

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

***Culture, Identity, and Language Education:
Home Culture Attachment, Social/Cultural Capital,
Demographic Factors and Self-Identity Changes
Among Iranian EFL Teachers***

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We hereby certify that we have read this thesis written by *Mehrzad Sadeghi-Ordoubody*, entitled “*Culture, Identity, and Language Education: Home Culture Attachment, Social/Cultural Capital, Demographic Factors, and Self-Identity Changes Among Iranian EFL Teachers*,” and that it is satisfactory in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of M.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign language (TEFL) .

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Declaration

No portion of this work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other university or other institution of learning.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated with love and respect
to the soul of Imam Khomeini who helped us
look at our Iranian, Islamic culture
with fresh eyes and appreciate
the values previously ignored, and
to the souls of all those who sacrificed their lives
for this revival to let us become
culturally, socially, and politically cognizant
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List of Abbreviations

Ave: Average

C1: Native Culture

C2: Second Culture

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

EIL: English as an International Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ESL: English as a Second Language

Exp: Experienced

F: Female

FL: Foreign Language

Id: Identity

L1: Native Language

L2: Second Language

LOBB: Length of Being Bilingual

LOTE: Length of Teaching Experience

M: Male

Max: Maximum

Min: Minimum

TC: Target Culture

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TL: Target Language

T1: Type I / Subtractive Identity Change

T2: Type II/ Additive Identity Change

Abstract

Learning English means crossing the boundaries of one's home culture into a foreign culture – a challenging cross-cultural experience influencing one's home culture attachment (Brown, 2007). EFL teachers are products of degrees of identity conflict experienced while learning English. Thus, the present study, which consists of a quantitative phase as well as a qualitative phase, firstly attempts to examine the role of EFL teachers' access to social and cultural capital in their home culture attachment, using Bourdieu's theories in the sociology of education as frames of reference. To this end, two questionnaires were administered simultaneously to a sample of 342 Iranian EFL teachers from more than 25 private language schools in Mashhad and the data were entered into SPSS 16 program. Pearson correlation, one-way ANOVA, and Sheffe Post Hoc Test were run between the data collected by the two questionnaires and the results demonstrated that access to *social competence* and *social solidarity*, played a significant role in teachers' home culture attachment. Interestingly, *cultural competence* negatively influenced their home culture attachment. The remaining components, literacy and extraversion, did not play any role in their home culture attachment.

In the second part of the quantitative phase, the major aim was to investigate whether and how ten demographic factors can influence EFL teachers' home culture attachment. To this end, Pearson correlation, t- test and one-way ANOVA were run between the data collected by the home culture attachment questionnaire and ten demographic factors. The results revealed that the older the EFL teachers are, the longer they have been bilingual, and the longer teaching experience they have had, the stronger home culture attachment they have maintained. Moreover, the married are more strongly attached to their home culture than the single. Interestingly, multilinguals are less strongly attached to their home culture than bilinguals. The larger the family who EFL teachers come from, and the longer they use the Internet, the less home culture they maintain. Gender, average teaching hours a week, and academic status had no roles in their home culture attachment.

The qualitative phase presents a biographic enquiry into self-identity changes among 14 EFL teachers from 6 private language schools in Mashhad and attempts to capture their developmental processes of cultural belongings and identity construction while EFL learning and teaching from a social constructivist perspective in the light of Norton's (1997) theory of identity and language learning as well as Gao's (2010) revisited models of identity change. Open interview was used as the means of data collection. Fifteen common themes emerged from the fully recorded and transcribed self-narratives of the informants. The frequency of occurrence of each experienced theme was then entered into the tables. It was concluded that Iranian EFL teachers have mostly undergone subtractive identity changes. Western Identity has been highlighted most of all themes. Questioning the taken-for granted is prevalent though it might not be a full-fledged experience of critical thinking. Home culture and religious identity have been maintained least of all. The less experienced informants and the females are more vulnerable in identity conflicts and have distanced from their home culture more. Extracts from the self-narratives were included in the final discussion on whether and how the informants exercised agency in selection among identities, and how their imagined identity fueled their investment in learning and teaching English.

Key Words: Bourdieu; Cultural capital; EFL learners; EFL Teachers; Home culture attachment; Self-identity change; Social capital

Chapter One

Introduction

1.0. Introduction

In this chapter, after a concise background, the problem is introduced and then the significance and the purposes of the study are stated. Next, the 13 research questions, 9 hypotheses, and 22 sub-hypotheses are presented. After defining the key terms, the limitations of the study are mentioned at the end.

1.1. Background

English is a global lingua franca recognized as the language of progress, development, science, technology, and the world news. In Iranian sociocultural context, English is not a language for daily communication within the families or communities; it is mainly encountered as a school subject. However, it is not too foreign and irrelevant to the students' lives. The spread of English-based media, particularly television, the Internet, and the motion picture industry provides students with ready access to, enhanced interest in, and genuine need for English even in a so-called isolated EFL setting (H. D. Brown, 2007). Thus, there has been an ever-increasing interest in English in a way that lots of students have been attracted to private language schools due to the fact that they cannot develop a high level of English communicative competence in school curriculum. Persian is the language to represent themselves in the immediate community they are engaged in and English is the language they use to expand who they are and who they want to be – their imagined identity in their imagined community (Kanno & Norton, 2003).

English has become much more than a school subject to its learners. It has become a tool to enrich and expand their sociocultural horizons, a tool to give them more freedom to express all their difficult emotions and experiences, and a tool to interchange experience and information through travel, email, phone and video-conferencing. English has become something they want to master, own, and feel competent and comfortable in so that they no longer consider it as a foreign language. They imagine entering the elite group of English-conversant Iranians, their imagined community, where English is theirs. English is regarded as one of the significant means of embracing the desirable imagined future. As Norton and Gao (2008) stated an *imagined community* presupposes an *imagined identity*, and

learners *invest* money, time and energy in the target language (TL) in such a context.

Along with learning a second language, a second identity is adopted; that is, the learner's worldview, self-identity, and ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and communicating can be disorganized by a new culture contact (H. D. Brown, 2007). Though, in EFL learning, the identity conflict is not as severe as in English as a second language (ESL) learning, it still gives learners a chance to critically examine their home culture. Language learning, as a "reflexive process, intends to help students achieve new perspective on their own society" (Osler & Starkey, 2000) and look at different aspects of their home culture with fresh eyes (Gao, 2008) and helps them critically discover what was previously taken for granted as good or bad, interesting or boring in their society. This is the point where individuals' different historical, social and cultural backgrounds determine the strength of their home culture dependency. They may appreciate or depreciate their own cultural values after such a cultural contact and the subsequent reflection.

The role of EFL teachers and textbooks is of high importance in shaping EFL learners' perspectives on their home culture and language, their views of the target culture and language, and their stances on the continuum between the two points. Canagarajah (1999) has insightfully warned EFL teachers of imposing a foreign value system on their learners at the cost of bringing them a common language.

EFL teachers have been addressed in this study because they are products of degrees of identity conflict experienced while learning English. The present study analyzes English language learning and teaching in the informal context of education in private language schools in the light of Bourdieu's (1977, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, cited in Norton, 1997) theories in the sociology of education, Norton's (1997) theories of identity and language learning, particularly her constructs of investment and imagined identities (Kanno & Norton, 2003), and Gao's (2010) models of L2 identity development revisited in the context of globalization.