state in which the subject no longer belongs to the past and has not yet established himself in the future [4]. The protagonists of Hamid's book, Nadia and Saeed, inhabit this space differently.

For the female character, migration is an opportunity for transformation: it allows forming new bonds and adopting new social roles, creating a new identity that is free from the old limitations. Nadia's attraction to the "music and laughter of neighbors" [2, p. 153] implies that she is able to develop new intercultural attachments in the course of migration. Thus, for the woman, the process of migration transforms her identity through introducing new social relationships and expanding social possibilities. This aspect of migration can also be found in the narratives of Bandar Anzali adolescents: English functions as the language of future and new opportunities.

In contrast to the female character, Saeed chooses not to give up his traditional lifestyle: the more distant he becomes from his homeland, the more he needs to find the spiritual connection with it. For example, he emphasizes that "he would pray with others who had shared the prayer with him back home" [2, p. 160]. It is possible to apply Hall's concept of the subject as defined by his cultural memories [6] to explain Saeed's behavior in terms of cultural tradition. Thus, there is a fundamental difference between Nadia's and Saeed's narratives: the former is about transformation, while the latter is about maintaining the traditional identity intact.

Similar patterns of responses to migration emerge among Bandar Anzali adolescents, who view migration through the lens of personal aspirations or social relations. For some of the interviewed individuals, English-language skills are seen as the means to achieve their goals. One of the participants claimed that "everyone says if you know English, it's easier to migrate. That's why I'm studying it more seriously." This statement implies that migration is imagined as a process, which includes not only traveling, but also preparation. English skills can function as the language of imagination, providing adolescents with the possibility to think about their future outside of the current place of residence. In this way, the pattern described by Hamid in his book also emerges in the field data.

Another common pattern in Bandar Anzali adolescents' narratives is a desire to stay in the native place until the conditions become favorable for leaving. According to one of the students, "if my parents want to go, I'll go too. If not, I'll stay." This statement shows that migration is perceived not as an act, but as a result of personal or family decisions; this pattern is also seen in Saeed's story.

Finally, a mixture of aspiration and attachment to the place emerges as a pattern in some adolescents' narratives. One of them declared that "if there's a place with better conditions, maybe I'll go — but I'll miss Anzali." This statement shows that migration is perceived in terms of opportunity and improvement rather than abandonment.

Thus, the combination of literary narratives and field data identifies three major types of migration imagination:

1. migration as an opportunity for identity expansion (*reconstructive migration*);
2. migration conditioned by certain factors (*conditional migration*);
3. migration as emotional distance from the place of residence (*emotional migration*).

The three patterns discussed above will serve as the foundation for developing a typology.

4.2. LANGUAGE AS A MENTAL BORDER: NARRATIVES OF MIGRATION BETWEEN IMAGINATION, EDUCATION, AND IDENTITY

As far as migration studies are concerned, language is commonly regarded either as a means of integration, adaptation, resistance, or communication. In post-colonial discourse and cultural anthropology, language acquires a new dimension: it turns out to be a space where power relations, displacement, identity, and self-representation are embedded. It is in the context of the latter that Bhabha's notion of Third Space becomes relevant: it allows stating that the second language is,

in many cases, much more than a mere tool for access and integration; it is a way of redefining the self, the past, and the imagined future [4].

It follows that English-language education cannot be analyzed solely from an academic perspective. Indeed, for many adolescents who attend English classes, the second language has ceased to be something needed to pass exams or master the curriculum. Rather, for some students English is becoming a symbolic point of departure towards “somewhere else”—an imagined space of mobility and transformation of self, motivated by socio-economic insecurity and local opportunities, the expectations of the family members, and the impact of mass media on individual imagination.

The concept of migratory imagination elaborated by Appadurai may be considered relevant for this context. According to him, imagination is a social process by means of which an individual begins to imagine the movement before actually migrating [3]. Based on the analysis of the field data gathered during this study, it becomes evident that, in Bandar Anzali, English has become a symbolic signifier associated with migration and imagination rather than merely a subject studied at school.

Specifically, the qualitative responses of students indicate that the language has become a mental border, a kind of imaginary line beyond which students try to envision their alternative future. Thus, English is mentioned several times as a “key,” a “ticket,” and a “way out.”

Socio-cultural context of Bandar Anzali and the symbolic role of English.

Notwithstanding the history and rich culture of Bandar Anzali as well as its strategic location near the Caspian Sea and the status of free trade area, the town has been experiencing socio-economic decline in recent years. Among other factors, youth unemployment, lack of academic and professional opportunities, and decline of local cultural traditions are creating conditions for place detachment, i.e., the inability to create strong emotional bonds with the place of origin. This process may be treated as the opposite of place attachment analyzed by Tuan [8].

Against this background, English begins to assume double meaning in the socio-cultural context of the area. Firstly, it continues to be a formal requirement in terms of the education system and university admission exams. Secondly, informally, in the discussions conducted among peers, within families, in schools, etc., English becomes a symbol of departure and migratory imagination. Hence, the students do not perceive the second language in purely academic terms; rather, they tend to view it as a possible path towards the reconstruction of the self and future identity associated with migration and mobility.

