

**Being a Female English Teacher: Narratives of Identities in the
Iranian Academy**

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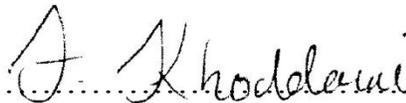
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Abstract

Despite the growing interest in the issue of identity formation in the broader TESOL research field, few studies have been concerned with the question of female teachers' identity formation from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. This study also seeks to further the feminist poststructuralist research within the Iranian TESOL and bridge the substantive gap within the existing literature, which is an almost untouched area of research regarding the teachers' identity formation.

This thesis attempts to explore the construction of identities of eight Iranian female teachers of English and the discourses that shape them through examining their narratives, using data gathered from interviews and email correspondences. In a two-year collaboration with the participants, I applied a feminist poststructuralist conceptual framework to examine the participants' main subject positions and the prevailing discursive practices that construct them. The research data, collected by individual interviews and email correspondence, indicates the teachers' identities as multiple, complex, and contradictory. I contend that multiple subject positions stem out of the clash of the multiple discourses that are available to them. Impacted by both gender and professional discourses that sometimes even collide, the findings show how these women struggle to conceive a sense of coherent self. The results of the analysis indicate that the gender and professional discourses are of normative, disciplinary, and individualizing nature. Negotiating identities within themselves and within the complex cultural context they live in, these female teachers are involved in an ongoing process of adjustment, adaptation and resistance.

For My Parents
In gratitude and Love

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This thesis was a self-exploratory journey of love and learning which took almost three years in making; the time in which my own identity has been undergoing immense transformation. Here, I would like to acknowledge the help, support, and encouragement of those generous souls whose collaboration made this journey possible.

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List of Abbreviations

BA	Bachelor of Arts
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EdD	Doctor of Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
FT	Full Time
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IRI	Islamic Republic of Iran
IRIB	Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting
MA	Master of Arts
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PT	Part Time
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TTC	Teacher Training Courses
UAE	United Arab Emirates

Chapter One

Prelude

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the thesis. Initially, I will discuss the nature of the problem followed by the rationale for choosing the study. In the following section, the significance of the study and its contribution to the knowledge will be established. Following the description of the research context and its significance, the specific research objectives will be identified in form of research questions. In order to provide the reader with a general overview, the structure of the thesis will then be described.

1. Nature of the Problem: Being a Female English Teacher in Iran

The phenomenon under investigation in this thesis is Iranian female English teachers' perception of themselves and their sense of identity. The study seeks to explore the ways in which these women teachers in Iranian higher education come to define, interpret, and constitute their identities. Based on the women's personal accounts and experiences of family /social life, education, and occupation, this study focuses on the work of self analysis, redefinition, and modification that these women go through on an everyday basis. It is significant to remember that these actions do not take place in a vacuum. Their social/cultural context, on the one hand, and the post secondary schools, institutions and universities where they have studied and worked, on the other, function as the social sites of active struggle over hegemonic discourses, values, and practices which constantly mediate their lived

realities (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988; Stromquist, 1995; Walker, 1998). Being situated at the crossroad of a number of contradictory discourses, such as those related to Iranian traditional and local cultures, the ideological discourse of the state, and the mounting influence of the Western cultures, these women struggle to position themselves within, between and against the various dominant discourses in the Iranian context. Using a Foucauldian-feminist approach, this study attempts to focus on the ways in which gender disciplinary powers and regimes of truth create female subjects and normative femininity. I also intend to focus on the professional discourses related to the construct of good English teacher that aim at creating rigid identity slots or subject positions. By analyzing the interview accounts as the effects of discursive practices, I intend to explore how these women's identities are mediated through discourse (Weedon, 1987; St Pierre and Pillow, 2000; Alldred and Gillies, 2002). I also try to demonstrate the active struggle of the existing contradictory discourses over hegemony and the ways in which these discourses attempt to form, define and reproduce female subjects. In this light, the thesis should be viewed as a micro analysis of the complicated process of identity formation that these participants experience on a daily basis; an exploration of the ongoing struggle that they face in creating and recreating selves within these conflicting discursive boundaries.

2. Rationale

I chose to examine this particular topic for my doctoral thesis for several reasons. Firstly, I need to clarify here that this research project is partly inspired by my own personal experience as a female Iranian teacher. Seeking a successful career in, what I believe is, a patriarchal social and cultural system, on the one hand, and

working within a highly centralized authoritarian educational system governed by ideology, I felt the need to portray and analyze some of the challenges, struggles and frustrations that women have to encounter in my specific context. As I became acquainted with Foucault's (1978a, 1978b, 1980, 1982) ideas on governmentality, constitution of subjects, and feminist theories of identity formation (Weir, 1996; Butler, 1991; Weedon, 1999; Mc Laren, 1999, 2002; Weitz, 2003), I felt the need to explore how the repressing and regulating discourses subjectify women. Hence, I acknowledge here that I started the study with a biographical desire to gain a new understanding of my own story in the light of the experiences and stories of other women educators who have shared similar experiences and know what it means to teach in the context of Iran.

Another primary objective of this thesis is to provide the context for the too-long unheard voices of these women who experience, on a day to day basis, multiple forms of domination yet relentlessly strive to survive within an extremely complex web of social, cultural and ideological forces that attempt to control and maintain their subordinated position. This study tries to give voice to these discredited and unattended experiences and endeavours, as well as to portray some of the challenges, contradictions and dilemmas that these female teachers have to encounter in their attempt to constitute their identities in Iran today.

This research work also aims at allowing these women's voices to resonate with other female teachers' experiences and enable women, educators and language teachers who will read this thesis to see their own lives reflected in these stories. Hence, there is the possibility that we all could reflect on these women's stories of struggles, frustrations, and accomplishments, and perhaps identify with them. As

the researcher, I hope that the storied lives of these women will be of benefit to the researcher, the participants, other female teachers, administrators, teacher educators, as well as interested readers and would lead to further insight, growth and empowerment.

Finally, it is also the case that very little research attention has been directed to the problem of the construction of female identity in Iranian higher education. The fact that there has been inadequate body of research particularly regarding ELT teachers' identity formation in Iran triggered the idea of studying how women educators go about the complex process of creating and recreating a sense of self.

3. Significance and Contribution to Knowledge

It is anticipated that the thesis findings will offer interested readers much to consider regarding the role of education in gendered power relations and female teachers' struggles within this system. I am hopeful, that the findings of this work may someday help develop fresh insights into the question of female teachers' sense of identity and will make it possible for the educational system and higher education institutions, in particular, to meet the needs of the female language teachers who struggle to function well and create a coherent self within a social, cultural and educational framework which tries to put them in the position of marginalization. Clearly, this study implies that we need a new perspective and a new approach to address the issue of gender subjectivity in Iran, in order to help produce recommendations of a fundamental change in both policy and practice. This study also contributes to the body of knowledge by: adding the Iranian experience to the women's studies in higher education in other parts of the world,

contributing to the feminist scholarship in Iran; enriching the literature on the formation of teachers' subjectivities within the Iranian and World TESOL, and bridging a huge gap in the Iranian TESOL studies by adding this qualitative study to the mainstream positivistic and uncritical research.

4. Research Questions

There are certain issues which I believe are of great importance in understanding the processes and techniques in which the female Iranian ELT teachers create and develop a sense of self. My first important concern is related to these women's sense of self and the main subject positions that are created regarding their roles as women and as teachers. These subject positions, however, are the products of normalizing and regulatory discourses that are available within their social, cultural and professional context. By defining and determining 'the normal and natural', these regulatory discourses aim at eliciting and fashioning their identities (Foucault, 1978a; Giddens, 1992; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1997). Therefore, the following questions are going to be addressed and identified from a theoretical as well as an empirical perspective:

- What constitutes the participants' identities as female ELT teachers in Iran?
- What are the dominant discursive practices that shape their identities?

Using these guiding questions and focusing on the relevant themes in the interviews and email correspondence with my participants, I was able to tap into

an invaluable source of material for the analysis of the Iranian female teachers' identities and the prevailing discursive practices.

5. Structure of the Thesis

The sections presented below provide a general overview of the work structured over the subsequent chapters. The thesis consists of six chapters. This first chapter comprises an introduction which, in addition to listing the rationale and the objectives, has also defined the context and scope of the thesis.

Chapter Two details the context of the study familiarizing the reader with complicated social and educational systems in Iran. I first present a summary of the major historical events of the past century in Iran and concentrate on the dominant discourses concerning women in Iran, including the traditional/ideological discourses, and the modernist discourses. This section presents a close look at the social, political, and legal mechanisms of the traditional patriarchy in Iran, as well as, modern discourses which advocate westernized life styles and secularization. Moreover, Chapter Two consists of an overview of the Iranian educational system as a product of the economic and ideological power relationships focusing on the position of English as the language of the elitist and modernist within the Iranian context.

In this thesis the theoretical framework and the relevant literature are presented in the third chapter. The chapter focuses on the *gendered poststructuralist* theoretical framework which is consistent with the theories of Michel Foucault (1972, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1988) on the one hand and Feminist theories of gender identity (Weedon, 1987, 1999; Walkerdine, 1989, McLaren 1993, 1999, 2002,

Butler, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2005), on the other. The key concepts discussed include subjectivity, gendered identities, power/ knowledge, and technologies of the domination. Chapter Three, also focuses on the academic literature pertaining to the key areas of identity formation, female teachers' sense of self and reviews the related poststructuralist constructions subsequently. In this regard, the poststructuralist feminist perspective is evaluated with reference to previous research studies related to female teachers' identity formation in TESOL and their fundamental assumptions are critically analyzed. The clear gap in the literature in the Iranian context is also emphasized.

Chapter Four moves beyond the theoretical underpinnings of the study to a detailed discussion of the proposed research design. Based on the assumption that there can be different realities perceived by different individuals and that the process of exploration and discovery is sought rather than measurement, particular attention is given to the methodological directive in the thesis which is the rich and detailed documentation of the participants' articulation of meaning as it naturally emerges and unfolds. Since the personal story is the source of experiential data, this study is presented as a narrative inquiry based on interview material using an interdisciplinary analytic approach (Chase, 2005; Gubrium and Holstein, 1997; Laslett, 1999). The data collection tools selected for this research, (the in-depth, open-ended, and semi structured individual interview as well as email correspondence as a supplementary tool) are discussed with particular attention to the portrayal of the eight female participants involved in the study.

Chapter Five focuses on the empirical examination of the data, using a thematic analysis approach as the means to organization and interpretation (Holliday, 2001).

Presenting the respondents' family histories, educational background, professional experiences, as well as their ideas and beliefs, I will largely concentrate on these female English teachers' multiple, heterogeneous and even contradictory subject positions that are the result of the complex interplay of the gender and professional discursive practices that construct them (Alldred and Gillies 2002). The major gender discourses that are at work creating female subjectivities include the normalizing discourse of femininity and the disciplinary discourses of exclusion. Professional discourses, on the other hand, construct the rigid subject positions of the 'good English teacher' with normalizing and regulating functions.

Chapter Six provides an overview of the thesis, summarizing the key findings and conclusions. Going beyond the theoretical analysis of narratives and discourses, I will also try to concentrate on the practical applications of the findings of this research for women academics, fe/male English teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. The contribution of this investigation to various related fields was also discussed in the concluding chapter. The routes and recommendations for further research that are discussed, include: exploring the gender or professional counter discourses; involving participants from smaller cities and more traditional families who might have a different sense of feminine and professional selves; doing comparative studies on female TESOL academics within the Muslim World; and applying a similar approach in analyzing male university teachers' experiences and identity formation. The chapter is closed with two significant considerations regarding my position as the researcher.

Summary

Introducing my research study, I discussed the nature of the problem, the research objectives, the rationale, as well as the significance of this investigation. I tried to show why the ways in which female teachers form their identities need to be examined through the complex interplay of gender and professional discourses within the context of Iranian TESOL. My vision and goal in this study has been to use the best resources, pose relevant questions, give voice to my participants, explore and analyze topics from the variety of theoretical perspectives, connect previous experience and knowledge to new learning, and share what I have learned on this journey with other researchers and teachers in hope of co-constructing new knowledge and ideas. The aim has been to present various journeys of discovery; however, I acknowledge that there exist no firm conclusions.

Chapter Two

The Status of Iranian Women: A Survey in History, Culture and Education

Introduction

In this chapter, I will first give a historical overview of the main social, political and economic developments in the past century providing a context to better understand the position of women in contemporary Iran. Then, I will turn to explore some of the dominant discourses in the Iranian society concerning women, in order to understand and explain the elements that play a role in effectively shaping Iranian women's identities. In order to understand and explore the position and status of female ELT university teachers, I will also concentrate on the Iranian higher Education system, while particular attention is given to the condition of ELT at Iranian academic institutions.

1. The Social and Historical Background

The purpose of this section is to shed light on the Iranian political and social scene in the past century in order to establish the essential historical context and frames of reference. The focus here is on the Pahlavi dynasty, the Islamic Revolution of 1979, and the span of thirty years following the establishment of the Islamic Republic. By concentrating on these events, I intend to demonstrate the process of historical transformations that resulted in the specific social, political and cultural milieu of contemporary Iran. By concentrating on these two secular and religious states and their behaviour towards women, we can see both have deeply embedded gender interests and have constructed gender politics in their broader political

projects and developmental strategies. Reinforcing their own interests, both these secular and religious, Westernizing or Islamizing states intervened dramatically in Iranian women's various aspects of life.

We first go back to as early as 1925 when the Pahlavi dynasty was founded by Reza Khan (1878 – 1944). Reza Khan was a military officer who overthrew the Qajar dynasty (1779-1924), consolidating power in a totalitarian central government (Keddie, 1999). Reza Shah who is largely known for his strong tendencies toward nationalism, secularism and modernization (Zirinsky, 1992), introduced many social reforms in educational, judicial, and military organizations (Abrahamian, 2008). His attempt to revive the 'Ancient Persian' glory took form in his departure from religion, anticlerical secularism, and the formulation of significant symbols of nationalism (Moaddel, 1998). However, he has been criticized for his authoritarian and despotic political style which led to establishing a patrimonial government (Chehabi, 1990; Abrahamian, 2008). After the Anglo-Soviet forces occupied Iran in 1941, Reza Shah was forced to abdicate the throne to his son, Mohammed Reza and went into exile.

Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, well known as the Shah, (1919 – 1980), also employed an “autocratic and Western-oriented modernization approach” (Paidar, 2001, p.2). In 1951, the Iranian Parliament, under the leadership of Dr. Mohammed Mossadegh (1882 - 1967), voted for the nationalization of the oil industry which had been under the control of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Shutting out the British profit, Dr. Mossadegh became the Prime Minister of Iran and soon, the Shah was forced to leave Iran by the political opposition. He was restored to power, however, when in the summer of 1953, a joint Anglo-American plan called

Operation AJAX led by a CIA agent (Kermit Roosevelt who was a grandson of Theodore Roosevelt) overthrew the democratically elected government of Dr. Mossadegh (Roosevelt, 1979; Kinzer, 2003; Keddie, 2003).

Restored to his throne, the Shah embarked on more repressive domestic policies, heavy defense budgets, single rule party, and growing control on free speech and press (Keddie, 2003; Yeganeh, 1993). The economic boom which followed the rising oil income in the 1960's and 1970's, allowed the economy and state bureaucracy to further expand (Amuzegar, 1991).

Although the country enjoyed economic prosperity for more than a decade (1965-1977), Iranian economy witnessed high levels of inflation and increased volatility. The rapidity of change resulted in great economic and cultural dislocations, the rural to urban migration, along with widening income gaps which led to the dissatisfaction of the majority of people.

The authoritarian rule of the Shah and his repressive political methods also spread immense discontent among the intellectual elite, which included a wide range of nationalists and democratic groups as well as the Communists (Abrahamian, 2008; Keddie, 2003). He also encountered further criticism regarding his pro-Western politics especially from the traditionalists who were discontented with the growing influence of the Western culture in various aspects of the urban life. As popular discontent grew, it fueled a series of anti Shah protests and massive rioting in 1978 which developed into a nationwide mass, urban revolution in 1979 (Tareh'gol, 2007, Keddie, 2003). By adopting an Islamic ideology which mainly problematized the Western cultural imperialism, the revolutionary leadership was able to mobilize millions of the urban population (Yeganeh, 1993). The revolution

had promised economic equality, social justice, political freedom and cultural integrity. The Islamic opposition alongside the secular antimonarchist forces unified under their figurehead, Ayatollah Khomeini, a Shī'ī cleric, and succeeded in overthrowing the Pahlavi dynasty (Abrahamian, 2008; Keddie, 2003). The constitutional monarchy transformed into an Islamic Republic, as Alamdari (2005, p. 1285) comments:

Seventy years of conflict and challenge between monarchism, religious traditionalism, regionalism, tribalism, nationalism and the political left finally ended in the revolution of 1979 and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI).

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran and in the post-revolutionary transitional era, the discourse of Islamization was constructed within a context of power struggle, political dominance, ideological pressure, and war (Iran-Iraq war). Soon the new regime consolidated into an ideological theocracy (Jahanbegloo, 2002).

