

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 *Mehrzaad 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  
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# Table of Contents

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	1
1.0. Introduction	2
1.1. Background	2
1.2. Statement of the Problem	4
1.3. Significance of the Study	6
1.4. Purposes of the Study	8
1.4.1. Research Questions	9
1.4.1.1. Research Questions of the Quantitative Phase	9
1.4.1.2. Research Questions of the Qualitative Phase	10
1.4.2. Research Hypotheses and Sub-Hypotheses	10
1.5. Definitions of the Key Terms	13
1.6. Limitations of the Study	16
<b>Chapter Two: Review of Literature</b>	18
2.0. Introduction	19
2.1. Theoretical Background	19
2.2. Language and Critical L2/FL Teaching Approaches	21
2.3. Culture and Cultural Aspect of L2/FL Teaching	23
2.4. Identity: “Who am I?”/ “What can I do?”	27
2.4.1. Types of Language Identity	29
2.4.1.1. Bilingual Identity	29
2.4.1.2. Collective Identity	29
2.4.1.3. Cultural Identity	29
2.4.1.4. Ethnic Identity	29
2.4.1.5. National Identity	29
2.4.1.6. Personal Identity	30
2.4.1.7. Professional Identity	30
2.4.1.8. Social Identity	30
2.5. Norton’s Theoretical Constructs	30
2.5.1. Motivation/ Investment	30

2.5.2.	Imagined Community	32
2.5.3.	Relevance of Imagined Communities for Language Learning	33
2.6.	Gao's Revisited Models of Identity Change	33
2.6.1.	Subtractive Bilingualism (Traditional Model)	34
2.6.2.	Subtractive Identity Change ( $1-1=1$ ) (Revisited Model)	34
2.6.3.	Additive Bilingualism (Traditional Model)	35
2.6.4.	Additive Identity Change ( $1+1=1/2+1/2$ ) (Revisited Model)	35
2.6.5.	Productive Bilingualism (Traditional Model)	36
2.6.6.	Productive Identity Change ( $1+1>2$ ) (Revisited Model)	36
2.6.7.	Hybrid Identity Change ( $1+1+\dots 1=1$ )	37
2.7.	Bernstein's Sociolinguistic Theory of Language Codes	38
2.8.	Bourdieu's Perspective	40
2.8.1.	Distinction and Taste	41
2.8.2.	Field, Habitus, and Symbolic Capital	42
2.8.3.	Social Capital	43
2.8.4.	Symbolic Violence	44
2.8.5.	Economic Capital	44
2.8.6.	Cultural Capital	44
2.8.6.1.	"Embodied Form" of Cultural Capital	45
2.8.6.2.	"Institutionalized Form" of Cultural Capital	45
2.8.6.3.	"Objectified Form" of Cultural Capital	46
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>		49
3.0.	Introduction	50
3.1.	Participants and Settings	50
3.2.	Instrumentations	52
3.2.1.	Questionnaires	52
3.2.2.	Open Interviews (Self-narratives)	53
3.3.	Procedure	54
3.3.1.	Data Collection	54
3.3.2.	Data Analysis	55

<b>Chapter Four: Analysis of Results</b>	57
4.0. Introduction	58
4.1. Quantitative Phase	58
4.1.1. Quantitative Phase: Part One (Relationship Between Home Culture Attachment and Access to Social/Cultural Capital)	58
4.1.2. Quantitative Phase: Part Two (Relationship Between Home Culture Attachment and Ten Demographic Factors)	62
4.2. Qualitative Phase (Probing EFL Teachers' Self-Narratives)	66
4.2.1. Overall Subtractive/Additive Identity Change	67
4.2.2. Subtractive/Additive Identity Change: Females vs. Males	71
4.2.3. Subtractive/Additive Identity Change: The More Experienced vs. the Less Experienced	74
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion, Discussion and Pedagogical Implications</b>	78
5.0. Introduction	79
5.1. Findings and Discussion: Quantitative Phase (Part One)	79
5.2. Findings and Discussion: Quantitative Phase (Part Two)	83
5.3. Findings and Discussion: Qualitative Phase	87
5.3.1. EFL Teachers' Home Culture Attachment and Types of Bilingualism/Self-Identity Changes	87
5.3.2. Context of Learning, Imagined Identity, Investment, Agency in Selection Among Identities, and Self-Identity Change	97
5.4. Applications and Implications	105
5.4.1. Teaching	105
5.4.2. Learning	106
5.4.3. Materials Development/Syllabus Design	106
5.4.4. Teacher Education and Policy Making	107
5.5. Suggestions for Further Research	107
<b>References</b>	109