In this respect, the story of Gogol Ganguli in *The Namesake* proves to be particularly relevant [1]. Similar to the students from Bandar Anzali, the main character in the book finds himself in the situation when he is trying to cope with the burden of his name and inherited culture and recreate the self in the new linguistic and cultural environment. Like the students in the case under consideration, the central hero poses himself a difficult question: “Who am I if I think, speak, or imagine myself in a different language?” Both fictional and actual stories demonstrate that, in this particular context, language cannot be viewed merely as a foreign tongue. It becomes a symbolic space of imagination and belonging.

The table below reflects this trend in terms of migration intention and age and gender groups. Even though the figure below does not directly measure the students’ English-language proficiency, their responses in the open-ended questionnaire help understand how the role of the second language should be interpreted. As shown below, most students from older age groups, who were willing to migrate, called English a “tool for leaving,” a “gateway to opportunity,” and a “bridge to somewhere better.”

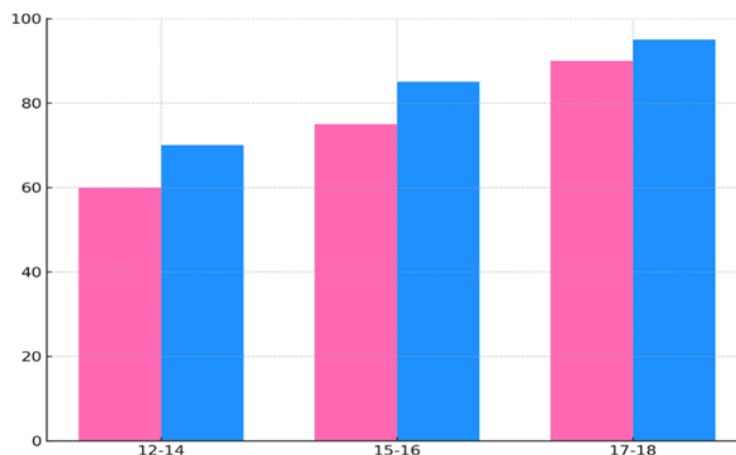


Figure 1. *Migration aspirations among adolescents in Bandar Anzali by age and gender*

Figure 1 below provides information about the migration intentions of adolescents in Bandar Anzali. The horizontal axis represents age groups, whereas the vertical one illustrates the percentage of respondents willing to migrate. The figure

distinguishes between men and women in terms of migration aspirations.

One of the respondents provided the link between the studied phenomena quite literally:

“If I learn how to speak English well enough, perhaps I could migrate somewhere. Because now here is nothing—no job, no future. Just study and take examinations.” (Female student, age 14)

Thus, English is viewed by the student not only as a language for studying, but also as an element that may help them move away from the existing situation of stagnation and towards an entirely new reality and way of being. This connection reflects the approach to linguistic identity that was presented in *Exit West*, as the protagonists Nadia and Saeed experience migration not only physically, but also through cultural and linguistic transformations [2].

According to Hall’s theory, identity is a narrative constructed in the discourse and not an essential quality of the individual [6]. In this framework, languages serve not merely as a medium of communication but also as tools through which the subjectivity of individuals is generated and reconstructed. Therefore, each sentence uttered by a teenager in Bandar Anzali regarding English is an exercise in constructing a new identity within a new symbolic context.

In other words, this paper views English language education in Bandar Anzali not only as a subject in itself, but also as a psychological border—beyond which teenagers construct a new image of themselves and of their future life options. Thus, English serves as a site where desires for escaping existing circumstances, migration, and creating a new identity are generated. It is important for educational practices to recognize the significance of language in constructing the desire to migrate because it is especially crucial in regions prone to migration.

Place and conditional belonging: local identity between loyalty and uncertainty.

The concept of place attachment is essential for cultural geography, environmental psychology, and identity theories. According to scholars such as Tuan and Relph, the notion of place is not simply a geographical term but a meaningful and emotionally charged environment in which people form their sense of self, memory, and identity [8, 9]. Being in a place involves remembering childhood and growing up, forming connections with other people and attaching symbolic meanings to landmarks, buildings, and other features of the place. Conversely, placelessness is defined as a loss of emotional engagement with a place, which transforms it into a mere physical object and a symbol of limitations for the subject.

It may seem at first that such a picturesque city as Bandar Anzali with its cultural background and natural beauty, as well as the international lagoon, the beautiful Caspian Sea, and a famous football club called Malavan, should foster a very high degree of emotional attachment among the local adolescents. However, the results of the fieldwork suggest something completely different. Namely, it turns out that most teenagers do have an emotional attachment to the city of Anzali, but they would stay there only if the local conditions were improved in various ways. That is why their sense of belonging to the city involves both emotions and uncertainty.