It is significant to note that since the establishment of the Islamic Republic, there has been various, and sometimes opposing interpretations of the Islamic laws and the Constitution within the ruling body. There are specifically two distinguished groups that in the course of the past thirty years, have alternatively gained power in the government: those who are labeled as the fundamentalist “conservatives” and those who are known as “the reformers” with a more liberal political, economic and social tendency (Sadri, 2001; Saiffzadeh, 2003; Tarehgoi, 2007).

The presidential election of 1997 which resulted in the rise of a reformist clergy, Mohammad Khatami, to the Presidency (1997–2005) who advocated a new link between religion and democracy, was deemed to be a sign of the public dissatisfaction with the conservative policies and ushered in an era of “hope and change” (Siddiqi, 2006). Campaigning on major social and political freedoms, the moderate Khatami was re-elected in the following election winning over the votes of women, intellectuals and young people again. Failing to materialize his envisioned plans for real change and unable to achieve any improvement in people’s life, he was replaced by Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad, a hardcore conservative. Winning the 2005 presidential election despite many voiced doubts about the authenticity of its results (Alamdari, 2005, p. 1285), the fundamentalists who lean towards militarism took over the political power structure mainly due to the fact that 52% of Iran's 47 million eligible voters boycotted the elections. Iran’s 2009 Presidential election which led to Ahmadi Nejad’s much disputed victory and its aftermath once again put Iran on the political spotlight. Demanding the annulment of the elections, an unprecedented number of demonstrators came to the streets of major cities in Iran claiming they were robbed of their votes for the reformist candidate, Mir Hossein Mousavi. The protestors were violently suppressed by the Police and Basij (paramilitary militia) while the government closed major universities, blocked websites and cell phone transmissions (Worth and Fathi, 2009; Khalaji, 2009). Street protesters who alleged electoral fraud were killed, wounded and arrested. Among many arrested were prominent reformist politicians, journalists and human right activists. The dominance of the hardliners in all aspects of life in Iran has negatively impacted women’s lives socially, legally, culturally, and academically (Tohidi, 2010).

In the course of the past thirty years, the country has witnessed the power struggles and clashes between the political rivals within the ruling system that “compete with one another for resources and act against one another politically” (Alamdari, 2005, p. 1296). It is crucial to view Iranian women’s issue within this labyrinth of power struggles. Despite their outstanding participation in the Revolution in 1979, and their active involvement in their country’s various political, economic and social upheavals in the course of the last thirty years, Iranian women’s basic rights have constantly been repealed (Keddie, 2000). They have been the victims of purges called the “Cultural Revolution,” suffered the calamities of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88), and the economic decline with the whole nation, as well as undergoing the repressive gender policies (Moruzzi, 2001). For women of Iran, there has been a constant feeling of hope and disappointment regarding the challenging battles in the existing gender relations.

2. A Dual Culture and the Position of Women

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate the different discourses and power relations that surround women in a country which is entangled in a dual culture of “tradition” on the one hand, and “modernity” on the other. The phenomenon of cultural dualism found in a number of societies in the global South, argues Keddie (1980), is a result of an imposed and prescribed modernization from above and it merely produces “post-traditional” segments in a traditional society. Whether we call it “post-traditional” or “modernist”, we need to remember that in the past 150 years, there has been a series of ontological and anthropological encounters between the two segments. We need to keep in mind that classifying these complex encounters into binary classifications of “tradition” and “modernity”

would oversimplify the phenomenon (Jahanbegloo, 2002). Moreover, the two segments of traditional and modernist are internally heterogeneous and there are various strata within each of them that may contain contradictory elements and perceptions (Chehabi, 1990).

It has been argued that up until the end of the nineteenth century, the traditional Islamic culture, although polyethnic in nature united the Iranian people and provided them with a common perspective on life (Chehabi, 1990; Keddie, 1980, 1981). The genesis of a dual society, however, occurred when in mid 19th century, more contact with the Western world introduced a new worldview to the society, specifically the ruling strata (Chehabi, 1990; Keddie, 1980). In the course of time, each of these dominant strata has further developed their agenda and generated their specific discourses. In order to understand the position of women within the complex and dynamic power relations which have been operating and shaping the fabric of the Iranian context, the next section will focus on the construction of the two dominant discourses of Islamization and modernization.

In order to avoid the danger of essentialism, I need to emphasize that my aim here is not to exclusively magnify the role of these two main categories, but rather to focus on the role and function that these main categories play in the reproduction of gendered identities which are historically, socially and politically constructed. It is important to remember that women in Iran are profoundly embedded in various overlapping social relations and engage in multiple social roles that help shape their experiences.

2.1. The discourse of Islamization

It is important to clarify at the beginning of this section that the term “Islamization” needs to be differentiated from Islamic. The Iranian society like many other Islamic societies has always been mainly dominated by a traditional Islamic culture (Lapidus, 2002). With the exception of the upper and middle classes, the majority of women followed the traditional Islamic norms, including wearing *hejab* in the public sphere and were confined to perform the domestic tasks of a wife and mother (Sanasarian, 1982; Metz, 1987; Sedghi, 2007). A new political interpretation of Islam and *Shi'ism* in particular, however, became the theoretical basis for a number of popular political forces in the 1970's and later for the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The term “Islamization” is based on a politicized reading of Islam and denotes a series of strict practices in the private and public spheres which reinforce the rule of a theocratic political system. In other words, it is suggested that the post-revolutionary Iran is more of an Islamized society rather than an Islamic one (Mehran, 2002).

Regarding the position of women, the new politicized *Shi'ite* ideology differed from the traditional quietist *Shi'ite* interpretations in a way that instead of opposing women's participation in society, it advocated the new alternative concepts on women as instrumental political agents who were promised to be given the right to “fulfil their natural instincts as well as participate in social life” (Yeganeh, 1993, p. 9). Women's participation in massive numbers in the street demonstrations of 1978-79 forced the revolutionary clerics, who had criticized women's right to vote in 1963, to change their position drastically and to endorse women's political rights as a religious duty (Tohidi, 1991). This marked a considerable shift in the

Ulama's (Islamic scholars) perception of women's role (Kian, 1997, Afkhami, 1995). However, an incident immediately after the revolution symbolizes what took place down the road. It is ironic that the Iranian Revolution and the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1979) coincided with the United Nations Decade for Women (1975-1985). As Sansarian (2000) reports, the revolutionary regime which was concerned mainly with its agenda of Islamization refused to host the 1980 UN Conference on Women in its capital city. Alongside a rapid Islamization process, the state began to impose its strict gender policies that can be regarded as patriarchal rather than emancipatory ; insistent on gender differences and female domesticity (Tabari and Yeganeh, 1982; Tohidi, 1991; Moghaddam, 1995, 2003; Paidar, 1995; Sanasarian, 2005; Sedghi, 2007). As in other revolutions, there has been a “complex, gendered intersection of family, religion, and state” (Bush & Mumme, 1994, p. 344) in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary processes and their consecutive outcomes. Despite the fact that women's position in the family and society, as well, as their individual and human rights have been seriously undermined within the confines of the theocratic system, it is significant to note that they have remained active in cultural, educational, economic and labour spheres (Yeganeh, 1993). As Mehran (2002) argues, it was virtually impossible to seclude the women who took part in a revolution and gained social awareness and force them back to their domestic passivity.

Over the last three decades, various discursive disciplinary practices have been constantly at work constituting female subjectivities. An anticorruption campaign against women (and men), rooted in the discourse of sex and sin, has been continuously threatening women's basic rights under the banner of “countering

immoral behavior”(Human Rights Watch, May 22,2007). An instance of the most drastic measure in this regard is the punishment against adultery which is death by stoning decreed under Article 83 of the Iranian Penal Codes (Women’s Action, 29.1, 2007).

It has been suggested by a number of academics that both civil and criminal laws aim at subordinating women’s status and strengthening male domination (Afshar, 1985; Yeganeh, 1993; Afkhami, 1995; Bahramitash, 2003; Kheiltash & Rust, 2009). Undermining women’s familial rights, the law explicitly positions the husband as “head of household,” and grants him rights such as: polygamy, divorce, and custody of children. Article 33, for example, states that a woman’s testimony in all civil and criminal cases is worth half a man’s. According to the Law of Retribution and Punishment, the compensation paid to the family of a murdered woman is half that of a murdered man (Article 46). Under the law, girls over the age of 9 are considered adults and are held liable to capital punishments (International Amnesty, 2007; Women’s Action, 2007). It has been argued that such mechanisms have inflicted a severe blow on the status of women in society and resulted in horrifying State and domestic violence in the post-revolutionary era (Yeganeh, 1993).

It is significant to note how the implementation of these laws and regulations attempt to aggravate women’s subordinate position in society (Bahramitash, 2003; Kheiltash, & Rust, 2009) . In the following section, I will focus on the two major practices which aim at perpetuating the patriarchal relations of power: First, the emphasis on women’s primary role as wife and mother, and second, a gender-based segregation in public life.

2.1.1 The Appropriate Woman

It has been argued that the marginalization of women in Iran is a process that has been carried out for almost thirty years (Tohidi, 1991; Bahramitash, 2003; Kheiltash , & Rust, 2009). Despite Iranian women's increasing visibility in the economic and socio-cultural scenes (Mehran, 1999, 2003a, 2003b; Moghaddam, 2003; Honarbin-Holliday, 2009) with strong features of male dominance, the ruling system aims at a set of gender relations based upon domesticity and subjugation of women. It insists on producing the ideal Islamic women for whom the ultimate goal is purification and commitment (Higgins and Shoar- Ghaffari, 1994), and defining them primarily as good wives and good mothers (Hendessi, 1995; Sedghi, 2007).

The relationship between sexuality and power in Iran like other Islamic societies is manifested mainly in "a socially sanctioned silence" (Riaz, 1995, p. 25) and an absence of open discussions regarding the female sex and sexuality. However, certain gendered power relations govern even these very private and intimate territories, that is, the women's relationship to her partner, to herself and to her body. Within this context, marriage is considered the only legitimate site of sexual pleasure and reproduction for women. The virginity of unmarried girls, the fidelity of married women, and the sexual self-denial of divorcees and widows are rooted in traditional discourse and have been emphasized by the post revolutionary reIslamization. It is interesting to note that hymen is conceived as a physical obstacle, a natural hindrance to sexual temptation before marriage. Thus, it is upon women to practice self-restraint, cover their bodies, restrain their sexual desires and defend their *honour*.

Thus, a renewed vision of the appropriate Woman is constructed who not only suppresses her personal desires, but is also an ideal citizen for the Islamic state (Usman, 2002). She is ready to make sacrifices whenever needed for the sake of her family and country (during the Iraq-Iran war, women were called upon to send their husbands and sons to war and go to work in their place). In this way, some have suggested that we are able to detect a process of "nationalization" of women alongside the official religious discourse.

Domesticization

Traditional Islamist discourse in Iran is based on the concept of gender boundaries and promotes the public arena for men but idealizes the notion of a private space for women. Perpetuating the patriarchal relations of power, the post revolutionary gender discourse conceptualizes *the ideal woman* by insisting on her role as wife and mother within the foundational social unit of the Islamic Republic, the family. Through monopolizing cultural production, the State aims to create a singular and uniform model of a woman who is a devoted wife and a self-sacrificing mother. As Moghaddam (1995) explains,

Islamists projected the image of the noble, militant, and selfless Fatemeh - daughter of the Prophet Mohammad...as the most appropriate model for the new Iranian womanhood (p.342).

Slogans such as, "domesticity is the women's holy war" are clearly manifesting the patriarchal normative structure that perpetuates the unequal gender relations in the private space (Afshar, 1985, p.272). Within this ideological fundamentalist discourse, the woman's role is restricted to fulfilling her domestic duties in relation to her husband and children.

Asides from law, it has also been argued that the media plays a significant role in the domesticization of women. Through explicit and symbolic representations and images of the ideal Muslim wife and mother, the media aims at instigating obedience and conformity. In chapter 6 of her book, *Women's Rights in the Laws of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Ebadi (2002) refers to the domesticizing role of IRIB, the State-controlled broadcasting and propagating organization in Iran. Representing the States' perspectives, IRIB which is considered the most important means of propaganda and cultural production nationwide, constantly invites women to return to their Islamic roots by acknowledging their dignified position as wife and mother. Films and movies also function as a very effective tool in imposing images of woman as the passive sex, hitherto, maintaining the function of gender relations in the family as well as the society. The representation of women in films, movies and TV series seem to portray women as the understanding and caring wife for the working husband and a loving and nurturing mother for the children (Ebadi, 2002).

The State, as key agent in the definition of gender roles, employs mechanisms such as laws and legislations in order to influence attitudes and behaviours (Stromquist, 1995). Viewed from this perspective, the Islamic Republic Constitution and the Civil Code both amplify and inculcate a well-defined gender hierarchy within the Iranian family (Article 10 of the Constitution; Article 1105 of the Civil Code). The man is privileged as the *head* of the family and the woman is rewarded for her *tamkin*, submission to *nafaqa*, financial support. *Tamkin* is largely defined as the woman's duty to fulfill her husband's sexual desires. A woman's rights to *Mahr* (the husband's payment of money to the wife that is agreed upon in the nuptial

contract and often deferred until after divorce) as well as *nafaqa* are denied if she refuses to provide her husband with her sexual services (Articles 1086 and 1108 of the Civil Code).

Viewed from this perspective, the dominant patriarchal discourse has successfully structured a solid legal framework for maintaining and legitimating the gender ideology. The practice of subjugation of women through domesticization has the following legal and penal articulations (Ebadi, 2002):

- Women cannot choose the family's place of residence (Article 1050 of the Civil Code).
- Women cannot pursue a career without the husbands' permission (Article 1117 of the Civil Code).
- Women cannot leave the country without the husbands' permission (Article 18 of the passport law).
- Women cannot marry a non-Muslim, but men can marry non-Muslims (Articles 1059 and 1060 of the Civil Code).
- The exclusive right to terminate a marriage belongs to men (Article 1133 of the Civil Code).

Thus, through these legal practices, gender power relations aim at objectifying women through standardizing unquestionable and fixed female attributes. It should be noted that the role of mother is considered as the noblest function for a woman. The prophet Mohammed's saying that 'paradise lies at mothers' feet,' has become a very common adage, placing motherhood on the pedestal of praise and respect. The Iranian Constitution defines the position of Woman within the ideal Islamic

family in terms of the *precious foundation of motherhood* (Moghaddam, 1995). Widely promoted through education and media, the theme of the primacy of motherhood has been the fundamental theme of films, journals, magazines and textbooks.

Exclusion

Although I do not intend to fall into essentializing the simplistic dichotomies or public/private spheres (Thompson, 2003), I find it necessary to emphasize the long history of gender exclusion within Islamic societies based on the inextricable link between women's chastity and space (Tabari and Yeganeh, 1982; Ahmed, 1992; Hassan, 2000). In pre revolutionary Iran, alongside the gender-specific discourse of domestic space, a legitimized modernist discourse existed that emphasized the presence of women in the public sphere. In many urban and rural areas, women were already active in work and education. Therefore, the post revolutionary ideological discourse based on gender marginality and exclusion, needed to redress and refashion the traditionalist domestic notions and allow it to re-emerge in an updated form. Thereby, women's presence outside the domestic domain and in the public sphere was tolerated only within predefined and desexualized forms and conditions. It focused on the purification of the public space by a strictly enforced segregation of space by gender which has been in full implementation for the past thirty years (Najmabadi, 1991; Moghissi, 1998; Mir-Hosseini, 1999).

Although idealized sex-specific domain has never been fully actualized, it has resulted in a restriction of women's access to political, social, economic, educational and cultural domains. Women in Iran have the right to vote in election and become members of the Islamic Parliament; however, they are legally

excluded from the leadership positions, such as the position of the country's spiritual leader and presidency. According to the Article 115 of Iran's Constitution, "the President must come from among the religious and political statesmen (*rejal*)."

The law also prevents women from becoming the head of Justice Department and the Attorney General (Article 162 of Iran's Constitution). Immediately after the revolution, all the women judges were removed from the bench, including Shirin Ebadi, the Noble Peace Prize winner who was the first Iranian female judge.

Although women can pursue their education, they are barred from studying certain subject areas, such as some technical and engineering disciplines which are considered gender inappropriate for women (Usman, 2002).

Gender segregation is implemented in health care system (AFP, May 8, 2007), in sports (Alavi, 2005), and even in religious practices. There are separate sections on public buses and distinct compartments on metro trains for women. The State's attempt to further enforce gender segregation has taken a ludicrous turn recently by suggestions of segregated elevators and pedestrian sidewalks! (Iran Focus, 2007).

***Hejab* or Islamic Covering**

At an early stage of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, women's covering their bodies and hair became a symbolic manifestation of Islamic identity and the state propaganda began to focus on the issue "as the symbol of reasserting Islamic identity and purification of society from Western culture" (Afshar, 1998, p. 197). In 1983 the *Majlis* (Iranian Parliament) passed the "Islamic Punishment Law" that all women are required to adhere to strict *hejab*. As Mir-Hosseini (2005) points out, "it was no longer enough to believe; one has to wear one's beliefs in the form

of *hejab* (p. 1). The addendum to Article 638 of the Islamic Penal Codes states that women who appear without the covering in public will be condemned 74 lashes. This penalty, however, was modified to 10 days to 2 months prison or a cash fine of 50,000 to 500,000 Rials.