<b>Appendices</b>	120
<b>Appendix I:</b> Home Culture Attachment Questionnaire (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009)	121
<b>Appendix II:</b> Social and Cultural Capital Questionnaire (SCCQ) (Pishghadam, Noghani, & Zabihi, 2011)	123
<b>Appendix III:</b> Open-Interview Questions	125
<b>Appendix IV:</b> The Interview Extracts Related to the 15 Themes	126
<b>Appendix V:</b> Histogram of Home Culture Attachment vs. Frequency	144
<b>Appendix VI:</b> Two-Way ANOVA Tables and Profile Plots of Age, Length of Being Bilingual, and Length of Teaching Experience	145
<b>Appendix VII:</b> Context of Learning, Imagined Identity, Investment, Agency in Selection among Identities, and Self-Identity Change	149

## List of Tables

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Table 2.1.</b> Assumptions About Identity	28
<b>Table 2.2.</b> Motivation and Investment Assumptions	31
<b>Table 3.1.</b> Informants of the Qualitative Phase	52
<b>Table 3.2.</b> Reliability of Each Factor	53
<b>Table 4.1.</b> Correlation Between Home Culture Attachment and Total Social/Cultural Capital and its Components	59
<b>Table 4.2.a.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Social Competence	59
<b>Table 4.2.b.</b> Results of Scheffe Post Hoc Test for Social Competence	59
<b>Table 4.3.a.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Social Solidarity	60
<b>Table 4.3.b.</b> Results of Scheffe Post Hoc Test for Social Solidarity	60
<b>Table 4.4.a.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Cultural Competence	60
<b>Table 4.4.b.</b> Results of Scheffe Post Hoc Test for Cultural Competence	61
<b>Table 4.5.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Total Social/Cultural Capital	61
<b>Table 4.6.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Literacy	61
<b>Table 4.7.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Extraversion	61
<b>Table 4.8.</b> Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation (SD), Lowest & Highest Achieved Scores (Min & Max) as Well as Those of Possible Scores	62
<b>Table 4.9.</b> Results of Correlation Between Home Culture Attachment and Age, Length of Being Bilingual, and Length of Teaching Experience	63
<b>Table 4.10.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between High and Low Groups of Age	63
<b>Table 4.11.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between High and Low Groups of Length of Being Bilingual	64
<b>Table 4.12.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between High and Low Groups of Length of Teaching Experience	64

<b>Table 4.13.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between Two Groups of Knowing Asian /European Languages and Knowing No Other Language	65
<b>Table 4.14.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between Males and Females	65
<b>Table 4.15.</b> Independent Samples T-Test for Home Culture Attachment Between the Married and the Single	65
<b>Table 4.16.</b> Results of Correlation Between Home Culture Attachment and Number of Family Members, Average Use of the Internet (h/w), Average Teaching (h/w)	66
<b>Table 4.17.</b> Results of One-Way ANOVA for Home Culture Attachment and Academic Status	66
<b>Table 4.18.</b> Themes Emerged From Self-Narratives and Their Corresponding Definitions	67
<b>Table 4.19.</b> Types, Subtypes, Themes, and Percentages of Each Theme Experienced by Overall Informants	70
<b>Table 4.20.</b> Percentages of the Themes Experienced by Female and Male EFL Teachers	71
<b>Table 4.21.</b> Percentages of the Themes Experienced by the More Experienced EFL Teachers and the Less Experienced Ones	76

## **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.