As an example, one could consider the following field narratives:

“But if nothing changes here, I will have to move away, maybe... but no place on Earth can compete with Anzali Lagoon. Wherever I am, Malavan will always be my team and my hometown.” (Male student, age 17)

“I cannot imagine myself leaving Anzali—we are Malavani, and for us Malavan is more than just a football club—it is our history, our identity. But sometimes seeing others leave and achieving success makes me doubt.” (Male student, age 16)

“At times, I think, the lagoon in which we rowed in childhood is drying up, the Caspian Sea is being polluted, and maybe soon there will be nothing here anymore. Why do I need to live somewhere without even a small trace of home?” (Female student, age 18)

The above field notes reflect emotional contradictions that exist in the consciousness of teenagers who are emotionally attached to their native city, but at the same time perceive it as a source of limitations and uncertainties. Indeed, as noted above, a place consists not only of its geographic features but also of experiences associated with that place. Thus, a student who remembers rowing in the lagoon also recalls her younger self who spent time there, thus making the lagoon not only a natural phenomenon, but also an important part of her personal biography. The degradation of this site can be perceived as a kind of trauma affecting her identity.

The issue of migration-related risks for identity is further explored in terms of students’ fear of losing their cultural or local identity after moving to another place. In order to present the results, a chart in Figure 2 was created.

The horizontal axis shows the ages of respondents, while the vertical axis represents the share of those students who stated that they feared losing their identity if they decided to move elsewhere.

As seen from the chart, despite expressing the willingness to move away, there are numerous adolescents for whom one of the main worries is connected with loss of identity associated with local culture. One can say that such apprehension is relevant to all age groups; however, the most sensitive to such issues tend to be girls, who are worried about the weakening

of cultural or local affiliation. Therefore, we cannot speak of migration desire as an indication that people refuse to accept their native town.

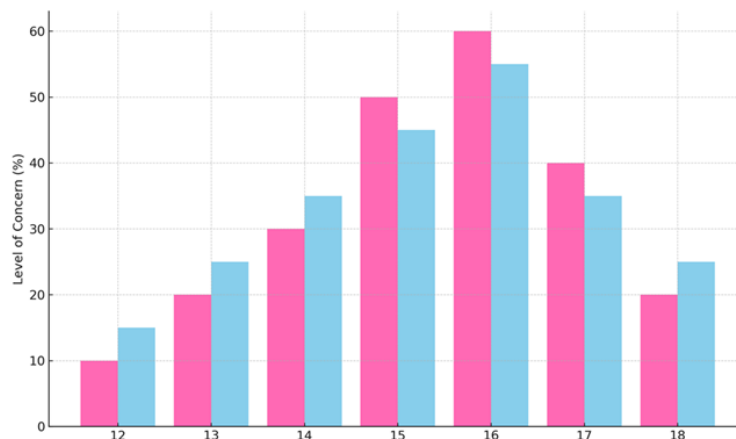


Figure 2. *Fear of losing cultural identity after migration by age and gender*

Although in Figure 2, language skills of students have not been estimated, it becomes obvious that the language barrier plays a very significant role in the described situation. For the adolescents, English represents a means that can enable them to reach the future, but it symbolizes at the same time that it is necessary to leave behind their native town. Hence, the idea of migratory imagination suggested by Appadurai seems relevant here [3].

In order to investigate which structural factors determine the desire to migrate, Figure 3 presents how economic and job-related circumstances affect the desire to migrate among adolescents of different ages and genders. As one may see from the figure below, older students perceive their dream not just as a dream. The reason why they think about moving is the lack of opportunities for work and education.

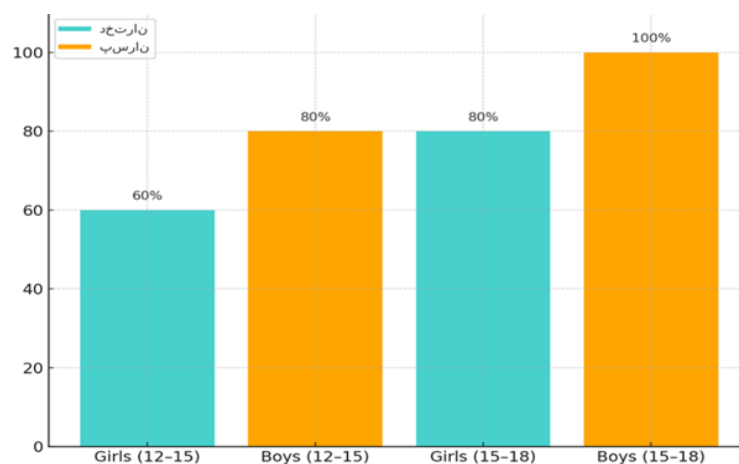


Figure 3. *Influence of economic and job factors on migration decisions by age and gender*

Thus, these findings reinforce the conclusions of the interviews. Migration is not necessarily seen as a goal per se but rather as an option imposed on the adolescent by his/her perception of structural limitations. Migration is not necessarily perceived by respondents as a free choice. On the contrary, it is often seen as something necessitated by poor local opportunity structures. Thus, the findings from Bandar Anzali and those obtained during the analysis of migration novels studied demonstrate the profound ambiguity inherent to migration as both an experience and a phenomenon.