Milani (cited in Tallatof, 1997)) contends that, the veil symbolizes gendered identity by evoking femininity and ultimately creating an ideal woman. The veil, in her view, is defining female attire that is meant to polarize the sexes. Moghaddam (1995), however, believes that compulsory veiling is all about negating female sexuality. Whether *hejab* evokes femininity or negates it, we need to see it is as an ideological regulating tool that defines the dominant gender relations through segregation (Sanasarian, 2005).

In order to supposedly protect the society from the side effects of women's social participation, the State, overlooking women's individual freedom of choice, attempts to define women's appearance and role by the interest of the Muslim community. *Hejab* (Islamic clothing) and gender segregation have been constructed by the State for the past three decades in order to achieve its own form of gender relation (Mir-Hosseini, 1996b; Sanasarian, 2005; Sedghi, 2007). It is interesting to note that despite the state policy on *hejab* and the forceful ways of its imposition, women have found ways of resistance (Najmabadi, 1998).

It is also interesting to note how the official propaganda system has been politicising the Islamic *hejab* in recent decades. In this light, *hejab* is a powerful symbol of the domination of the political Islam in Iran, since the veiled women in the public social arena symbolize the moral and cultural transformation of a

society that had been subjugated to the Western decadent cultures (Afshar, 1998). Thus, all women, regardless of their religious beliefs, are forced to wear the veil which is associated with moral purification and the fight against Western imperialism under the penalty of criminal sanctions.

2.2. The Discourse of Modernization

In spite of the works of the dominating official discourse in present day Iran and its joyous announcements of the victory of the Islamic values, there exists a multiplicity of discourses that play their roles in the discursive games of power. It is within this multiplicity of various conflicting discourses that relations of power are being defined. The compulsive presence of the Islamization discourse touches upon all aspects of public and private life; however, it is far from a monolithic discourse. Modernity has also resulted in myriad changes and challenges in contemporary Iran. The main advocates of the unofficial modernist discourse in Iran have been the Iranian intelligentsia and academics who define modernity in terms of secularism, rationalism, pluralism, and civil society. In order to understand the discourse of modernization, we need to define the term first. “Modernity,” according to the cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1996), carries certain defining features such as:

- the emergence of secular forms of political power that operate within defined boundaries,
- large scale production-consumption economy based on extensive ownership of property;
- the decline of the traditional social hierarchies and the rise of new class formations;

- the decline of religious worldviews and the rise of a more secular culture that emphasizes on the rationalistic and individualistic principles.

In general, one can conclude that modernity is a way of thought and life which involves query, choice and doubt while allowing discussion, disagreement, debate and rationality. According to Jahanbagloo (2002), Modernization in the Middle East, as in the West, involves a Weberian process of secularization, particularly a replacement of religious institutions with those of rationality. The pre-modern patrimonial nature of the Iranian society in the mid 19th century witnessed signs of attempts at demising the tribal institutions and reconstructing Iranian national identity (Behnam, 2002). The cultural encounter with the Modern West throughout the following century, Boroujerdi (1997) believes, took shape in importing ideas such as: secularism, socialism, constitutionalism and democracy. The authoritarian secularization led to the emergence of a group of secular elites who entered areas of culture, knowledge, law and education which were previously the exclusive domains of the religious clergy. The carriers of modernity were at first members of the ruling system and the government bureaucracy, but gradually, they expanded to the oppositional groups including the “leftists, Nationalists, liberals, fascists, and regionalists” (Chehabi, 1990, p.21).

It is significant to note, however, that due to an “obvious power disparity of Europe vis-à-vis Iran,” there existed a modernization dilemma that Ringer(2002) explains as, ”the attempt to use European institutions as models for Iranian modernization, and to adopt European technology and knowledge, while at the same time guarding against a loss of cultural agency and authenticity (P.41). Such guarded and utilitarian welcoming of modernity, in Jahanbagloo’s (2002) view, is

a sign of a traditional society's defensive uneasiness continuously preoccupied with questions of adaptation, modification and assimilation of the West.

Although the experience of modernity in Iran took place in the mid 19th century, the establishment of the Pahlavi dynasty in the early 1920s marked the era of a systematic process of government-directed modernization in Iran. The monarchs' intervention in the cultural scene took form in their attempts at promoting the ancient secular culture and establishing modern legal, educational and military institutions (Abrahamian, 2008; Moaddel, 1998). There was a superimposed emphasis from above on nationalism as a more binding force than religion. This kind of fascination with the Western ideas of enlightenment, however, led to a cultural Westernization which ignored the political accompaniments and values of modernity, such as democracy, pluralism, and civil society (Behnam, 2002).

An important aspect of the Pahlavi monarchs' (1925-1979) modernizing projects involved transforming the status of women in the traditionally patriarchal Iran. Modernity, in relation to women's status, can be defined with reference to women's roles and responsibilities in a society. As early as 1932, a number of Iranian women participated in the Oriental Feminine Congress in Tehran during which in their attempt to improve their status, they called for equality with men in marital, educational, professional and political rights (Weber, 2008). Probably the most dramatic manifestation of women's entrance into the public sphere, however, was the mandatory unveiling imposed on women in 1936 by Reza Shah. (Pappe, 2005; Moaddel, 1998). For the authoritarian monarch, female emancipation was a modernizing gesture which also provided him with the power of utilizing gender, according to Sedghi (2007), "to emasculate religious authorities and transfer

patriarchal power from the domain of the clergy to the realm of the state” (p.67). To further establish hegemony over the clerical authorities who controlled the old school system, he attempted at releasing the educational system from the religious domain. Reza Shah’s educational reform policy resulted in the establishment of the first modern schools as well as the first university for both women and men, in addition to a women’s college in Tehran (Sedghi, 2007). The secularization of the educational system allowed women to enter higher education institutions as students and teachers. In 1936-37, 70 girls were admitted to the Tehran University. The “modernization” project was resumed by Mohammad Reza, who succeeded to throne in 1941. Through a US-led program of “modernization”, strong-armed rulers around the world, such as Mohammad Reza Shah were forced to commit themselves to certain economic and cultural changes aiming at the urbanization and industrialization of their societies (Bahramitash, 2003, p.552). In the 60’s, these programs took shape in Iran, in form of a series of reforms called the “White Revolution” which were also staged mainly in order to prevent major social and political challenges. Although at the heart of this so-called revolutionary package was the land reform, it also included the women’s right to vote (Chaido, 2006). To further advance women’s position in the domestic sphere, the state modified the Family Protection Law in 1967 and 1975. Soon women were elected to the Parliament and were appointed as ministers and judges (Peppe, 2005, Baharamitash, 2003).

By implementing the top-down measures such as mandatory unveiling, women’s suffrage, major legal reforms, promoting women’s education, and opening certain

professions to them, the Pahlavi dynasty advocated women's active participation in the social sphere. This kind of "state feminism" as Sedghi (2007, p.3) maintains, led to women's agency growing more evident. Due to the financial expansion of education and health, women particularly from the middle and upper classes were able to enter the labor force. However, the lives of other women especially from the traditional middle class as well as the lower classes and rural areas did not undergo any dramatic change (Bahramitash, 2003). The limitation of the reforms was due to the absence of a democratic system and the prevalence of patriarchal norms and values. Therefore, the society continued to cling to traditional views and behaviour; where values such as, "virginity, modesty, chastity, fidelity and subservience to men's sexual desires and male dominance in the family remained as legitimate cultural norms and practices" (Sedghi, 1996, p.116). Limited educational and professional opportunities for women made it difficult for the majority of Iranian women to overcome their subordinated status and achieve emancipation.

Despite all the restricting practices on the position of women after the overthrow of the Shah and the arrival of the Islamic Revolution, the discourse of modernity regarding women's position as active members in the social, political, economic, cultural and educational domains remained relatively strong (Mehran, 1999, 2003a). Women from both the secular middle classes and the urban lower classes played an active role in the Revolution and overthrowing the Shah by demonstrating in the streets of large and small cities. Even after the Revolution and despite the new regime's attempt to keep women in their traditional role, they kept struggling to further transform the public scene with their presence. Far from being passive victims, women gradually tried to move out of the

preordained patriarchal cultural frames. Restricting measures such as, imposed veiling and restricting legal rights, could not keep them from finding ways round the limitations of the patriarchal system (Moghissi, 1999). Women have used different strategies, either from a thoroughly modernist-secularist perspective, or a modernist Islamist view in order to create a more 'gender-friendly' condition in the cultural, legal, educational and professional spheres. The modernist Islamist view which is mainly based on a modern reading of the *Sharia* also tries to reconcile the differences between the religious doctrine and secular rationalism aiming at facilitating women's access to the public domain.

Moghissi (1999) believes that women's achievements show the ruling system's compromise under the economic, social and political pressures. Efforts towards modernity, whether Islamic or secularist, have resulted in certain transformations such as, further access to education, better job opportunities and an overall presence in all spheres of life (Mehran, 2003a). Alavi (2005) reports that, one third of all doctors, 60% of civil servants and 80% of all teachers in Iran, are women.

It is significant to note how the official discourse of Islamization with its outright criticism on the Western cultural 'decadence' and sexual promiscuity has been unable to compete with the unofficial modernist discourse (Moghissi, 1999). The fundamentalist discourse has gradually discredited itself before the population of urban middle and lower class women. Great advances in the means of communication and information has resulted in the infusion of aspects of modernity and accommodated a cultural framework which gradually has been changing the contours of the Iranian society.

3. Higher Education

In order to understand the present state of affairs in the Iranian higher education, I first give a brief historical background of the state of affairs in relation to modern education in Iran.

3.1. A Brief Overview

In this section which is specifically concerned with two eras of Pre- Revolution and Post- Revolution, I briefly, try to portray Iranian women's role and position within this system. Then I will also touch upon the question of academic repression in Iranian higher education. Finally, I discuss the position of ELT in the Iranian society and more specifically, in the country's higher education.

3.1.1 Pre-Revolution Era

The first Ministry of Education in Iran started in 1855, during the Qajar dynasty (1779-1924), when the new ministry, had to encounter opposition from the religious, as well as the aristocratic circles. During the Pahlavi period, the goal of modernizing the social, cultural and economic face of the country led to the realization that there was a serious shortage of an expert and specialized workforce for these reforms to realize (Chehabi, 1990). Hence the expansion of schools at all levels alongside the reforming of the academic curricula seemed necessary. In 1938, Reza Shah established the first Iranian university called, Tehran University. At the same time, due to the shortage of advanced teaching facilities inside the country, Iranian students were sent to Europe at the expense of the state, while foreign experts and academics were invited to teach inside the country.

Women's admission to universities was one of the most fundamental developments during this period. By opening the doors of higher education and providing employment opportunities for women, the State encouraged women who were previously limited to the family environment to step out into the public sphere (Yeganeh, 1993). The School of Education and the Faculties of Literature and Science were among the first places to admit women. Women had to discard their covering, abide by a western dress code, and co-mingle with men; all of which were not to be easily accepted in the traditional society of Iran. It was only logical that a very limited number of women who were from the higher social classes were ready to take these bold steps.

During Mohammad Reza Shah's period (1941 – 1979), Iran continued being a conservative state, but the trends towards modernization of the country and its transformation from an agrarian society to an industrial state was accommodated by its great wealth and abundance of raw materials. To meet the acute needs of this transitional period, the educational reforms were considered essential in order to disseminate modern science and technology. The state initiated an ambitious educational expansion by building more universities and higher education institutions. By 1978 there were some 20 universities functioning, while almost 150 other higher educational institutions, including 87 affiliated to different ministries and governmental organizations, and 40 private ones were providing tuition in various fields and majors.

More women found the opportunity to enter into the educational and employment arenas in the 1970's. They participated in all levels of education, especially higher education. The pattern of inequality persisted, however, since women's

opportunities to enter into higher education were much more limited than men's: in 1976 women constituted only 30 percent of students in higher education (Yeganeh, 1993; Paidar, 1995). There were many Male-dominated professions that were not available to women (Paidar, 1995). There has also been a notable absence of women from top decision-making jobs. Yeganeh (1993) believes that the state failed to effectively challenge the patterns of male-female inequality; therefore, modernization failed to bring about women's full integration into the process of national development (p.6). According to Yeganeh (1993), Pahlavi's did not aim to remove patriarchal relations, rather, to merely modernize them.

3.1.2 Post-Revolution Era

After the 1979 Revolution, education remained one of the main concerns of the new ruling system. The structure of the education system in Iran includes five levels of pre-school, primary, middle, secondary and post-secondary. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

The government is duty bound to prepare free education facilities for all people upon graduation from high school. Higher education should be made available to all aspirants as the self-sufficiency of the country prescribes (Article 30).

The revolutionary rulers started re-arranging the country's educational system in order to implement their own ideals and values (Mobin Shores, 1998,). Higher education became the product of the ideological power relationships and is used as a means of ideological indoctrination since the actual power at universities lies with the State. The educational policies and decisions, including the supervision of the programs, curricula and courses, as well as setting the rules and regulations are

all made outside the universities by the Supreme Council on Higher Education Planning (SCHEP) and the Minister of Science, Research and Technology.

The number of universities run by the state is 58, in which 250,000 students enrolled in the year 2004. Tuition and accommodation at these universities are mostly covered by the state budget, paid for by the government. In addition to the state universities, there are a number of non-profit universities that follow the same rules as the public educational institutions; however, tuitions are paid by the students. The Islamic Azad University founded in 1982 is a private chain of universities which is currently operating in over 110 cities. In 2004, around 1.3 million students enrolled in various programs in Islamic Azad University. Payame Noor, for example, is a distance education university which offers degrees remotely. Both these major universities are spread far countrywide and grant degrees that are accredited by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology.

In Iran, all applicants for higher education institutions need to pass centralized National Entrance Exam held annually by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology. The language of instruction in all higher education institutions is Persian (Farsi).

Academic Repression

Academic institutions in Iran have always been a centre of dissent. In the past half a century, universities were seen as great threat by almost all governments. For decades, Iranian students and faculty have been in the forefront of resistance against the ruling system (Altbach, 2001; Mojab, 2004). In order to have a clear picture of the higher education in Iran, especially during the last three decades, we need to examine it in the light of the existing power struggles. Soon after the 1979

Revolution in Iran, the project of the Islamization of the Iranian universities was launched in the form of the Islamic Cultural Revolution (1980-1987). A Cultural Revolution Council was appointed that closed down all campuses for three years, purged dissident students and faculty, and formed a system of quotas for admitting the regime's loyal defenders into the universities (Mojab, 2004). Aiming at integrating the state and religion, the theocratic regime was hoping to fuse ideology with all aspects of higher education including the administration and faculty recruitment, students' admission and purging textbooks. Any form of academic freedom, in this context is synonymous with Western liberalism and, hence, assumed inappropriate for an Islamic society.

The policy of academic repression that has been going on in both state-run and the private universities for almost three decades has been argued to have led to (1) persecution of the academics, (2) silencing the classrooms, (3) censorship and pre-publication previews of scholarly works, and (4) banning the discussion of politically and ideologically sensitive topics and fields. The policy of the iron fist also resulted in the phenomenon of 'brain drain' among the academics and students in the past two decades (Abootalebi, 2001).

Women's position in Higher Education

The position of Iranian women in the higher educational system in the post revolutionary era is characterized by a coexistence of contradictory issues. The paradox of modernity and tradition can be easily detected in the nature of women's presence in the educational arena of the country. There has been an undeniable increase in the enrollment and completion rates of female students at higher education institutions in the past 30 years (Mehran, 2003; Shavarini, 2005). The

Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, reported that the percentage of women enrolled at state universities increased from 27.3 percent in 1990 to 44.1 percent in 1999 (Ghiasi, 2000, cited by Mehran, 2003, p.3). According to statistics, 63% of students within the Iranian higher education are women (Campbell, 2006). These growing numbers can be traced in the great desire in women to change their social status. Higher education, according to Shavarini (2005), is a sphere of hope where women can have access to a very limited freedom which may provide them with better social, marital, and financial opportunities.

However, certain gender biased policies which aim at limiting women's access to equal educational opportunities cannot be overlooked. Wearing Islamic *hejab* has been imposed on female students and teachers by the Ministry of Education since the beginning of 1980-1981 academic year, following the declaration of compulsory Islamic covering by the government for all women and girls over the age of 6 regardless of their religion and nationality. What the officials interpreted as the appropriate "Islamic attire" has been monitored and checked at the entrance gates of university campuses by the security guard offices. Female security guards known as "sisters" were responsible for checking the *hejab* and makeup of all women entering the campuses. In case of any improper appearance, they would either give instructions to wear the *hejab* properly or may report the students to the moral committee of the university that has the power to inflict certain punishments on the guilty person.

Moreover, single women were denied the right to study at foreign universities on State scholarships, according to the "Sponsorship for Foreign Students Act" of 1985. Article 3, note 1 of this Act specifies that "women graduates who qualify

according to this Act can apply only if they are married and can go abroad accompanied by their husbands." Many female candidates who were qualified to receive state scholarship were denied the right to better education for almost 16 years. Finally, in 2001, the Iranian Parliament passed a legislation allowing unmarried women's access to state scholarship but only after having acquired their fathers' consent.

Another gender biased policy is segregating the academic studies in accordance with the patriarchal gender roles and responsibilities. After the 1980-1983 so-called Cultural Revolution certain fields of study were considered inappropriate for women (Higgins & Shoar-Ghaffari, 1994; Mehran, 2009). Female students were denied the right to study in mining, veterinary, petroleum and agricultural engineering. In 1987-88, women were not allowed to study in 65 out of 108 fields of studies related to in mathematics and computer sciences (Alavi Hojjat, 1994). In response to these discriminatory limitations, Iranian women's significant resistance and participation in the educational scene gradually eliminated some of the existing gender gaps. Hence, there have been fewer restrictions concerning women's admission to most of the fields of study since 1993. However, in 2008, in an attempt to rectify what was considered women's disproportionately high university acceptance (65%), the government attempted to impose restrictions on the admission of female students to certain disciplines. A statement signed by 700 women's rights activists revealed and objected to this secret gender-based quota system. Despite lack of any legislation to impose female quota, on 8 February 2008, the Government enforced quota system in 06-07 for 26 fields and 07-08 for 39 fields of study that limited women's presence in certain fields of study while positively promoting the admission of male students. All these discriminatory

measures have led to the fact that within the Iranian higher education women are still underrepresented at graduate level both as students and as faculty members (Mehran, 2009).

3.2. ELT in Iran

In order to understand Iranian English female teachers' beliefs and attitudes, it is important to understand the socio-political context of the profession. The status of English in Iran is a position of foreign language and is considered mainly as a necessary tool for business, international contacts and higher education. Though its influence was challenged seriously in the post revolutionary reactions against what was regarded as the spread of 'western decadence,' English has gained a new status in recent years.

English language institutes have been mushrooming in major cities and are frequented by people from different walks of life and with different aims. High school graduates are convinced that a reasonable knowledge of English will help them get admission to university education, which is based upon passing the national entrance examination known as the *Konkur*. This highly competitive examination includes a section on general English.

Recently, there has been a growing interest in international tests such as IELTS and TOEFL among those who seek to pursue their education abroad. There is also a considerable number of people who plan to immigrate to or acquire the citizenship of foreign countries and need to be relatively fluent in the language.

Knowing English for some people also means being able to find better employment opportunities. Surprisingly enough, to a certain extent English is

becoming the “gatekeeper to positions of prestige” (Pennycook, 1995, p. 14) in Iranian society as in many other non-English speaking countries. There are also cases of religious people, as reported also by Al-abed AlHaq and Smadi (1996) in Saudi Arabia, for whom knowing English is a means of defending and propagating their ideological and political views for a non-Persian speaking audience.

3.2.1 ELT in Higher Education

In Iran, English language is introduced to students from the age of twelve (grade 7) as a compulsory subject within the secondary school system (3-4 hours per week) where the decisions regarding the textbook selection and exams are dictated by the Ministry of Education in a top-down curriculum. (Eslami Rasekh and Valizadeh, 2004). There are also numerous private English language institutes all over the country that are self-funding but under the control of the Government. English is offered in all state and private universities in Iran in the form of limited courses of 3 credits General English and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in which students concentrate on the field-related English texts and terminology (Talebinezhad and Aliakbari, 2002). English Major students can be placed in three main categories: English Language and Literature, Teaching English as a Foreign Language, and English Translation. In the first two years, students focus on the main language skills, while in the following two years, they are offered courses related to their specialized course of study (Talebinejad and Sadeghi Beniss, 2005)

As far as methodologies and resources are concerned, the pedagogical focus seems to be mainly on the linguistic aspect of the language rather than the communicative or cultural functions (Majdzadeh, 2002). As for the teaching methodologies, a combination of grammar-translation method and audio-lingual

is used for the General English courses. EAP courses, on the other hand, mostly focus on the improvement of the learners' reading skill. ELT textbooks and materials used at the higher education institutes are planned and approved by the Ministry. The culture of teaching in the English language classes in Iran are dominated by a teacher-centered approach (Talebinezhad and Aliakbari, 2002).

Teachers of English at university level are largely Iranian nationals and there are very few native speakers of English who are permitted to teach at Iranian higher education institutes. English language teachers in Iran can obtain their degrees from various foreign language programs offered by Iranian universities. MA and PhD graduates in the fields of TEFL or English Language and Literature are considered qualified to teach at university level (Talebinezhad and Aliakbari, 2002).

Summary

In this chapter, I gave a relatively detailed description of the context of Iran which due to its socially and politically unique and complex nature, I believe, was essential. In giving a historical overview of the main social and political developments in the past hundred years, I have attempted to show how Iran has been the arena for an ongoing struggle between the two main discourses of tradition and modernity. These constant ebbs and flows of the two main discourses of modernity and traditional fundamentalist discourses and their consequences have effectively shaped Iranian women's lives and played significant role in shaping their identities. The second part of the chapter looked

into the Iranian higher education with particular attention to the condition of ELT at Iranian academic institutions.

The main goal of this chapter was to set the background for this study by demonstrating how the constraining limits within which women study, work and live have been systematically institutionalized and regulated. Perhaps more than women in other parts of the world, Iranian women have genuinely felt that “the personal is political,” since their very basic choices and preferences are being defined, molded and constrained by the broader political, legal and social mechanisms of totalitarianism. The set of gender codes imposed on women is so broad that it encompasses all aspects of their personal and social beings including the essential choices such as what to eat, what to drink, what to wear and what to say.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework: Poststructuralist Feminism

There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself: Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestiges of essentiality, of identity, of property.

Jacques Derrida (1978, p.51)

Introduction

The present chapter intends to provide the theoretical framework and the relevant literature survey as the conceptual tools to approach the topic of this thesis, i.e. understanding women teachers' construction of the self. In my attempt to examine the processes of identity formation of the female English teachers in Iran, I first focus on the notions of identity in the light of various theories with special regard to the poststructuralist understanding of identity. Then I will explain the theoretical framework I intend to employ in this study which draws an analytical crossroad where post-structuralism and critical feminism meet. This gendered poststructuralist theoretical framework which is consistent with the theories of Michel Foucault (1972, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979, 1980, and 1988) on the one hand, and Feminist theories of gender (Weedon, 1987, 1999; Walkerdine, 1989; McLaren 1993, 1999, 2002; Butler, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2005), on the other, provided the design and later the analytical interpretation of the data. The key

concepts discussed here include subjectivity, gender, discourse, and technologies of domination. .

This chapter also concentrates on the recent studies in the field of TESOL regarding subjectivity and teachers' identity construction in particular. I will also discuss the scarcity of the research on female teachers' identity construction from a feminist poststructuralist perspective. Discussing the literature on women issues and TESOL in Iran, I will also refer to the gap in the literature within this context.

1. Self / Identity in the Light of Various Theories

In our modern world, it would appear that we are preoccupied with issues of self: who we are, what we believe in, how we feel about ourselves, and how we want others to regard us. Interests in the subject of self and identity has grown rapidly in the past decades. The self, deemed by Joas (2000) as "one of the greatest discoveries in the history of the social sciences,"(p.2) is examined through various lenses of disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. Hobson (1996) regards the self as a socially, culturally and historically constructed phenomenon. Living within a particular social and cultural system, we come to learn norms, values, and language while developing certain belief / habit system which in a very complex process leads to our understanding of ourselves.

The approach of the pioneers of work on self was more holistic in nature. In the identity theory, self is deemed as a collection of identities, i.e. role positions that a person occupies within his/her social framework. In the sociological approach to self and identity, society and individual influence each other in a reciprocal

relationship (Stryker, 1980). According to social identity theory (Tajfil, 1978, 1982; Tajfil and Turner, 1979), the individual falls into various social categories such as, nationality, class, gender, profession, etc., that give her a sense of belonging. Each of these social categories presents a definition of who the person is and provides the individual with a social identity that is evaluative, normative, and prescriptive (Hogg, et al, 1995).

Blumer's (1969) theory of symbolic interactionism which is mainly concerned with the individuals' construction of meaning through interaction, asserts that individuals are influenced by the culture and social institutions on the one hand, and they are instrumental in producing culture, on the other. Mead (1934) who also postulates that self is created through social interaction discusses a dialectic of self which distinguishes two different 'selves' within each individual: an 'unsocialized self' that concerns the desires and needs of the self, and the 'socialized self' which is self within the frame of society (Eliot, 2001). Goffman (1959) also emphasizes this dual aspect of self: the active (working) self or 'I' and the passive (worked on) self or 'Me' (Gubrium and Holstein, 2000). The literature on self and identity highlights the interaction, as well as, the tension between self and society (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980, 1987; Giddens, 1991; Bosma and Gerlsma, 2003; Kroger, 2004).

1.1. A Postmodern Fragmented Self

As a result, one may perceive the self as an entity that is unstable, unorganized, fragmented and dispersed (Stryker, 2000; Eliot, 2001). The recognition of this ephemeral nature of the self may lead to a postmodern perception of this

phenomenon. Based on the assumption that personal identity is flexible, fluid and socially constructed (Butler, 1990; Rosenau, 1992; Hall, 1996), postmodern selfhood has become an indefinable entity which is unique, conglomerate, complex and hybrid. The question of identity is no longer lingering on the traditional ‘*Who am I?*’; but rather it focuses on questions of *when, where and how am I*. In Trinh Minhha’s (1992) words, “There is no real me to return to” (cited by Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 105). Thus, from this viewpoint, we can conceptualise identity as multiple, varied, and constituted through a continuing struggle to reinvent selves within specific material and discursive boundaries. From this perspective, human beings are constantly engaged in an ongoing interpretive process of what they mean to themselves (Blumer, 1969).

According to influential theories in post-modernity, the personal identity is constructed and constrained through various regulating mechanisms (Giddens, 1992; Foucault, 1978). The experiences we go through and how we understand them, lead to particular forms of identity. On the other hand, our sense of self shapes our understanding of the outside world and our experiences. Warner (2000) concludes that reality is constructed through the relationship of the triangle of experience/ identity/ understanding. Within a postmodernist framework, identity, and as a result experience, are not only understood as provisional, we can also explore how particular versions of reality (identity and experience) are produced, promoted and maintained. Therefore, in contrast to modernists’ preoccupation with *what* and *who* an individual is, a poststructuralist perspective is mainly concerned with *how* an individual comes to be.

2. Poststructuralist approach to Construction of Identity

Of particular import to the poststructuralist approach to construction of identity are Michele Foucault's theories on power, discourse and subject as explicated in his archeological and genealogical analyses. In a series of historical/philosophical works, this complex and eclectic thinker has developed a theory of the constitution of subject. The key terms he unpacks in his work include: truth games, power, discursive procedures, discipline and subjectivity. We need to know that all these terms, however, are examined and redefined by Foucault, in a new light that are far from their traditional definitions and our normal understanding of them. Foucault has attempted to problematize all these notions that seem natural but, he suggests, are in fact constructs of domination (1978a, 1984).

2. 1. Foucault's Nietzschean notion of Truth

Truth for Foucault (1988), as a Nietzschean thinker is very different from realist conceptions of truth. Truths do not correspond to an objective reality; they are, rather,

illusions about which it has been forgotten that they are illusions; worn-out metaphors without sensory impact, coins that have lost their image and now can be used only as metal, and no longer as coins (Nietzsche, 1974, pp. 46-47).

In Foucault's theorizing, truth, neither exists in a pure state nor can be separated from the processes and procedures of its formation, to which he refers to as truth games. These sets of procedures, or *truth games* lead to a certain result that on "the

basis of its principles and rules of procedure, may be considered valid or invalid, winning or losing” (Foucault, 1978b, p. 297).

2.2. A Fluid Identity Constructed by Regimes of Power/Knowledge

In his critique of modernity and its universalizing paradigm of globalism, rationality and scientific knowledge, Foucault gives prominence to multiplicity, discontinuity and fragmentation. Such perspective would naturally lead to challenging the modern concept of the universality of human individuality, as well. In his later works, in particular, Foucault is mainly concerned with the subject (Foucault, 1982, 1988a, 1988b, 2001, 2003). His approach to the question of identity and self however is far from those of essentialists’ or Universalists’. Refusing to privilege an *a priori* conception of the subject, Foucault negates the existence of a fixed, whole and stable identity within a person. Hence, the idea of rational, stable, and unitary forms of identity, for him, is an ideological fiction of the modern era (Flax, 1990; Rosenau, 1992). Drawing upon these Foucauldian notions will particularly help me avoid observing the participants as individuals who possess an essentially unified identity that can be explored and uncovered through analysis. It is also of significance to my study to consider that human identity, as for any form of truth, is not universal but the product of social, political and cultural processes and procedures. Subjects, therefore, are constructed rather than biologically determined (Foucault, 1978b). The modes of objectification that transform human beings to subjects can be viewed in a framework of complex power relations linking authority and power to issues of self and identity (Foucault, 1988a).

Unlike the traditional negative conception of power as possessed, repressive and emanating from the top down, Foucault presents a new perspective on the issue of power (Sawicki 1988). The ‘juridico-discursive’ conception of power that entails the homogeneous domination of one social group over another, according to Foucault (1978a, p.92), originates from the practices of pre-modern societies. Foucault, however, redefines power as “a multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization” (1990, p. 92). In this light, power is seen as pluralistic and heterogeneous, as well as positive and productive. From this Foucauldian account of power, we can see why power works on individuals, without weighing itself on them as a negative force. It is simply because power is positively productive. Circulating through a social network, power produces knowledge, pleasure and discourse. In an ongoing cycle, power produces and sustains truth, and truth, in its turn, generates and extends power (Foucault, 1978a). What Foucault refers to as ‘discourses’ or regimes of power/knowledge are organized and structured forms of knowing and practicing power that are mutually conditioning and modifying operations. Thus, any form of knowledge, human sciences, religions and ideologies need to be considered as a discursive formation that tends to subjugate and objectify the individual.

Theorizing the relation between power and subject, Foucault (1986) asserts that,

it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals (p, 234).

Holstein and Gubrium (2000) also discuss the existence of the “constellation of procedures, conditions and resources through which reality (in this particular case, subjectivity) is apprehended, understood, organized and represented in the course of everyday life” (p. 94). Thus, in order to understand teachers’ construction of subjectivity, we need to examine the prevalent discursive practices, defined by Foucault as “a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function” (1995 [1972], p. 117 cited by Gubrium 2000, p. 232). In my study, I will try to focus on the labyrinth of practices, procedures, institutions and operations which are of inquisitorial, disciplinary, and normative nature and provide the teachers in this study with various subject positions that they identify with and, as a result give them a sense of self as well as, a sense of the world around them. In addition to that, I, as the researcher, need to bear in mind that the construction of identity is constantly conditioned and modified depending on the time and place the participants happen to be in.

2.2.1 Techniques of Domination

Foucault draws our attention to a "system of control in the production of discourse" (Foucault 1972, p.224) called discipline, that constitutes a myriad set of strategies and techniques of domination that have come to control our life (Foucault, 1978a). Foucault argues that *regimes of truth* are regimented through a specific technology of power called discipline. Discipline chooses the body as its site and target. Thus, the body is peered into, acted upon, inscribed, regulated and controlled. The regulatory practices of discipline aim at producing *docile bodies*:

What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act on the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behavior. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it... Thus, discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, “docile” bodies’ (Foucault 1978a, p. 138-9).

In *Subject and Power*, Foucault (1982) maintains that, these practices are applied to people’s “immediate everyday life” and “categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him”(Foucault, 1982, p.781). These disciplinary practices are exercised directly on the body in a process of permanent visibility and continuous surveillance. In ***Discipline and Punish*** (1978a), Foucault analyses institutional settings such as prisons, hospitals, schools, as examples of sites of constant visibility. In the example of the prison, he refers to the *panopticon*, an architectural structure, as a means of constant surveillance which enables a continuous control of inmates’ conduct. Drawing upon these theories concerning discipline and surveillance, I will try to examine how within the culture of permanent visibility, Iranian female teachers become the object of an observing gaze (Foucault, 1978a). Understanding such “conscious and permanent visibility” (Foucault 1978a, p. 201) will help me in my study understand the practices that are applied not only in disciplining the bodies, but in regulating and controlling the minds of the participants.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1978a) discusses other techniques, such as ‘normalization’ and ‘examination’. Normalization seeks two goals: first, it determines the ‘acceptable’ limits of behavior and imposes ‘homogeneity’ on the

subjects. Second, it individualizes the subject "by making it possible to measure gaps, to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another" (p.184). Through examination, on the other hand, a certain visibility is established over individuals which makes it possible to differentiate and judge them (1978a, p.186).

Foucault (1980) believes, power has replaced its former strategies and tools of social control. In order to produce the modern subject, power is applying more subtle instruments of domination. Repression, violence, and constraint applied mostly through the juridical tools are now substituted by social norms. Human beings are given identities to which a set of categories of attributes, conceived of as natural and normal are attached: man/active/capable; woman/passive/fallible; mother/sacrifice/nurture; teacher/authority/knower. These attributes are conceived of as normal and natural and set the social standards of normality for the subject. Operating through perpetual surveillance, these social regularities are internalized by individuals and produce a kind of self-awareness that manages and directs their lives. Thus, modern subjects are both effects of power and a point from which power is exercised. In other words, individuals have become both the objects and the agents of domination (Foucault, 1978a). These disciplinary and normalizing practices are of great concern in my study of the female teachers' sense of self. Since through examining these 'new' means of normalization, we may be able to see how discourses can get a firm grip on these female teachers by changing them into self-regulating beings without using the former aggressive and violent tools.