This ambiguity lies in the interplay between the obligation/longing for remaining and the urge to leave. Belonging to a particular place is not taken for granted. This notion has to be re-examined and renegotiated constantly. For numerous adolescents from Bandar Anzali place becomes a narrative constructed around their childhood, associated with Malavan football, the picturesque lagoon, and their worries regarding whether or not all this would provide them with a sustainable future. Often this future is expected somewhere else, unless a new sense of home could be created both emotionally and politically.

Typology of migration attitudes: the inner layers of leaving.

Analysis of the field data, specifically, qualitative data collected through the students' essays and interviews, showed that the adolescents in Bandar Anzali present themselves as a heterogeneous group with regard to attitudes towards migration.

Unlike binary approaches that see migration as an option either to leave or to stay, this study distinguishes three different migration attitudes formed through the complex interaction of personal identity, place attachments, language, family expectations, and imagined future. The three types are defined by the interplay between emotional attachment to a certain place and imagining the future elsewhere.

The latter can be viewed as a form of mental mapping that allows adolescents to position themselves relative to their local environment and elsewhere. Table 1 describes the typology.

Table 1. *Typology of migration narratives among Anzali youth*

Code	Type name	Socio-psychological features	Sample narrative
T1	Disconnection	Weak emotional ties to place; second language understood as escape; strong desire to leave.	“There is nothing for me here. I am just waiting for a chance to go.”
T2	Conditional loyalty	Affection for place combined with structural criticism; strong family bonds; desire for improved local prospects.	“Nowhere is like Anzali, but there is no future here. I do not want to leave, but I might have to.”
T3	Dual identity	Openness to new cultures while remaining emotionally rooted; migration understood as growth rather than complete separation.	“I want to explore new places, but I will always miss Anzali.”

To visually represent how migration attitudes are distributed among students, Figure 4 presents overall willingness to migrate. Although the figure is simple in form, it indicates the strength of migration discourse among adolescents in the region.

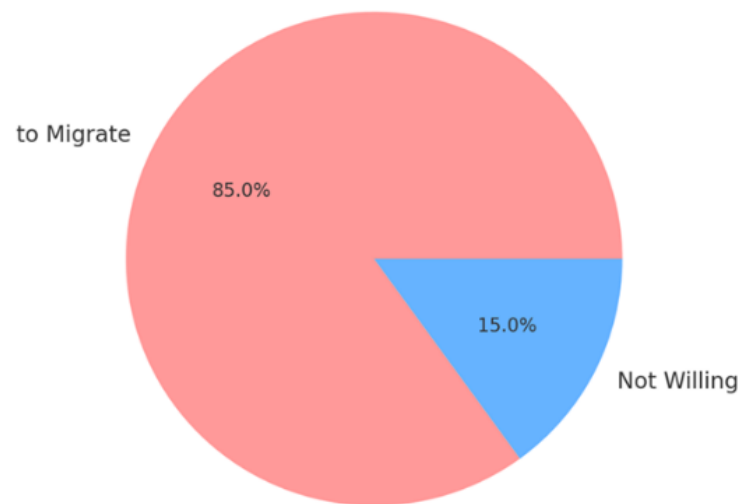


Figure 4. *Overall willingness to migrate among students*

According to Figure 4, 85% of participants responded that they would consider moving away when such a possibility arose, whereas the other participants were unwilling to make such a choice. Such a large number reflects the increasing discrepancy between current realities and the future-orientation of the new generation. In this regard, migration is not only seen as a subjective factor but as a structural solution to insufficient opportunities, a lack of faith in the future, and an intention to improve one's social mobility status.

To further analyze the issue, in Figure 5, a narrative typology tree is provided to describe the three types of migration based on emotions, discourse, and culture.

Migration story serves as the core of the diagram, which is branched out into T1 – disconnection; T2 – conditional loyalty; and T3 – dual identity. This typology matches perfectly the theoretical background developed in previous sections of the paper and relates, specifically, to the concepts of Bhabha's Third Space and identity as becoming by Hall [4, 6]. Many Anzali adolescents don't belong 'here,' yet they are unable to imagine a clear picture of 'there.' They become subjects whose identity reconfiguration relies on the use of stories, language, and future-oriented imaginations.

There are some examples from migration narratives to illustrate how this typology can be applied. Namely, Gogol in *The Namesake* can be discussed as an illustration of Type 2, since he tries to redefine his identity, moving in an in-between space, and, at the same time, remains bound by cultural memories. Nadia in *Exit West* can be seen as a Type 3 subject in that her migration includes openness towards the unknown social world, and, still, she retains a certain belonging to the earlier life. Adolescents who have characteristics of Type 1, disconnection, reproduce the feeling of rupture expressed by

Hamid in the following quote, "When we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind" [2, p. 94]. Thus, it is possible to compare literary and field narratives using the typology.