3. Poststructuralist Feminism: An alliance between Foucault and Feminism

Foucault has impacted feminism in many ways; however, there have been many feminist thinkers that have criticized and rejected him altogether. Although, Foucault's theoretical work can provide illuminating insights into the construction of the self, many feminists have argued that his work has overlooked the issue of gender. This shortcoming has led to the emergence of a poststructuralist feminist approach in which Foucault has been extended, criticized and applied to various questions regarding the construction of female self (Mc Laren, 1997). Situating my views within the feminist perspective that intends to throw light on women's marginalization, I attempt to explain the relativity of a feminist poststructural theory to my study of female teachers' construction of identity. In the following section, I intend to show how selecting a poststructuralist conceptual framework can help me as a researcher avoid an essentialist and reductionist view of women and subjectivities by recognizing the fact that the social arena comprises a multiplicity of diverse and changing power relations

3.1. Foucault and Feminism

Despite his contribution to understanding the role of subjectivity, it is argued that Foucault shows little concern for sexual differences and insufficient regard to the female subject in his works. There exists a considerable body of feminist works that strongly criticize the Foucauldian conception of power and his theory of subjectivity (Martin, 1982; Fraser, 1988, 1989; Bartky, 1990). Some of these criticisms are directed at Foucault's earlier works and his deterministic notion of individuals as passive, powerless 'docile bodies' that are incapable of agency (Mc Laren, 1997). In their reading of Foucault, there seems no place for resistance to

power. Some others emphasize Foucault's lack of attention to the female subject, in particular. Bartky's (1990) critique of Foucault's *docile bodies*, for instance, is based on his failure to distinguish between male and female bodies:

We are born male or female, but not masculine or feminine. Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, 'a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms which surface as so many styles of the flesh (p. 65).

Despite the considerable critical body of feminist works regarding Foucault's theories of subject and power, we are able to see a convergence of feminism and Foucault in the feminist theoretical arena that aims at the exploration and development of a coherent theory of feminism. Feminist theorists have found common areas of concern with Foucault's analysis of power relations and subjectivity and have shown how these theories have relevance to gender-related questions. Unlike liberal or radical feminists who have remained faithful to the traditional assumption of power as repression, domination and victimization, feminists, inspired by Foucault are concerned with potentially more complex aspects of power, such as, its nature, production, location, and circulation. By interpreting power as exercised rather than possessed, these Foucauldian feminists have problematized the traditional liberationist orientations and consider them as an oversimplification of a complicated issue (Weedon, 1987, 1999; Sawiki, 1998; Bartky, 1990; Butler, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2005; Lather et al, 1997).

The issue of identity has always been of great significance to the works of the prominent feminist thinkers, such as, Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, Nancy

Chodorow, Jessica Benjamin, Jacqueline Rose, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva” (McLaren, 123). One of the main implications of traditional feminism is viewing female identity as a whole and coherent entity defined in its relation to male identity. In Foucault’s theory, however, self and identity are considered as multiple, fragmented and flexible that emerges from discursive processes and practices (Linstead and Thomas, 2002). As Maria Tamboukou, 2003) points out, "there is no woman but women and moreover many 'selves' within each woman (and man)" (p. 2). Foucault's notion of human body as the principal site of power has also helped feminists' in their understanding of how relations of power aim at construction of the gender inequality through operating on the female body (Mc Nay, 1991).

3.2. Poststructuralist Feminism: a gendered Foucault

The feminist poststructural theory of subjectivity and domination has been particularly illuminating in my study of the female teachers. Focusing on the micro-political and concentrating on the women’s everyday lives, I will try to use Foucault’s theory of power and subjectivity in analyzing the processes and practices involved in their identity formation. In the analysis of Iranian EFL teachers’ construction of the self, I have drawn upon the works of feminist poststructuralist theorists such as: Weedon (1987, 1999), Bartky (1990), Mc Nay (1991), and Butler (1993, 1999, 2004, 2005). Despite their relatively various theoretical orientations and contexts, they all draw upon Foucault in conceptualizing subject as multiple, floating and decentered. According to these thinkers, gender, sexuality, race and class are all constructed through discursive practices and within the constant flux of time and history (Dolan, 1993).

3.2.1 Female Body and Performing Gender

In order to explore the complex relationship between the female subjects' sense of self and the practices of domination, I need to focus on issues of gender and the feminine body and mind. Simon Beauvoir well known quote, 'one is not born, but rather, becomes a woman,' points rightly to the social and cultural nature of gender. Gender in the works of the well-known poststructuralist feminist, Judith Butler (1990), is "neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (p. 6). In her famous work, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and Subversion of Identity*, Butler (1990) defines gender as the "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being" (p.33). These stylized acts are culturally constructed and repeated through time so that they appear as natural and essential. Focusing on the performativity of gender may help me see how the regulating gender discourses can force female subjects to enact the socially 'normal' and gender appropriate behavior. Butler maintains performing gender is not voluntarily chosen by individuals, but the result of the regulating discourses. As Cameron (2001) maintains:

Being a man/woman involves appropriating gendered behaviors and making them part of the self that an individual presents to others. Repeated over time, these behaviors may be internalized as "me"—that is, gender does not feel like a performance or an accomplishment to the actor, it just feels like her or his "natural" way of behaving (p. 171).

In order to analyze the female self, it is significant to reach an understanding of the female body since it is upon "the biological difference between the male and

female bodies that the edifice of gender inequality is built and legitimated” (Mc Nay, 1991, p.128). The body, according to Foucault (1984) is:

the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration (p. 83).

The body is the principal site of domination on which specific patterns and codes are repetitively inscribed (Foucault, 1978 b). Through the hegemony of norms and specific technologies, power shapes bodies and solidifies identities, such as: race, age, class, and gender. Through the fundamentalist/ ideological discourses in Iran that are of patriarchal nature, gender performances are manifested on the female body, which is utilized as a framework for certain prescribed function (Grosz, 1994). Body as the direct locus of social power directly targeted biological difference between the sexes.

In *Femininity and Domination*, Bartky's analysis (1990) elaborates on how the feminine body is constructed differently from the masculine body:

the process by which the ideal body of femininity-and hence the feminine body-subject-is constructed; In doing this, they produce a "practiced and subjected" body, i.e., a body on which an inferior status has been inscribed (p. 71).

Female bodies are being subjected to disciplines that shape them into feminine bodies, fundamentally inferior to masculine bodies. These disciplinary practices, according to Bartky, are directed towards three distinct targets: producing the body of an ideal shape and size; eliciting certain gestures; and displaying the body as an

ornamental surface (Bartky, 1990). Borrowing from Foucault's analysis of *Panopticon* (1978a), Bartky, focuses on women's self regulating normative practices:

it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies....The woman who checks her make-up half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or her mascara run, who worries that the wind or rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle, or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate in the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to relentless self-surveillance. This self-surveillance is a form of obedience to patriarchy (1990, p. 80).

Mc Nay (1991) agrees with Bartky in that the regulatory disciplinary techniques operate through distinct peculiar ways on the female body so as to "inscribe physical effects, such as restricted and hesitant body movement, and which compound the secondary position that dominant conceptions of femininity ascribe to women" (p. 132). Yet she emphasizes "the 'natural' body must be understood as a central tool in the legitimation of specific strategies of oppression" (p.128). Medicalization of women has also been identified as an instance of how power has been targeting female body. Diamond & Quinby (1988) mention instances of such procedures:

The medicalization of women's bodies, for example, which made pregnancy into a disease and undermined women-centered healing institutions; the physical and sexual abuse of women, from

witchburning to rape; and the mutilation of women's bodies for the sake of "beauty" are just some of the ways feminists have identified women's bodies as the locus of masculinist power (p. xv).

Hence, by focusing on the performativity of gender and the disciplines that aim at shaping femininity, I will try to see through my participants narratives how their bodies are being targeted, how they reach a sense of feminine self, as well as examining the legitimation of the strategies of oppression. In addition to this, by integrating the individual experience at a micro level with the social power relations, poststructuralist feminist theory may help me explore the ways in which discourses and counter discourses are created and circulated.

4. Literature regarding identity formation

The concept of identity in the English language teaching and learning has just recently received substantial academic attention. In this section, I will try to give an overview of some of the research that focuses on the topic of language and identity, and concentrate on those studies that have informed my own research in various ways.

4.1. Iranian Research Pool: Women Issues and ELT

At the very outset of this investigation, I realized there exists an immense gap of studies on issues of identity in the Iranian ELT literature. This, however, does not entail that I was not able to find studies related to gender relations in Iran. There were various researches regarding the identity formation of immigrant Iranian women from different perspectives. Shahidian's (1996) investigation concerns the gender relations and identity among exiled women, while Kaighobadi and Ahrens,

(2007) were concerned with the feminist identity development of Iranian immigrant from a psychological perspective. Khoei', et al (2008) explored the meaning of sexuality to Muslim Iranian women immigrants in Australia. There also exists a bulk of studies related to women's issues and gender politics in Iran, particularly from two aspects of secular feminism (Najmabadi, 1991, 1998; Hendessi and Shafii 1995) and Islamic feminism (Afshar, 1998; Mir-Hosseini, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2004). Despite their differences in perspectives, both groups of feminists in Iran aim at improving women's status. The secular feminists believe that the Islamic feminism is a compromise with patriarchy (Mojab, 1995, p. 25). The Islamic feminists try to distinguish themselves from the political ideology and the "absolutist and legalistic Islam," that focuses on women's sexual and domestic 'duties' (Mir-Hosseini, 2002, p. 37). This new generation of feminism, according to Mir-Hosseini (2004) represents "a new consciousness, a new way of thinking, a gender discourse that is 'feminist' in its aspirations and demands, yet is 'Islamic' in its language and sources of legitimacy" (p. 3).

I also came across research related to gender issues within the Iranian higher education, in general. Mehran (2003a, 2003b, 2009) and **Alavi Hojjat**(1994) concentrated on the women's status within the higher education system in Iran, while Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari (1991) investigated sex-role socialization in Iranian textbooks. Concerned with the issue of inequality in education, Kheiltash and Rust (2009) studied the representations of gender in school textbooks and curricula.

In the ELT research field, however, most of the research carried out in Iran focuses on issues related to language learning methods, strategies and the related

classroom practices. I also realized that the bulk of Iranian ELT research is under the spell of positivism and the majority of researchers show a considerable tendency to utilize quantitative research methodology. The current ELT models in Iran are examined by Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2002), whereas, Sarani and Kafipour (2008) centered their work on the language learning strategies. The studies carried out by Izadinia (2009), Matbouli (2009) and Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini, (2005) were concerned with issues of power and critical pedagogy, while Aliakbari (2002) for instance, evaluated the issue of culture within the ELT program in high schools.

In general, the question of the ELT and identity formation has been hitherto inadequately examined. I was not able to find any research on the question of female EFL teachers' construction of identity, either through a poststructuralist or a feminist perspective. The gap in literature, itself, thus, became an important motivation and made me more determined to set out on this untrodden road.

4.2. The Hegemony of Modernist Perspective within the Broader ELT Research

In the international ELT literature, it is also significant to note that researchers that have studied language and identity have focused predominantly on the notion of identity from a modernist perspective. Informed by theories from such disciplines as anthropology, psychology and cultural studies, most of these research projects are based on a modernist understanding of identity that regards it as rational, coherent, consistent, transparent, and free-willed. These hegemonic approaches in TESOL which are based on such assumptions as the internal cognitive processes and individual's control over them (Mc Intyre et al, 1998) seem to ignore that

individuals' goals, efforts and motivations, as well as their sense of self are discursively produced by relations of power. Whether these researchers focus on the psychological variables (Dornyei, 2001), or the socio/cultural context (Kramersch, 1993, 1996, 1998; Hyde, 1994; Lessard-Clouston, 1996; Robinson-Stuart and Nocon, 1996; Moran, 2001), they represent a particular modernist notion of self that needs to be problematized. As Norton (1995, 2000) points out issues related to language learning, such as motivation and inhibition should not be examined in vacuum, but as socially constructed factors within relations of power that are in a constant flux over space and time.

4.2.1 ELT Research: Inadequate Concern with Teacher Identity

Another important issue that needs to be addressed here is that in spite of the growing interest in the question of identity and language in the literature from various perspectives and methodologies (Hansen and Liu, 1997), the central interest in this limited existing literature is mainly in the identities of the language learners (Kanno, 2003; Miller, 1999, 2003; Varghese, 2004; Varghese, et al, 2005; Block, 2005) rather than the identity formation of the language teachers. Duff's (2002) study focuses on the discursive co-construction of knowledge and identity among high school students from a social constructivist's view on language learning and cultural identity. While, Richards (2006) is more concerned with the dynamic nature of identity construction and how it is formed and reformed through the classroom interaction. Toohey (2000), on the other hand, tries to show identity in the mirror of social relations and classroom practices.

There is also the issue of gender within the TESOL body of research. According to Davis and Skilton-Sylvester (2004), "constructivist, critical-feminist, and

poststructuralist research paradigms now dominate studies of language and gender education” (p.386) among both Western (Crookes and Lehner, 1998; Duff, 2002; McKay and Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000), and Non-Western researchers (Canagarajah, 2002; Pavlenko et al, 2001). However, whether we are looking at essentializing the role of gender on the language learning in the positivistic and post-positivistic research outcomes (Eisenstein, 1982; Farhady, 1982), or whether gender is considered as a social and cultural phenomenon and product of power relations (Schmenk, 2004; Ehrlich, 1997; Norton, 2000; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), we have to admit that the bulk of TESOL research is directed towards the relationship of gender and language learning. The main focus is on how gender relations affect learning and learner, not teacher.

There are also a few studies researching the language learners’ identities that have drawn on the feminist poststructuralist theory. Weedon (1987) theorizes that subjectivity and language are mutually constitutive:

Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed (p. 21).

Based on such a conception of identity and language, scholars such as, Norton Peirce (1995), and McKay and Wong (1996) centered their works on the understanding of identities as multiple and flexible as well as conflicted and constructed entities. Pierce’s (1995) longitudinal study on five immigrant women in Canada is particularly significant. Drawing on the poststructuralist conception

of social identity as complex, fluid, and shifting across time and space, she maintains that relations of power have not been adequately addressed in the interaction between language learners and the target language. She further argues that issues such as motivation in language learning are not fixed personality traits and need to be understood within the complex power relations. Bonny Norton Pierce's (1995, 2000) approach to the process of the construction of identities of the language learners within the limiting power relations has also been extended by scholars such as, Cannagrajah, (1996), and Mc Kay and Wong (1996).

Regarding the teacher identity, in the research carried out in TESOL, the core tendency is based on a modernist conception of teachers as free-willed, rational individuals. In most of the studies on teachers' identity, little attention has been given to the impact of teachers' personal histories, their everyday life experience, and the imposed social, political, cultural values and norms. I believe there is a need for a kind of research that recognizes teachers as complex, multifaceted, contextualized subjects.

In the area of teacher identity, Inbar-Laurie (2005) focused on the perceived native and non-native speaker identities of EFL teachers in Israel from a socio-psychological perspective. Concentrating on the same issue, Rajagopalan (2005) observed a similar feeling of self inadequacy among the Brazilian EFL teachers. Amin (1997, 1999, 2004) has also contributed to the issue of non-native ESL teacher identity.

4.2.2 Poststructuralist Research on Teachers' identity formation

In my search for research that has tackled the issue of identity formation from a poststructuralist perspective, I came across various studies that focused on different topics related to teacher identity, such as, the professional, sociocultural and political context (Duff and Uchida, 1997; Beijaard et al., 2004, 2005), the dynamics of moral issues and values (Johnston, 2003, 2007; Phan Le Ha and Phan Van Que, 2006). In their review of studies regarding language teacher identity, Varghese et al (2005) point out three main perspectives: conceptualizing identity as multiple, shifting and conflicting; the concern with the close interrelation of identity with sociocultural and political context; and the concept of the discursive construction of identity.

The works of Coldron and Smith (1999), Moore, et al (2002), and Clandinine and Huber (2005) discuss the interrelation of the agency and social structure in the teaching profession. Emphasizing on the contextual nature of teacher identity, Coldron and Smith (1999) believe that the identity of a teacher is “a matter of where, within the professional pertinent array of possibilities” (p. 714).

Moral issues and questions of values have also been center of attention in some of the studies related to teacher identity. Dealing with the dynamics of values in teaches' identity formation, Johnston (2003, 2007) explores the moral aspect of teacher-student relation, teacher's view of herself as a professional and the role of teachers' religious beliefs in ELT. In their qualitative analyses of the nature of the discursive construction of identity among Vietnamese teachers of English, Phan Le Ha and Phan Van Que (2006) and Le Ha Phan, (2008) try to explore the relations between the personal, professional and moral identity discourses. Their work is

mainly concerned with the ways in which Vietnamese Western-trained teachers negotiate their identity with regard to their moral values in teaching English. The focus of these studies is on the challenges and complex strategies non-native teachers of English employ facing values contradictory to their own.