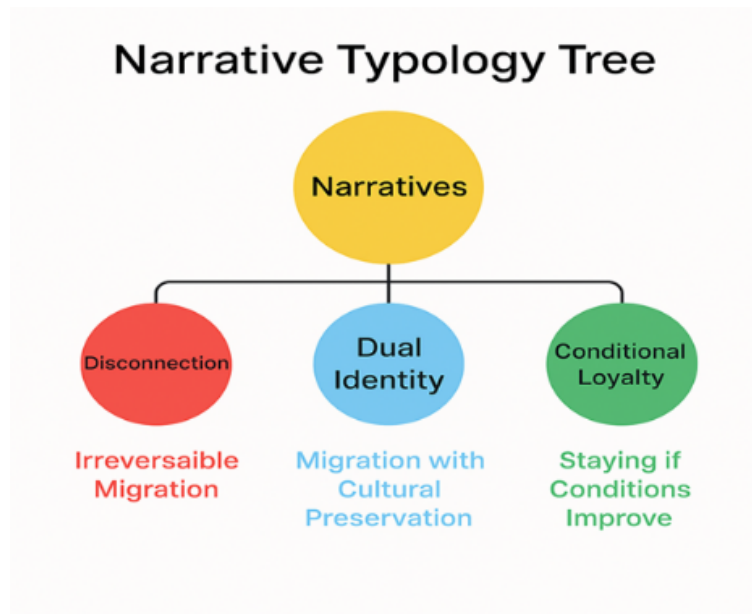


Figure 5. Narrative typology tree of adolescent migration attitudes

Discursive analysis of migration mentality: language, identity, and institutional structures.

The qualitative analysis reveals that migration tendency in Bandar Anzali teenagers does not result simply from necessity or personal choice. On the contrary, it emerges as a consequence of interactions of three discursive layers: educational, institutional, and familial. Every layer contributes its unique but interrelated discourses regarding second-language acquisition, cultural place-making, and education.

In order to elaborate on the above-mentioned interaction, there will be presented two analytical charts and one conceptual table. Such visual materials are not used here just for statistical purposes. Rather, they are analyzed as discursive constructs, which are constructed with the help of the theoretical background of the paper, including such authors as Hall, Bhabha, and Freire [4, 6, 10].

Frequency of recurring themes in three respondent groups, which are: teachers, counselors, and students, is illustrated in Figure 6.

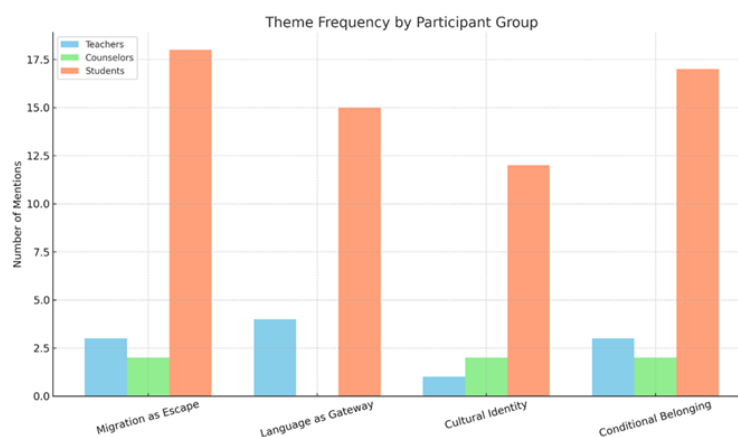


Figure 6. Comparative distribution of themes among respondent groups

This analysis implies that students highlighted language as means of access, migration as an escape option, and the phenomenon of identity crisis more. Teachers concentrated mainly on the cultural gap caused by language learning in schools; counselors, on the other hand, stressed out family pressure, psychological ambiguity, and provisional belonging. It may be assumed that the act of migration does not just start with actual physical movement, but also starts discursively, in the imaginations and language of people preparing for the journey. Migration discourse, hence, is shaped both inside classrooms, family dialogues, institutions, and peers' language.

In order to structure the extracted categories, Table 2 below provides the main analytical categories together with their

functions in all three levels of discourse.

Table 2. Key analytical concepts across three discursive layers

Concept	Description
English-language education	Curriculum content and its role in shaping migration-related discourses.
Migration mentality	A psychological and narrative inclination toward leaving, often preceding actual migration decisions.
Teachers	Educational actors who observe and interpret how schooling may structure mental displacement.
Students	Central subjects in narrating spatial disconnection, future aspiration, and conditional belonging.
Counselors	Institutional observers of familial, emotional, and psychological factors influencing migration desire.
School institution	The structure through which language, value, success, and mobility discourses are reproduced.
Cultural identity	A sense of coherence or fragmentation shaped under modern social, economic, and educational pressures.
Language as gateway	The perception of language as a means of accessing opportunities beyond the local environment.
Family pressure	The influence of parents, relatives, peers, and family migration stories on decisions about leaving or staying.
Migration as escape	The framing of migration as departure from blocked futures rather than as a fully free choice.
Conditional belonging	A sense of attachment linked to quality of life, educational access, economic possibility, and future prospects.

Taken together, these notions serve as the backbone of the theoretical framework for the last part of the study - the generation of the conceptual map of migration narratives. As Hall argues, identity is not a stable concept, but a discourse-based narrative, changeable over time [6]. Findings of this research are consistent with this theoretical postulation, as the adolescents perceive their identities through the constant conflict between their past (their families, local environment, native language, and memories) and their future (the English language, migration, and the life in another place).