Concentrating on the complex interrelationships between language and culture, Duff and Uchida's (1997) ethnographic research explores teachers' sociocultural identities and their teaching practices in the postsecondary EFL classroom in Japan. In another study on the professional identity of non-native English teachers, Anita Dewi (2007) discusses the impact of language and culture immersion on the professional identity of Indonesian EFL teachers. Tsui (2007) examines the professional identity of a male EFL Chinese teacher through a narrative inquiry. Exploring the teacher's struggles with multiple identities, this study highlights institutional construction, on one hand, and the teacher's personal reconstruction of identities, on the other. Boyd's (2000), study discusses the processes of identity formation in a different group of participants. He focuses on the cultural adaptation of four Canadian English teachers who worked in Japan, as well as their readaptation in returning to their home country. Golombek and Jordan (2005) also apply a poststructuralist framework in their study of pre-service teachers' multiple and conflicting identities. They argue that by offering alternative discourses, teacher education programs may enable pre-service teachers to imagine alternative identities. These researches used various methodologies and tools such as, ethnography, interviews, diaries, observations, and case studies in their work on social identity and language teaching.

Conclusion

As I have demonstrated, an interdisciplinary conceptual framework seems appropriate for the topic of this thesis since it provides a multi dimensional theoretical perspective that may sufficiently explain and analyze the nuanced nature of the gendered self. In order to “grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 97), I will be questioning discursive practices that lead to the subjugation and objectification of the female teachers in this study. Individuals as constituted objects are distributed into disciplinary spaces within the “grid of social regularity” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 98) and from there, will turn into subjects to particular discourses and practices. In other words, through the process of objectification, individuals not only come to occupy *spaces* in the social hierarchy but through their continual subjugation, come to know and accept their *place*. Studying the production and reproduction of a hegemonic gender-oriented discursive processes and practices sheds light on the understanding of the construction of female identity. By analyzing the Iranian female English teachers’ self-writings and interviews, however, I do not intend to focus on “who” they are. My main concern is with ‘how’ they come to see, know and position themselves in their world. In this light, we can better understand why an analytical tool consistent of Foucault’s work and feminist theories concentrating on self formation techniques and practices, as well as using the autobiographical writings were chosen to analyze the research data.

Summary

This chapter focused on the conceptual framework of the study and the relevant literature. The feminist poststructuralist theoretical framework derived from Foucault and feminism are thoroughly discussed, focusing on the multiplicity, complexity and fluidity of the personal identities (Davies, 2000). I tried to show how subjectivities are elicited and produced through underlying normative and disciplinary discourses rooted in the power mechanisms (Foucault, 1976, 1977, 1978a, 1978b). I also showed in order to examine the female teachers' multiple identities, I need to apply a gendered theory of subjectivity as the foundation of the data analysis (Weedon, 1987, 1999; Butler, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2005) since it enables me to focus on the regulative and disciplinary techniques that determine the possibilities of sex and gender for the female subjects. Concentrating on the TESOL literature pertaining to the key areas of identity formation, I tried to show the inadequate concern with the teachers' subjectivities in TESOL research in general, and within Iranian TESOL, in particular.

Chapter Four

Researching Identities through Narrative Inquiry

Introduction

In doing a micro analysis of the complicated processes of identity formation, I needed a kind of research methodology which would enable me to see how the participants go through the ongoing struggle of creating and recreating selves within the various and sometimes conflicting discursive boundaries. In this chapter, I first discuss the theoretical argument for the research strategy I have used. The research design will be explained with regard to the method, the process and the organization of the data collection and analysis. I have also included a brief discussion of the challenges I encountered throughout the data collection process.

1. Methodology

If we consider any research as an “effect of the meanings and values in circulation at its own historical moment” (Belsey, 2002, p. 37), we come to realize that this investigation is the result of the co-construction of meanings by both the researcher and the participants and under the impact of the claims of “truth” produced by specific discourses at a particular place and time (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). In other words, in our researcher /participant interaction, each one of us bring our own “claims of truth” which are products of certain discourses that have shaped our subjectivities within a particular time/place framework.

Having in mind that this study is a product of the co-construction of meaning, the following research questions are considered as my guidelines to this thesis project:

- What constitutes the participants' identities as female ELT teachers in Iran?
- What are the discursive practices that shape their identities?

Considering the nature of the research questions, this study aimed at exploring the complexities and inconsistencies of the construction of female teachers' identities. Therefore, choosing the narrative enquiry as the main design for this study which involved a rich and detailed documentation of the participants' stories seemed most appropriate (Riessman, 2002b, 2002c; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

1.1. A Narrative Enquiry

Studying and analyzing narratives in the social and educational research have opened new territories of theories, methods and perceptions regarding the self (Polkinghorne, 1988, 1995; Denzin, 2000; Riessman, 2002b, 2002c). My attempt, in this study, has been to explore how the female English teachers perceive themselves and their work, what mechanisms shape these perceptions, and how their multiplicity of subjectivities are produced within the current relations of power. Foucault insists on examining relations of power at a local level where the strategies of power are more transparent. Through examining the everyday experiences, ordinary routines, and the immediate conditions of life, the power strategies and mechanisms can become visible (Mills, 2003). In this regard, a qualitative approach that is mainly concerned with the details of lived experiences seemed the most appropriate for the current study.

People's accounts of their experiences, from the personal and intimate to the social and professional, can provide the most appropriate means to an exploration of the constructions of the self. However, it is important to note that these stories are not coherent, consistent, or well organized. The significant point here is the ways in which individuals give coherence to their personal stories, "the source of the coherence, the narrative that lie behind them, and the larger ideologies that structure them must be uncovered" (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p.62).

Narratives as data can be written or oral; short or long; in form of a life story, or just relating a certain incident and event in the person's life. In the present study, interviews will be treated as stories narrated by those who lived them, i.e. the female university teachers who teach English in Iran. Chase (2005) defines a narrative, either oral or written, as "an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life such as schooling, work" (p. 655). Being a very distinct form of discourse, narrative is considered a retrospective process of constructing meaning: "the shaping or ordering of past experience" (Chase, p. 656). It is a method through which, one, either as the actor or the observer, can organize and connect actions in a way that leads to understanding one's own or others' actions (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997; Laslett, 1999). More importantly, narrative discourse emphasizes on what is unique in each human action and event instead of directing attention to their common properties (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Regarding the importance of discourses in producing identities, as I have already discussed in Chapter Three, individuals need to be viewed as the sites of discursive games in action. Narratives from a Foucauldian perspective are governed by discourses that rule within a particular time and place. In this regard, the

participant's narrative reveals her subjectivity which in its turn personifies the multiple dominant discourses that shape it from moment to moment. Subjectivities such as "mother" or "English teacher" are products of a complex and ongoing interplay of discourses, such as gender discourses, academic discourses, cultural discourses, colonialist discourses, etc. that are themselves transitory and subject to change.

We identify 'what' we do and 'who' we are through an 'account,' a 'narrative' of deeds and persons" (Benhabib, 2006, p. 384). Depending on the context and audiences, and through images, metaphors, perceptions, and sensations, individuals create and express particular identities that they may even continue to develop and live out (Ricoeur, 1980). As (Benhabib, 1999) argues, "the answer to the question of who I am always involves reference to "where" I am speaking from and to whom or with whom" (p.344). Human beings form and revise what is meaningful to them, which we assume would include meanings that define the self (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p. 33). There is a story of the self, indeed, but self, itself, is narratively constructed. "The narrative view of identity regards individual, as well as collective identities as woven out of tales and fragments belonging both to oneself and to others" (Benhabib, 1999, p. 351). The stories of the participants in this study are not the representations of reality but a creative interpretation or representation of meanings that are socially, culturally, historically shaped within the specific interactional context of the interviews. Therefore, we can conclude that both the researcher and the participants are involved in the process of co-construction of these meanings (Radnor, 2001).

1.1.1 Participants

The stories of all the female teachers who participated in this study have been situated within the social interaction of participant/researcher interview and email context. What Riessman (2003) refers to as *performing identities*, involves the socially interactive nature of storytelling in interviews and the enactment of these identities in a discursive context. That is why we need to have in mind that these stories are the result of a joint collaboration between the narrator/performer (the participants) and the audience (the researcher/interviewer).

In choosing my candidates, I used a relatively constrained purposive sampling which required advance knowledge of the candidates in order to “acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it” (Cohen, et al, 2007, p. 115). I needed to choose Iranian female English teachers who worked at Iranian higher education institutions. It is important to note here that certain criteria impacted on this study’s sample design and the choice of candidates, but these factors were not allowed to undermine it. Therefore, I need to acknowledge here that there exists an element of convenience in the sampling design that did not allow me to be overly selective under the specific circumstances of my research setting (Armakolas, 2001).

First of all was the question of time commitment. From the outset, I was aware that I needed to find participants who would willingly take part in a long-term study which involves several interview sessions and an ongoing email correspondence. Female university teachers are mostly very busy career women juggling chores at home as wives and mothers, as well as their academic responsibilities. Many of

them also teach extra hours as part timers. Finding participants who were willing to take part in such a project over an extended period of time was a bit challenging.

The second issue was the intimate nature of this project. A study on the ‘self’ requires a kind of interaction between the researcher and the participants that would allow free entrance into the social, cultural, professional, as well as the private and personal domains (Olesen, 2000). I needed to find participants that were willing to open up and share their personal and professional experiences with me. I was aware how challenging it could be to create such rapport with participants that would lead to allowing me into their private and sensitive spaces, as well as revealing their workplace conditions.

Another important challenge is the issue of trust. Exploring the complex and intimate experiences where there are various political, religious and cultural sensitivities was an important consideration in choosing my participants. I needed people with whom I could reach this mutual understanding that it was safe to take part in this study. These women work within a very restricted political and academic framework where the risk of exposure might involve jeopardizing their jobs or even worse consequences.

My contact with the participants extended over a span of two years; starting from January 2008 when I first sent them the invitation emails (see Appendix A). In the email, I briefly described my thesis and my research questions. I also indicated that there was going to be a questionnaire that I can email to them, as well as a number of personal interviews that can be scheduled at a time and place that was convenient to them. The email was sent to a group of twelve female teachers of

English who were working at various academic institutions in Iran. Ten people responded to my invitation but only eight agreed to participate in my study.

Here, I need to define my own relationship with the participants. Four of the participants were my former students, while three of them were classmates from college. There was only one person (a former colleague) that I did not know very well, prior to the research. I believe that the fact that I knew most of the participants in person worked in contradicting ways for and against my study. The fact that the participants knew me personally probably explains why they showed readiness to participate in the study. My previous relationship with these participants also worked in favor of the data collection process simply because it helped considerably in my establishing the required rapport and attaining their trust and confidence. The participants were able to open up to me, express their views and reveal their inner feelings and experiences (Olesen, 2000).

Yet, it could have had a negative aspect, as well. I sometimes suspect they might have felt reluctant to reveal certain aspects of their lives to me, since I knew them personally. Have I been a total stranger, they might have felt more comfortable relating those secret aspects of their inner worlds. The fact that some of the participants were my former students might have had an influence on their taking part in the research and trying to please their teacher.

See Table A for an overview of the information on each of the participants.

Table A

Partici[pant	age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Last Academic Degree	Years of Teaching Experience	State or Private Institution	Full time or Part Time
Sara	47	Married	2	M.A	13	Private and State	P T
Afsoun	47	Married	-	M.A.	20	Private	F T
Sousan	54	Married	2	PhD	30	Private and State	F T
Ramesh	46	Married	-	M.A.	18	Private and State	F T
Noushin	30	Single	-	M.A.	10	Private	F T
Shirin	35	Married	1	M.A	5	Private	P T
Simin	36	Married	1	M.A.	6	Private	F T
Tara	34	Single	-	PhD candidate	10	Private	P T

The age of the participants ranged from 30 to 54. All participants were born and raised in Iran and learned English as a foreign language inside the country. Only two of the participants were single women without the responsibilities of domestic work. Six of these women were married and four of them had children.

Two of the participants had attended international elementary and secondary schools where the medium of teaching was English. The rest had attended ordinary primary and secondary schools where Farsi was the medium of instruction, but they were sent to English language institutes simultaneously. All eight participants had completed their M.A. degrees in either Teaching Language or English Language and Literature at Iranian universities. There was one participant who had

a PhD in Teaching English, and another who was a PhD candidate at the time of the study. All participants had graduated from Iranian universities.

They all had teaching experience at post-secondary and academic institutions. The teaching experience ranged from 5 years for the youngest participant to 30 years for the oldest participant in the study. They all have been teaching at private academic institutions, but three were also teaching at State universities in Iran. Six of the participants have only been teaching at academic institutions inside the Iranian capital, Tehran, while three of them had the experience of teaching in both Tehran and other cities in Iran.

1.1.2. Researcher

Here, I try to clarify my own standpoint as the researcher on all claims of truth in the analytical process and results. This study should not be viewed solely as an analysis of the stories of the participants due to the fact that we cannot overlook the impact of my own subjectivities as the researcher on the process and the results of the investigation (Burman, 1992). Acknowledging my own epistemological, ontological, and ethical positioning, as well as my own emotional and professional baggage as inextricable from this study (Radnor, 2001), I, as the researcher, had to make great effort in order to maintain a “strategic and technical detachment” throughout the data collection process and data analysis (Holliday, 2007, p. 178). As a result of the discursive nature of my research approach, I embraced this analytical investigation as “an active subjective process” which requires “the contextualization” of the participants’ accounts as well as the researcher’s interpretation of these accounts (Alldred & Burman, 2005, p.175).

In addition to the issue of researcher's subjectivity, due to the fact that all aspects of our subjectivities are in a constant flux, I also intend to address the issue that various aspects of my own subjectivities rose and fell in different periods of this study, which might have affected the analysis and the results of this research. I constantly found myself moving between two main subject positions. As an Iranian female English teacher, I viewed myself more of an 'insider'; however, I constantly reminded myself of my 'outsider' position as a doctorate student writing her thesis. It is worth noting here that even as a researcher I mostly identified myself as a teacher/ researcher rather than an academic researcher.

There is no doubt that my perception of my own complex multiple identities: my class, gender, profession and nationality lingered throughout the research process (Alldred & Burman, 2005) and in order to address that I need to give a brief autobiographical portrait of myself. I was born and grew up in Tehran for the most part of my adult life. I come from a middle-class educated family in which my father was a university teacher and my mother worked as a high school vice-principal. I am the only daughter and enjoyed the special privileges that came along with that. At the age of 18, I witnessed and participated in a great political/historical event in my country, i.e., the Islamic Revolution which resulted in the overthrow of Shah's regime in 1979. This event affected my personal and family life dramatically. Both my parents were dismissed from their jobs during the so-called Cultural Revolution when the Iranian academia was purged of non-Islamic and Western influences. The universities were closed for three years, during which time like many Iranian high school graduates of the time, I was not able to continue my post-secondary education. When finally accepted and allowed to continue my education, I managed to finish B.A. and M.A. degrees from a State

university in Tehran. Both as a student and as a teacher, I had to learn how to survive a repressive educational system that shows little tolerance regarding academic freedom. Meanwhile all aspects of our everyday lives were affected by the horrifying outcomes of an 8-year war (Iraq-Iran War).

While doing this study, I felt all these previous experiences resonated with those of the female teachers in my research project. The fact that I could identify with them through the recognition of these similar experiences, may have had certain advantages and disadvantages. My own position as an Iranian woman and an English teacher has given me certain depth of insight into the experiences of the participants. Having lived under the same social, cultural and political atmosphere as well as being trained in the same educational system and having somewhat similar teaching experiences as my participants, I was able to relate to, understand and discuss with them the relevant issues. However, since I no longer live and work in Iran (I left the country in 2003 and joined the EdD program in 2004), my present location as a TESOL teacher/student/researcher working and studying outside of Iran has worked in two contradictory ways for me in this study. On the one hand, it is a privileged position which was perhaps viewed by the participants as ‘one of us who has stepped out of the system.’ On the other, these experiences, especially the human and material resources that I have been able to enjoy throughout my doctorate studies, have profoundly informed my perspective as a researcher in this study.

1.1.3 Data Collection Tools

Personal stories, whether oral or written, can be the source of data; however, we need to remember they can never convey the actual experience of interaction

between the researcher and the participants. At the same time, this kind of data comprises multiple, heterogeneous, and ambiguous information that reveal the variety and clash of discourses at work (Mills, 1997). Having this in mind, I chose to collect this kind of data through personal interview. In addition to the interviews, I was also able to use questionnaires, as an exploratory tool, and email correspondence as the complementary data collection tool.

We also need to remember that the work of redefinition, modification, and self analysis that these women go through on a daily basis does not take place in a vacuum. Their homes, as well as academic institutions and universities where they work, function as the social sites of active struggle of hegemonic discourses, values, and practices which continually and constantly mediate their lived realities. The emphasis in this light is on the participants' version of self, reality and experiences. The participants were encouraged to speak or write extensively and in detail. These tools provided me with different opportunities that I am going to discuss in details.

Questionnaire

As an exploratory data collection tool, I prepared a semi-structured biographical questionnaire "with a clear structure, sequence and focus" (Cohen, et al, 2007, p. 321) that had an open-ended format to elicit some initial information from the participants. I sent these questionnaires to all participants by email immediately after I received their consent form. The questionnaire consisted of 19 questions regarding the participants' biographical information, as well as their familial history, and educational/ professional background. Therefore, at an early stage of

the data collection, the questionnaire provided me with a sketched initial portrayal of each of the participants. The details of the questions are shown in Appendix B.