Moreover, under such conditions, the English language education does not turn out to be merely a practice of acquiring skills. It transforms into the kind of mental training for departure, if the language learning itself is perceived exclusively as the way out from the limitations of local environment. Such an idea resonates with the criticism of the banking type of education formulated by Paulo Freire [10]. Namely, when education is viewed as a mere process of knowledge accumulation, it can easily push students to leave for another place, failing to provide them with the necessary insight into their own culture.

Finally, the conceptual map of migration narratives, seen in Figure 7, is intended to show the connections between the notions and factors discussed above. Teachers, counselors, and students will be considered as participants in the process under analysis, while more abstract notions, such as migration mentality, language as the gateway, family and cultural pressures, and conditional belonging will be discussed as discourses.

- Migration mentality can be regarded as the focus of the conceptual map under discussion.
- Language education will be shown as an instrument of discursive migration narrative development.
- Family pressure and conditional belonging will be treated as extensions of migration mentality.

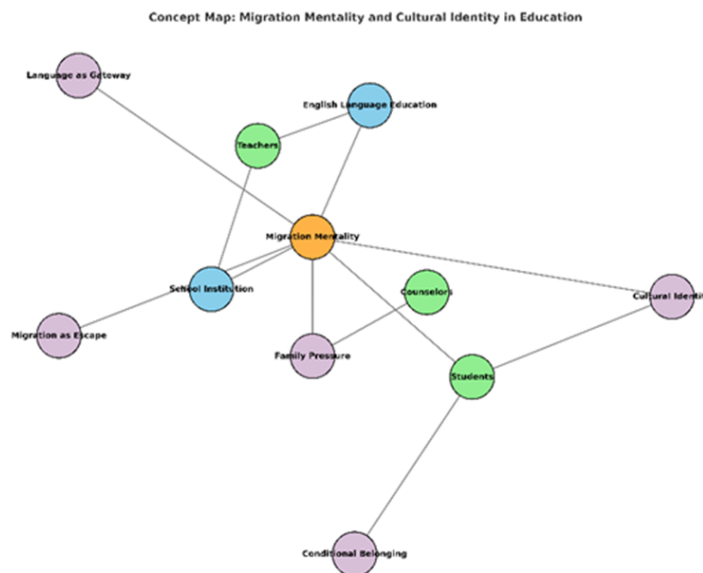


Figure 7. Conceptual map of migration narratives in Bandar Anzali

As can be seen from the map, migration cannot be simply described as physical relocation. It is, first of all, a complex process involving the mental transformation, the reconstruction of linguistic, cultural, and institutional realities. In other words, adolescents begin to migrate first with their imaginations, narratives, and language learning.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION

Therefore, this research used an interdisciplinary methodology combining literary studies with ethnographic observation among local students, which revealed commonality between literary narratives and the stories that Bandar Anzali's youths construct in reality. Thus, a comparison of migration literature with field narratives from Bandar Anzali's adolescents indicated that similar concerns about identity confusion, spatial dislocation, and the collision of tradition and modernity are characteristic not only of literary characters' lives. They also shape adolescent experiences in an environment where identity and desire to migrate are influenced by many social factors.

For instance, just like Gogol in "The Namesake" and Saeed in "Exit West," the young people in Bandar Anzali demonstrate their uncertainty about personal identity. The stories collected from them during fieldwork indicate that, like the literary characters analyzed in the current research, adolescents from Bandar Anzali feel like living somewhere in between two worlds, belonging to one culture yet dreaming of another. Moreover, the adolescents who participated in this study consider themselves emotionally attached to the city despite the fact that they see their future beyond its borders.

A particularly interesting finding of the study is that migration desire can arise even before migration itself occurs. For instance, as shown above, the characters of both novels do not necessarily have concrete plans to leave their places of residence. Similarly, the field narratives collected among adolescents in Bandar Anzali did not contain explicit statements regarding their desire to migrate in the near future. However, it can be assumed that the young people who participated in this research already exhibit a so-called "migration mentality."

This phenomenon includes not only a wish to migrate but also an attitude and desire to acquire knowledge and skills necessary for eventual departure. For example, as suggested by the narratives collected among the adolescents in Bandar Anzali, some of them start to develop a "migration mentality" due to English classes, the media, their families' migration desires, uncertain expectations for the future, and limited local job opportunities. Thus, migration begins not only when someone physically leaves his or her country. It also starts in imagination, language use, and education.

Migration desire can be explained by applying a set of conceptual frameworks used in this research, namely the notion of Third Space formulated by Bhabha, cultural identity defined by Hall as a process of becoming, and migratory imagination proposed by Appadurai. These concepts help explain why adolescents from Bandar Anzali find themselves in a situation similar to that experienced by Gogol, Nadia, and Saeed. Just like literary characters, the students examined in the current paper try to establish their identity, figure out where they belong, and think about possible future migrations.

School also plays a crucial role in the process of identity development and migration desire formation. As shown above, adolescents' perceptions and attitudes to migration are significantly influenced by English-language instruction in school. Schooling is much more complex than mere delivery of curriculum content. On the contrary, schooling provides young people with a particular worldview and understanding of their identity, language, and social roles. This process can be understood using Freire's idea according to which education practices may both reinforce social constraints and facilitate critical thinking.

The research conducted in Bandar Anzali demonstrates that migration is not simply moving from one place to another. Rather, it is a symbolic act based on the idea that one cannot stay where he or she currently resides because life in the city cannot provide enough opportunities for future prosperity and success. Thus, the adolescents involved in the study believe that they must either leave the city to find better conditions somewhere else or die here. This finding suggests that migration involves not only physical displacement. It also implies emotional, symbolic, and narrative processes.

Thus, adolescents in Bandar Anzali are concerned about their identity and future despite the fact that, in many respects, they have nothing to worry about in terms of economic well-being. Unlike the characters of literary works, these adolescents come from economically wealthy families with relatively well-educated parents who provide them with comfortable conditions. Nonetheless, the results of the study suggest that Bandar Anzali is gradually losing some of its attractiveness for its young residents, which may lead to the city's decline in the future.

It turns out that migration literature is not only an artistic genre. It is also an important source of information concerning socio-cultural changes in society. The voices expressed through literature resemble those that can be heard in interviews, student essays, and surveys conducted in Bandar Anzali. Thus, the voices of uncertainty, hope, nostalgia, and migration anxiety should be heard carefully by policymakers, educators, and cultural workers since they reveal something about young people, their hometown, and their future.

5.2. CONCEPTUAL IMPLICATIONS

As can be seen from the above discussion, this research offers an important opportunity to rethink the notions of cultural identity, place attachment, and language use among teenagers. From the perspective of migration studies, the most important contribution made by the research relates to the understanding that migration is not only an action and a decision.

It is also a narrative, symbolic process that takes place in imagination and education long before migration actually occurs.

One of the major conceptual implications is connected to English as a second language. For the adolescents involved in this study, English not only means learning a new language and preparing for future jobs. It is also a space where young people imagine different lives, places, and identities. While English classes provide them with opportunities to connect to the larger world and access various job positions, they may also create feelings of cultural estrangement and separation from local community.

Appadurai was quite accurate in his assertion that migration usually arises in imagination. This means that English language classes can play an important role in creating feelings that one must somehow leave the city in order to have a better life in the future. Thus, while learning English is obviously a good thing in many respects, it also has the potential to influence adolescents' perceptions of the environment, place attachment, and migration desire in a negative way.

Just as characters in literary works examined in this research, adolescents from Bandar Anzali are not static in terms of identity formation. To the contrary, they have to constantly adapt themselves to rapidly changing cultural context and find their places within it. Hall's view of cultural identity as an ongoing process helps one understand the complexity of identity construction. At the same time, it is complemented by Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, which helps explain identity construction through language and story telling.

The analysis of student narratives and interviews in this research shows that adolescents have several layers of identity. On one hand, they are who they are because of stories they have been told by family members, and because of cultural background they inherited from their ancestors. On the other hand, they also have their unique stories about themselves, which emerged through education, media, and other experiences they acquired in society. The result is a person who can be described as a mixture of several identities.

Bhabha's concept of the Third Space becomes relevant in explaining adolescents' identity in this case because it describes the process of positioning oneself in between a familiar past, an ambiguous present, and a vague future. Just as literary characters, adolescents in Bandar Anzali must constantly navigate among different cultural narratives and discourses, deciding who they are, where they live, and what kind of future awaits them. These choices are shaped not only by economic needs but also by narrative and emotional processes.

The above discussion allows concluding that migration is also shaped not only by objective conditions but also by the way people tell their stories. Migration imagination emerges in connection to migration stories and cultural narratives as they circulate in the media and education system. Adolescents from Bandar Anzali are surrounded by these stories at school and in the media, and thus they can imagine that they can leave the city someday in the future in order to achieve more success.

Finally, this research suggests using Freire's ideas to interpret the function of language education in schools. In particular, it can be argued that language education does not only provide knowledge of English but also shapes the identity of adolescents. For this reason, schools and teachers should be careful with this responsibility and avoid pushing students to see departure as their primary goal. On the contrary, language classes should help students remain connected to their culture.

5.3. PRACTICAL AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The fieldwork, literary analyses, and conceptual framework employed in this research enable offering several recommendations regarding migration imagination, cultural identity, place attachment, and narrative policy for adolescents in Bandar Anzali. Below are the recommended actions, which were organized in three groups depending on their target audiences and purposes.

A. At the local educational level, specific to Bandar Anzali.

1. *Revising the content of English-language instruction.* In Bandar Anzali, content of English-language instruction in schools should be modified. Specifically, activities in this discipline should be connected to the experiences of local students in relation to migration, place identity, and growing up in Bandar Anzali. For instance, they could learn about successful local migrants through short stories and documentaries translated into English, discuss cultural identity in English, and use this language for describing their native city and its cultural heritage. The purpose is to replace "language = escape" with "language = culture."