Private Face-to-face interviews

What is known as the narrative interviewing employed in a poststructuralist approach tends to be less structured than the more traditional methods of interviewing (Fontana and Frey, 2000). Interview or “inter-view” as Kvale (2007) asserts, “is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 1). This kind of unstructured interview is in form of negotiations that reflect and create the “selves” of both the interviewee and the interviewer (Gale and Wyatt, 2006, 2007; Holstein and Gubrium, 2003). It is also of great significance that these interviews are the "socially and jointly constructed (inter)action of which power is an indissoluble part (Shi-xu and Wilson, 2001, p.77). Therefore, as the main research tool, I used unstructured, informal and open-ended interviews to be able to create the co-construction of meaning related to these female English teachers’ selves.

I tried to arrange the interviews at the time and place that were most convenient to my participants and within my own possibilities. The dates were pre-arranged through emails or telephone conversations. I indicated that they were free to choose the place of interviews which was most convenient to them. I offered readiness to go to their homes or offices and also suggested my own house in Tehran as another possible option. The participants were given the choice of their preferred place of interviews since I wanted the place of interviews to be an environment of peace, comfort and safety. I was aware that a supportive and encouraging environment would enable them to feel comfortable and safe to

discuss their personal experiences and intimate feelings (Radnor, 2001). Four of the participants preferred to come to my own house for the interview sessions. In three cases, I used to go to their homes. Only one of the participants preferred her own office.

I began the interviews as early as February 2008. In each of the breaks I took from work, I took a trip to Iran and managed to conduct the interview sessions with my participants. In each trip which lasted at least one week and at most one month, I was able to see two to four participants. Over the span of two years, I was able to have follow-up interviews in quite an acceptable number of sessions with each of my participants. The first interviews lasted 3 to 4 hours. There were follow-up interviews with each of the participants that each took an additional 2 to 3 hours.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were given or emailed to the participants to make revisions or add anything they wished in order to give them a sense of control over the material and reduce the risk of feeling vulnerable "from exposure of their stories" (Chase, 1996, p. 48).

It is also significant to note here that in my approach to the data, I was concerned with *what* the narrators communicate as well as *how* they conveyed their meanings (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). Having in mind that in an interview the non-verbal is sometimes as important as the verbal, I took notes throughout the interviews of my own interpretation of the participants' gestures and body movements that I thought they might have implied or conveyed certain meaning (Scheurish, 1995). In taking these notes, I wrote down whatever occurred to me, regardless of their triviality or unimportance at that particular time. I also tried to remain as inconspicuous as

possible so that the participants do not get distracted by my note taking and find me a good listener.

I did not insist on the participants' use of English during the interviews (Chase, 1995). I was aware that the sensitivity of the topic and the intimate nature of the discussions might require their switch to Farsi. Therefore, they were free to use Farsi at any point of the interview that they felt comfortable. Most of them, however, used mainly English, but at points some of them switched to their mother tongue. In these cases, the texts were translated by the researcher and later sent to the participants for their approval of the translation.

In the initial interview sessions, I used the questionnaire that the participants had already answered as a flexible guideline, mainly getting directions from those questions that were unanswered or not clarified. I also had a tentative list of questions just in case there was going to be a gap of silence (see Appendix C). I need to clarify here that the list of questions does not imply that I limited myself to the sequence or wording of those question. I organized the list of questions only as a guideline to provide myself with a framework restricted to the areas that are research-relevant. Therefore, the interviews were more in the semi-structured format enabling me to elicit responses, explanations and interpretations related to my research questions (Radnor, 2001). By giving myself a reservoir of main and subsidiary questions at the outset, I could keep track of the areas that I thought were needed to be discussed with the interviewees. In addition to that, it made it possible to present similar topics in different interviews with different participants.

In the actual interview sessions, I tried to let the discussions to flow more freely and flexibly (Radnor, 2001) and intended to remain open to the new and emerging

topics (Cohen et al, 2007). During the sessions, I allowed the interviewees to shape the direction and outcome of the interviews (Anderson & Jack, 1991). I interfered mostly to ask for the reasons of their feelings and asked them to give more tangible and everyday instances of their answers. This form of concentration on the seemingly mundane, routine, everyday experiences (DeVault, 1990) could lead us to a better examination of the power relations that are at work at the micro level and enable us to see how they structure identities across time and place. Overall, I preferred to let the narrative to flow freely, flexibly and spontaneously (Cohen et al, 2007). As a female researcher doing a feminist research, I was concerned with this kind of free, trusting and reciprocal nature of the flow of narratives which requires a genuine human communication between the interviewer and the interviewee (Devault, 1990; Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Skype interviews

For the follow up interviews, I was able to arrange Skype sessions with three of the participants who had access to the software. We set dates that were suitable for my participants and they were able to do the interviews in the peace and comfort of their own homes. These Skyping sessions took about 1 to 2 hours during which I took notes and later completed the notes (not word by word). My participants and I found this long-distance interviewing a very convenient and reasonable way of collecting complementary data. The only problem that occurred was the fact that the internet connection proved unreliable especially at the times of political turmoil and we had to rearrange our dates when the internet was not accessible to them.

Email correspondence

Email correspondence was used as a complementing data collection tool. By allowing me to be in constant touch with all participants over a long period of time, this invaluable tool made it possible for me to gain insight into the participants' changing perceptions. Email correspondences were all in English. In each email, I would include only one topic or question and indicate that the participants were in no hurry to answer it. This was mostly because I was aware how busy these women were, struggling with work outside and chores inside their homes. There was also the risk that the sight of my emails in their inbox would make them feel pressured and resist or in the worst case scenario would want to withdraw from the project, altogether. Therefore, I made sure the number of questions or topics in each email was not more than one, so that the participants would not feel any pressure.

The questions in the emails were more of a "follow up" nature, that is, mostly topics that have already been touched in the interviews were asked to be further elaborated. I believe these emails added a worthwhile dimension to the study by enabling me to ask the participants to further probe into, elaborate on and clarify their viewpoints. The email questions were not predetermined but mostly emerged out of and were dependent on the nature of the correspondence carried on with each individual participant. In each email, I would ask them to respond to a new question or make more detailed comments, clarifications and amplifications to the previous questions. Another important aspect to the email correspondence was to check whether the participants' perceptions were changed over the passage of time. Overall, the email correspondence served as a useful supplementary tool in

increasing the strength of the findings, validity and extrapolations (Hammersley, 1996; Holliday, 2007).

In order to illustrate the nature of the raw material, sample transcripts of interviews (Appendix D) and emails (Appendix E) are presented.

1.1.4 Data organization and Analysis

Throughout actively engaging in a long process of data collection, I encountered the challenge of organizing the pile of data I had gathered. The first step was to make individual files for each of the participants in which I gathered the data collected from the questionnaire, the interviews and the email correspondences under each participant's pseudonym. Then, I concentrated on each participant's folder and tried to extract data related to their different domains of life and social relations of power. I started with their various subjectivities: gender, profession, nationality each of which respectively related to their being a woman, an English teacher and an Iranian citizen. Under each main entry, I created subcategories, for instance, under the category of woman, I created the subcategories of daughter, wife, and mother. I began with the close examination of the data collected which was in form of thick descriptions of the participants' attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and experiences (Radnor, 2001). This led to the recognition and categorizations of recurrent themes, pertaining to the construction of gender and professional subjectivities. In this regard, the two research questions functioned as the guidelines for a preliminary thematic code system (Cohen, et al, 2007). Studying the data resulted in the formation of themes which in turn led to more questions. In the process of further data collection and data analysis, newer themes and patterns emerged and expanded. While coding speech into meaningful categories, I also

kept a record of my impressions and memos to develop a reciprocal relationship between myself as the researcher and the data. Through the dynamic interaction between the data on the one hand, and my own constructs as the researcher on the other, the arguments were developed (Holliday, 2007).

The next step was to compare and contrast these experiences and individual cases in terms of the extracted themes. Recognition of patterns and relationships led to my own interpretation of the findings. It is important to remember that the process of analysis is “always interpretive, always contingent, always a version or a reading from some theoretical, epistemological or ethical standpoint” (Wetherall, 2001, p. 384). Using an analytical approach based on my conceptual framework (Chapter Three) enabled me to interpret the themes and generate theoretical explanation.

1.1.5 Ethical Considerations

Informed Consent

All participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix E). The form indicated that the participants had been informed of the aims and purposes of the thesis project, and the responsibilities of the researcher to preserve their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information.

They were also informed that they were free to withdraw from the project at any stage of the research process (Robley, 1995). A copy of the signed consent form was given to each of the participants. In addition to the consent form, I also signed and submitted a research ethics form to the Graduate School of Education, Exeter University (see Appendix F).

Confidentiality

The question of the participants' anonymity and confidentiality, as well as the secrecy of the information elicited from the investigation were of great significance in this study, due to the particular nature of the research context. Here, I need to clarify that doing and participating in certain research which involves social and political investigations have proven to be risky in Iran. I am aware how difficult to understand this might seem to some of the readers of this thesis. Yet, those who have experienced living and working under very strict authoritarian regimes and academic repression would probably be able to relate to this issue more than the Western academia. There have been a number of researchers that have been arrested and imprisoned for doing research on Iran. Some of these well-known figures are: Kian Tajbakhsh , scholar and social planner, sentenced in 2009 to 15 years ; Haleh Esfandiary, scholar and researcher of Middle Eastern women's issues arrested in 2007 and detained in solitary confinement for 110 days ; Arash and Kamiar Alaie, pioneering AIDS researchers in Iran were arrested in 2008 and remain confined (see Network for Education and Academic Rights). Many of these scholars were hardly dealing with political issues. That is why doing research that aims at exploring relations of power in macro and micro levels has proven risky and dangerous in Iran. Doing such studies requires a strict confidentiality code to which I completely committed myself. At the very outset, I made a pledge of confidentiality that any information my participants provided would be presented in a way to absolutely protect their anonymity (Cohen et al, 2007). All the participants were also ensured that they will be given a pseudonym. The participants were interviewed either in the privacy of their homes or my own home in Iran. All the questionnaires, the tapes, the transcripts and email correspondences

are kept in a safe place and will not be accessible to anyone except the researcher who is determined to guard them against any kind of disclosure.

1.1.6 Other Considerations

A quite troubling issue which I encountered was the fact that some of the participants who were my former students indicated at certain points throughout the data collection that they were not sure they would be of any help to me. I was surprised to hear about their uncertainty and concern as to the “amount” of their knowledge in the field. There was a disturbing feeling of insecurity among these participants that I can identify as the student/teacher power relation that probably still existed between us. Although they are now university teachers themselves, they still looked at me as their teacher and somehow felt that I viewed their performance in the data collection process as a kind of test or examination. I tried to clarify that the study is not concerned with competence or knowledge; rather it is about how they see themselves as female English teachers. It is noteworthy, however, since our initial relationship had been already established within a classroom setting, the teacher/student power relation had lingered after all these years and I do believe that it might have affected the process of my research. Although, as the researcher, I tried to avoid this pitfall by constant clarification and explanation, it remains a significant issue of ethical consideration that needs to be addressed here.

1.1.7 Limitations

In a reflexive examination of the research process, I intend to address a number of challenges encountered, as well as issues that may have affected the process or the

results of this study. These issues can be summarized in form of the following methodological and epistemological challenges:

There were certain logistical difficulties involved in the data collection, including the physical distance. The fact that I do not live in Iran was a main challenging obstacle. I tried to overcome the issue of physical distance by making frequent trips to my home country which is not very far from my country of residence (UAE). I contacted the participants and arranged appointments ahead of time. In order to overcome this shortcoming, I made frequent visits to Iran to do face-to-face interviews with my participants. In the process of doing the data collection, I was introduced to the possibility of Skype, so I used the new device as my interview tool in May 2009. Email correspondence and Skype software proved indispensable in completing my data collection task. As indispensable as these complementary tools have been to my project, I have to admit that more face-to-face sessions with my participants would have been far more useful for various reasons. Firstly, an email correspondence lacks the human warmth and presence between the researcher and the participants required in this kind of study. The participants also showed reluctance in giving more detailed replies in their emails, as they tended to do in the interview sessions. In addition to the interpersonal dynamics of the interview (Kvale, 2007, p.14), there was also the question of a lapse of time in receiving the participants' responses through email correspondence. Whereas, in an interview, the researcher can take the chance to ask relevant questions whenever necessary or pose related topics on the spot. The Skype sessions, on the other hand, proved essential in this regard. However, I was not able to employ the Skype software to connect to all participants. This kind of

long-distance interviewing was possible with only three of the participants. Even this solution was not always reliable since the internet connection in Iran was not fast or reliable enough. We suffered from poor internet connections especially in 2009 and after the political turmoil in the country.

The second limitation is related to the fact that the participants were geographically restricted to teachers who were living and working in the capital city of Tehran (except for one). As I have explained earlier, all the eight participants were either my former colleagues or my former students. Due to the personal nature of the interview discussions, as well as the professionally, culturally and politically sensitive issues that emerged, I expected to encounter reluctance and unwillingness from participants who did not know me well to share their views, feelings and experiences. Therefore, I felt that selecting the informants from the people I personally knew would enable me to gain their trust and have access to their open and uncensored views that would strengthen the investigation. This concern, however, limited my choice of participants to the people from my own circle of friends, colleagues and former students who live and work in Tehran, my own hometown. A more flexible sampling of participants may have revealed more varied findings and consequently may have opened newer venues in my study.

Summary

This chapter looked into the research design selected for this thesis based on the nature of the research questions and the proposed conceptual framework that involve complicated processes of creating and recreating selves within the various

and sometimes conflicting discursive boundaries. I argued since multiple realities exist in people's perception of the world and that constructions are not to be taken as 'true' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989), the qualitative research methodology was selected for this study which involves a process of exploration and discovery which provides the rich and detailed documentation essential for the exploration of the participants' sense of self and their various subject positions. Paying special attention to researcher's bias, I also addressed my own epistemological, ontological, and ethical positioning, as well as their unavoidable impact on the process of and the results of this study (Radnor, 2001).

Chapter Five

Findings and Discussion

This is the way I think, maybe my upbringing or my husband's expectations, I always want to be the best wife, the best mother, the best daughter and the best sister and the best friend and the best teacher. It is a huge burden, sometimes I really feel crushed under the burden (Sara, interview).

Introduction

In response to my research questions, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the diversity and strength of discourses that are at work in producing multiple subjectivities of the female English teachers in Iran. My attempt to make sense of the interplay of various powerful discourses is done through examining the personal narratives of participants which are in themselves meaning-making units of discourse. Having in mind the complex and diverse nature of subjectivities, on one hand, and the *truth claims* of various discourses in Iran, on the other, I will try to concentrate on philosophical or epistemological presuppositions, debate their “ideological function” , and “question it as a discursive formation” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 237) as well. But first, I will concentrate on the details related to the personal, social and professional lives of my participants’ background that proved noteworthy in this study.

1. Participants' Histories

Before any attempt to explore the mechanisms of power in constructing teachers' identities, I try to concentrate on my participants' personal and professional histories. It is significant to note that the social, cultural and biographical texture of each participant's life experiences can help us in our attempt to reveal the dominant discourses that have been constantly shaping and reshaping their identities. In their longitudinal study on teachers, I agree with Flores and Day (2006) on the significant impact of teachers' personal and professional context as determining factors on their identities. Therefore, as prerequisite to the analytical examination of the data, I try to give an overview of the participants' personal and professional backgrounds. Holstein and Gubrium (2000), too refer to "the myriad sites where subjectivity is constructed" as "going concerns of everyday life which also shape women's selves, from their intimate relationships, marriages, and families to their professional , occupational, and recreational affiliation" (p. 105).

1.1. Personal Background

1.1.1 Age

The participants fall into two major age categories which I differentiate as belonging to two different generations. This is due to the fact that I chose the participants mainly from my former colleagues as well as my former students. Therefore, the first group belong to the same generation as myself: Sousan is 54 years old; and Sara (47), Afsoun (47) and Ramesh(46) are all in their forties. The second generation's age ranges from the youngest, Noushin (30) to Simin (36). Sousan was already an M.A student at the time of the Islamic Revolution of 1979,

while Sara, Afsoun and Ramesh were in their teen years when the great political and social turnover occurred. They had finished the elementary school and were high school students.

The second generation has no clear memory of that significant event and they all were exposed to the Islamist educational system throughout their elementary, secondary, and post-secondary years. I decided to refer to the two age groups as the ‘beginners’ and the ‘old-timers.’ What struck me as significant, regarding the two age groups was that the “old timers” showed a sense of inner serenity and peace with themselves, which is vividly articulated in Ramesh’s response:

Now I’m in a stage of my life which seems much better than the past and perhaps even much better than the future. Because I feel mature, healthy, wise and strong now and I want to enjoy this stage of my life. Although I’m already considered middle aged, I don’t feel old and I’m rather happy that I’ve left the storms of youth behind and reached a haven of peace. I like the serenity that I feel and I wish to make the most of it as long as I can before I reach the old age with all its troubles (Ramesh, email).

While the ‘the beginners’ were still struggling with marital and maternal challenges (Simin); psychological and emotional problems (Tara); career insecurities (Shirin) or lack of opportunities to pursue their education (Noushin), there was a more hopeful attitude in the narratives of the first generation. This positive outlook and sense of stability can be the product of a sense of achievement that they have gained in their different roles as wife, mother, teacher. We cannot overlook the fact that it might be a technique which they have learned throughout

years of struggling with challenges to maintain their peace. Despite her insistence on her life being an ongoing ‘fight,’ in which she “survived through marriage, children and a full time job at university,” Sousan's positive attitude is thus articulated: “I start everyday with the idea that today something new, something wonderful is going to happen” (interview).