2. *Promoting storytelling activities in schools.* Schools in Bandar Anzali should encourage students to engage in various activities aimed at developing narrative skills. In particular, students may write essays and conduct storytelling sessions about "Me and My City," "A Memory from Anzali," and "What If I Stay in Bandar Anzali?" An annual storytelling festival could be organized with participation of students, their parents, teachers, and local cultural activists. Its goal will be to foster place identity and enhance the cultural memory of adolescents.

3. *Improving the cultural literacy of school counselors.* Local school counselors should receive training focused on developing their ability to discuss issues related to adolescence, migration desire, and place identity. The main topics for seasonal training events may include "Teenage Identity," "The Psychology of Migration," and "Place Attachment." Such

seminars can be held regularly in collaboration with local universities, education departments, and cultural institutions. The goal will be to prepare counselors for helping young people speak about uncertainty, migration desire, and identity construction.

4. *Designing a narrative-based future studies course.* Students in Bandar Anzali may benefit greatly from an optional extracurricular course or workshop aimed at helping them imagine and write narratives about their future life in Anzali with positive changes. Such a project may include the following five steps: discussion of selected migration literature such as "The Namesake" and "Exit West;" writing personal stories about future in Anzali conditionally assuming one will stay there; conducting peer workshops in which students share and evaluate these stories; translating or rewriting selected stories in English; and publishing them.

B. At the national educational policy level.

1. *Teaching English through a cultural and local approach.* It is necessary to revise national-level English language books for secondary schools, ensuring that they include stories about various areas in Iran instead of focusing mostly on Western culture. Students will be encouraged to see English as a language that can describe their own social realities and lives rather than something foreign. The goal of this recommendation is to foster local cultural pride and eliminate the idea that English equals going abroad.

2. *Creating local identity notebooks for students.* School administrations, education departments, and teachers should collaborate in order to prepare small notebooks containing local cultural identity. In Bandar Anzali, these notes should contain the following aspects of cultural identity: historical background, prominent figures, local literary and artistic heritage, traditional festivals, natural landscape, environmental peculiarities, famous tourist sites, etc. In this way, adolescents would become better aware of local culture and less likely to lose place identity and attachment due to migration.

C. For cultural institutions and the municipality.

1. *Launching the Anzali Story Archive.* A print or online platform should be created in Bandar Anzali in order to collect young people's stories and photos related to life in this city. Adolescents may share personal reflections on Bandar Anzali's cultural uniqueness. The collection may be created through collaboration between schools, public libraries, universities, and municipal cultural offices. The goal of the project will be to preserve the memories of young generations of Bandar Anzali inhabitants.

2. *Reviving symbolic cultural elements in everyday life.* Symbolic cultural elements such as Malavan football team, the lagoon, local festivals, maritime history, and the Caspian landscape should be more actively promoted in schools, public places, and media channels. In this way, culturally meaningful visual elements would add a symbolic dimension to the urban environment. The result will be increased pride and place attachment among adolescents.

All of the above recommendations are based on findings obtained through fieldwork in Bandar Anzali, analysis of the selected novels, and conceptual frameworks proposed in this research. What can be seen from the results is that the main issue faced by adolescents in Bandar Anzali is not so much related to material well-being as to the symbolic sphere of life. They do not seem to perceive their native city as their future because it lacks narrative and symbolic dimensions.

Thus, language, education, and literature are viewed here as interconnected instruments for restoring cultural identity, place attachment, and hopefulness in the environment where migration desire is becoming increasingly common among young people. English-language education can either foster migration desire or help young people become proud of their hometowns.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

LIMITATIONS

Nevertheless, there are some aspects about which this research cannot say anything due to its limitations. For example, the study concentrates on only one specific geographic location – Bandar Anzali – which means that its results cannot necessarily be generalized for other socio-cultural environments. Moreover, although the opinions of adolescents are taken into account during this research, it can be suggested that the inclusion of other age groups or migrant families' experience would significantly enrich the picture. It should also be pointed out that the significance of the symbolic role played by learning English is stressed within this research, whereas other foreign languages may also play an important role.

FUTURE RESEARCH

In the future, it would be useful to conduct research involving adolescents from different regions of Iran or even from another country that faces similar migration challenges. The comparison of urban and rural students' experience can also bring about significant results because the level of their connection with their places of residence is likely to differ. It might also be helpful to investigate the role played by foreign languages other than English in the formation of migration aspirations. Finally, it would be quite informative to carry out longitudinal research.

REFERENCES

- [1] Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The namesake*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2004.
- [2] Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit West*. Riverhead Books.
- [3] Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. University of Minnesota Press.
- [4] Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- [5] Ricoeur, P. (1988). *Time and narrative* (Vol. 3, K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Trans.). University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1985)
- [6] Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, culture, difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.
- [7] Smith, Z. (2000). *White Teeth*. Hamish Hamilton.
- [8] Tuan, Y. F. (1977). *Space and place: The perspective of experience*. University of Minnesota Press.
- [9] Relph, E. (1976). *Place and Placelessness*. Pion.
- [10] Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- [11] Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical Applied Linguistics: A Critical Introduction*. Routledge.
- [12] Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke. "Using thematic analysis in psychology." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3.2 (2006): 77-101.