1.1.2 Place of Birth

All the participants were born in Iran. Five of them were born and raised in the capital city of Tehran (Afsoun, Sara, Tara, Simin, and Noushin). Sousan, Ramesh, and Shirin come from other cities. The significance of the place where they come from lies in the fact that the best educational and cultural resources are mostly concentrated in the capital city and the bigger cities of the country.

1.1.3 Parents

They are all from middle class families with either or both parents holding university degrees. Tara’s parents are both PhD holders; Ramesh's father is a medical doctor; while Afsoun’s deceased father held a PhD in Law. Sara’s mother is a retired secondary school English teacher. Ramesh's mother and Shirin’s deceased mother were both elementary school teacher. The other four participants’ mothers (Sousan, Afsoun, Simin, Sousan), are all housewives with high school diplomas.

In all the stories, one can clearly see the parents’ great concern with their children’s education. Ramesh uses these words to describe her parents’ attitude towards education: “they always wanted us to study and achieve higher education more than anything else.” The fact that the participants’ parents are educated

themselves may explain their consistent encouragement and insistence on their daughters' higher education. Sara's parents insisted on her getting a university degree. This is probably based on the general assumption that a university degree would guarantee a successful career for a woman in Iran (Bahramitash, 2003; Mehran, 1993).

1.1.4 Domestic Life

Only two of the participants are single (Tara and Noushin). The 'old-timers' have all been married for at least 20 years. Both 'old-timers' and 'novices' married their spouses when they were in their twenties and most of them after completing their B.A. degrees. Sara is the only participant who got married after high school.

Among the married participants, two have no children (Afsoun and Ramesh). Sara and Sousan have two children, while the others each have one child.

1.2. Educational Background

Coming from middle-class families with well educated parents, these women had relative access to symbolic and material resources in their society. Their access to these resources may have paved the way for them to achieve the elite position of academia. Education, being an undeniable component of status for women in any context (Quilodran, 1996), enables these women to be considered among the privileged group of the population of Iranian women, as well. Their access to the material resources and socioeconomic privileges has also impacted their interpretation of themselves and the world they live in (West, 1992 cited by Norton, 1997). Looking at their educational background, we can view certain significant elements. The first important issue is related to their knowledge of

English and how they attained it. Second, we review their academic credentials and the TTC courses they completed.

1.2.1 Knowledge of English

English language for these women may have functioned as a form of cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu's (1991) that allows them certain privileges in the marketplace of social interaction. In a country such as Iran where English is a foreign language, becoming competent and fluent in English cannot be attained merely through public schooling. It requires certain material resources such as private schools, private tutoring, or language institutions, available to families with sufficient means to afford the expenses. Two of the participants (Afsoun and Sara) were sent to private international schools where the medium of instruction was English. Ramesh, Noushin and Tara started learning English at different language institutes while still studying at mid schools. Simin first started learning English at the age of five with the help of her aunt who was a native speaker of the language and she was later sent to language institutes. The only participant whose first substantial experience with the language started as late as university was Shirin: "at high school for the very first time [I was exposed to English], but I wasn't able to speak until I was admitted to university" (interview) where her major was English Language and Literature. It is significant to note that, these women's bilingual ability in the context of Iran is a valued type of skill or in Bourdieu's (1991) words, symbolic capital that helps them gain access to the position of the English Language university teacher, which is also a source of power and prestige.

1.2.2 Academic Credentials

All participants in this study received their BA's in English language and literature at State universities. This implies that they were able to attain a high mark in the national university entrance examination (*Konkour*) and they enjoyed free education. Sousan, Sara, Ramesh, and Shirin received their MA degrees from State universities, while the rest of the participants were accepted at private universities where they had to pay tuition fees. Sousan received her PhD from a State university. They all completed Teaching Methodology courses as part of their B.A. programs (8 units). Sara and Sousan who have not taught at private or semi-private English Language Institutes were not exposed to TTC. All the other participants who had at some point worked or are still working at English Language Institutes, had to complete TTC as a pre-requisite.

1.3. Professional Experience

Sousan is the only participant who works at a State university, while all other participants teach at universities that are private or semi-private institutions but all under the supervision of the government. Sousan who started work almost thirty years ago, had to go through the filter of a so-called moral/ideological interview. Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, such ideological interviews have been the first obstacle to overcome in order to be hired, especially by Government organizations. Sousan remembers her own experience in the interview session: "I was interviewed about how to pray, and what is this *ayeh* [Quranic verse] and I knew I had to go through this if I wanted the job" (interview). Ramesh, Afsoun, Shirin and Sara reported similar moral interviews in their institutions but of a milder nature. This might be due to the fact that Sousan was applying to a State

university for a permanent position of faculty member. Sousan, Afsoun, Ramesh and Noushin hold a full-time position, while the rest of the participants work as part-timers.

What is interesting is that the narratives of all eight female teachers show their somehow similar socio cultural backgrounds and professional experiences. These stories, however, go beyond these core commonalities and reveal the diversity of their experiences in the ongoing journey of identity construction.

2. Construction of Multiple Ephemeral Identities

Within the poststructuralist framework of this study, we need to overcome the essentialist tendency of observing the participants as individuals who possess an essentially unified identity that can be explored and uncovered through analysis. We cannot expect the participants' stories to disclose an essential identity, rather, they can only reveal the participants' preferred identities (Langellier, 2001, Riessman, 2002a, 2002b, and 2003) selected from their repertoire of identities at the particular time and place of the data collection. Within the interview context, the personal narratives can reveal a story in flux, that is, a story of lived experiences which have been formed and reformed over time since our life stories are constantly reformed as we go through an ongoing process of meaning-making, learning and relearning. Therefore, in the following section, I am going to examine the participants' multiple identities as products of social, cultural and professional discourses within their context.

Two main themes of gender identities and professional identities emerged out of the data revealing the relations of power, dominant discourses and the available counter discourses that shape the female teachers' identities as women and as English teachers. Examining these players at the local level where power is at work through relationships and interactions (Foucault, 1980, 1982), I will be reporting, discussing and analyzing how the female teachers view their role, their self-concept and their actual experiences.

3. Gender Identities

[Being a woman] means being the inferior sex, who has to undertake too many responsibilities but is denied indisputable human rights; it means being subject to double or even triple injustice, not only by the society, government and customs but also by men; it means being born to serve not only the ruling classes but also the ruling sex, being the stepping stone for the success, progress and welfare of her husband and her children, being born for the others to live a better life! (Ramesh, email).

From a feminist poststructuralist analytical perspective, instead of “‘discovering’ reality, ‘revealing’ truth, or ‘uncovering’ the facts,” I try to focus on deconstructing the essentialist assumptions that are the “dominant (oppressive) knowledge” (Garvey, 1989, p.463). Therefore, while trying to explore the various identities of female teachers, I am particularly looking for the underlying networks of gender relations and discourses. Discursive practices, as Foucault (1978a) contends are characterized by “a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories” (p. 199). This whole

labyrinth of practices, procedures, institutions and operations are of normative, disciplinary and inquisitorial nature and aim at subjectifying individuals.

To a large extent, my analysis of the data is directed towards making visible the crucial role gender discourses play in the construction of the participants' feminine identities. Regarding the gender discourses, two main themes emerged out of the data: the normalizing discourses related to femininity and the disciplinary practices of gender exclusion.

3.1. Normative Framework of Femininity

Before discussing the findings of this study, I need to clarify at the outset that none of the participants in this study were hesitant in criticizing the norms and structures of their society and they all showed great discontent with the gender inequality that exists in all aspects of women's lives in Iran. The narratives point clearly to their awareness of gender inequalities within their social context. They showed no hesitation to take on a critical stance *visa-a-vis* the social and cultural constraints and the gendered hegemonies within their context. They insisted on the absence of “equal opportunities” (Sousan), the fact that “women have no right to decide for themselves, even when it comes to the simplest choices in their life” (Noushin), and as a result “feel the burden of womanhood” (Tara). Ramesh, describes what she calls the “absolutely unfair” gender relations in Iran, most eloquently:

In our country, equality of sexes is only an empty slogan. Even most of the official rules and regulations are against women, let alone the unwritten social beliefs and norms which restrict women or ignore their rights sometimes inhumanely (email).

However, in my discussions, I am mainly concerned with those dominating gender discourses that have slithered into our consciousness throughout ages and are at work in most subtle and invisible ways. Therefore, despite the participants' insistence on the unequal gender relations, their desire for a change, and the necessity of equal opportunities and rights for women, I will show in the following sections how throughout the data, one could trace the prevailing normative discourses of femininity in their narratives. In all the participants' stories about themselves, their mothers, their female students and their female colleagues, the patriarchal discourses and practices that are constantly at work creating a normative femininity could be traced. As Foucault (1978a, 1978b) asserts subjectivities are produced by networks of power ensuring that the individual functions in accordance to a particular set of normative practices.

3.1.1 Discourse of Difference: A Tale of Two Natures

When most of the participants talk about their role as mothers, wives or teachers, they were mainly revealing the gender discourse of difference. Tara describes a woman's plight as well as her blessing:

The feminine compassion which is the source of their [women's] suffering still is a blessing that may show itself in maternal affections. This is what most men are deprived of (interview).

We need to be aware of certain layers of assumptions that are underneath this description. The main assumption articulated in this sample is that women are different from men. It is based on this fundamental notion that women's feminine subjectivities and their lived experiences can be shaped. Gender is socially constructed by the prevalent power relations (Marshall, 2008), and as Butler (1999)

argues, it is not “a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is ... instituted ... through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (p. 179). Gender discourses aim at constructing female subjectivities through employing self-regulatory and self-surveillance tactics that work on women through internalization of gender norms (Bartky, 1990; Bordo, 1993).

The assumption that women are different from men is based upon the biological essentialism which defines natural qualities in terms of gender (KITzinger, 1994). Masculinity and femininity are constructed as certain fixed, essential traits and properties for female and male. What mainly contributes to this discourse is, according to Weedon (1999), a complex product of sciences of anthropology and natural history. Schmenk (2004) describes the gender stereotyping tendency throughout diverse contexts and cultures as reflecting “essentialist views of gender [that] look for specific traits inside the person, neglecting the socially, historically, and culturally constructed dimensions of gender in social communities” (p.517). What we need to have in mind is that the cultural and historical forces not only construct gender, they help create a gendered social order that is hierarchical and discriminatory (Lorber, 2008).

Creature of Emotions

The participants’ description of their own female characteristics and roles confirms their compliance to the socio-cultural regulating norms of gender difference. Tara, distinctly refers to her "having so much love to give" as the privilege and meaning of "being a woman" (interview). Ramesh, describes this in different words:

I may be wrong, but sometimes I feel my *feminine tender emotions*, which some people think of it as a shortcoming or defect for women, helped me to be a better human being"(interview, my emphasis).

All the participants revealed this perception of their capacity to possess and show "tender emotions" as an innate feminine quality. Within this discourse, if women are creatures of realm of emotions, then, men, can be observed as creatures of reason and rationality. The 'truth claim' about women as creatures of emotions - as opposed to male capacities to make rational judgments - is being made through a comprehensive system of tactics of power that plays the game innocently enough to make it seem like a timeless and universal matter.

The implicit and explicit references to women as 'emotional' and men as 'rational' demonstrate a binary representation of genders that is based on 'natural' qualities of men and women and aims at defining and justifying their different traits, capacities and roles. This discourse is mainly based on a truth game which is a joint product of biological sciences (Browne, 2002, cited by Lippa, 2005) on the one hand, and, as is the case in this study, the religious ideology, on the other. The notion of fallibility is based on the belief that women are morally weaker than men since their "reasoning capacity is overruled by emotion" (Torab, 1996, p. 236). In its crudest and most traditional form, this biological/ideological assumption regards men as creatures of reason fit for complex thinking while women, being more of an emotional nature are incapable of reasoning (Wood, 2005). In her study of girls' educational performance, Walkerdine (1989) discusses the historical production of the notion that "females do not have the capacity to reason" (p.269). The female body and mind which had been doctrinized by religion and philosophy throughout

history, as Walkerdine (1989), argues, are in the modern era, under the scientific gaze, as well:

In this way it [science] began to be possible to make 'true' statements about the female nature, no longer an object of debate but resolvable by resort to evidence. Yet what counts as 'female nature' does not pre-exist the development of those doctrines, bodies of knowledge and scientific practices that produced it as its object. In this sense, the truth of scientific statements is not discovered: it is produced (p. 269).

According to this assumption, women are “other to rationality” (Walkerdine, 1989, p. 275); therefore, they can be molded into various subjectivities such as, kind, fragile, passive, fearful, accommodating and obedient. Since the participants of this study belong to the professoriate, and are all educated, modern-minded career women, we do not see the discourse in its most naked and unpleasant form. These women are not hesitant in revealing their feelings of frustration and disappointment in the socio/cultural expectations regarding women’s roles and duties. Sousan explains that the “expectation of the society is that you have to be silent and obedient” (interview). Tara refers to her sense of femininity in the society that comes to her, “through the painful, frustrating relations which show me my position as a woman to be yielding and submissive that I can never be” (interview). Ramesh also believes that, “women themselves must revise some of the incorrect beliefs, which have been inculcated to them, in order to mend their distorted image and regain their rights and their proper position” (email).

Despite all these outright oppositions to the dominant patriarchy, throughout the narratives of these female academics, we are able to perceive how the discourse of difference has paved its way in a more modified, modernized and beautified form and has instilled certain notions regarding the nature and roles of womanhood. It is interesting to see how Ramesh, defines herself : “As a woman, I’m patient, trustworthy, loyal. I am always ready to help others, particularly those I love” (interview). Tara states, "It makes me so happy when I share what I know. I guess it is because women are givers; instinctively they want to give" (interview). Sousan talks about her femininity in another light:

I like being a woman and the feminine *tender* characteristics in myself. I love the way I put on makeup, the way I attract men’s attention; now it is my husband, of course! The *feminine side of me, the tender feelings inside* is valuable to me. Never in my life, I wished I were a man (interview, my emphasis).

Even in their description of their students, most of the participants expressed different perceptions and feelings regarding their male and female students.

Ramesh's extensive description of the groups is rather illuminating:

Female students are more industrious usually. They consider studying more seriously than male students. They are much less confident and are rarely proud or pretentious. They are more responsible, but sometimes rather passive and submissive. They are more impressed by the teacher and more affectionate, respectful, polite and loyal. They don’t seem to be willing to test the teacher’s knowledge and trap him/her by unexpected questions. In many cases they get better grades than the

male students. Male students tend to be more disobedient or defiant at times. They are much more confident and they are willing to show their knowledge and to challenge the teacher. Therefore, they are more active in class and volunteer to deliver lectures or answer the teacher's questions more frequently. They can be less easily convinced and sometimes they insist on their views. They are proud of what they know usually and sometimes even go too far in evaluating their own abilities (email).

Afsoun, Sara, Tara, Simin, and Shirin prefer teaching female students.

Afsoun believes that female students "are nicer, they can easily be given the material, they listen to you, they do their assignments, they follow the instructions"(interview). In Simin's experience,

Female students are more sensitive, more sentimental, more reflective, more studious, more polite than male ones....They need more attention and kindness from the teacher. Male students are ready to take risks, more energetic and more uncontrollable (interview).

As we can clearly see, the data shows the dominant gender discourses reproducing normative feminine practices. Within the framework of the discourse of 'women as creatures of emotion', women are defined as gentle, kind, sensitive, caring, patient, and accommodating (Tavris, 1993). These stereotyped traits may seem positive at first glance, but just as Glick & Fiske (2001, 2007) show in their studies of sexual stereotyping (2001) and sexual discrimination at workplaces (2007), that there exists a 'benevolent sexism' which leads to marginalizing and discriminatory concepts. Masculinity is associated with independence, toughness, aggressiveness, control, competitiveness and risk-taking, while femininity is equated with

dependence, vulnerability, care, tenderness, and cooperation. As demonstrated in the above mentioned data, such static gender dichotomies aim at naturalizing particular gender roles, expectations and codes of conduct. Women learn and internalize these supposedly inherent qualities from childhood by being immersed in their specific cultural pool of subordinating patterns (Butler, 1993; Luke, 1996). From early childhood, “boys learn, through social expectations and modeling, to assert themselves and not to cry, while girls learn to express their emotions and to nurture others” (Garber, 1992, p. 211). These prescribed patterns are received through symbols and messages forming a façade of truth that throughout years they become difficult to question and can hardly be shaken.

Not Good Enough!

Throughout the data, I came across a feeling of lack of self confidence that can perhaps be explained within the deeply seated cultural/historical gender discourse of difference. Despite the fact that the women in this study are all successful academic professionals, it seemed throughout the data, they are somehow involved in a constant process of proving themselves. Ramesh has always been a great achiever of goals: she has been a straight A student all her life: she was able to score among the top ten in the country in both BA and MA entrance examinations. She was also able to impress her examiners in her MA viva. She is a semi-native speaker of English and her language competence has always impressed her teachers and colleagues. She has performed highly both as a teacher and head of the language center in her institution. She has had successful conference presentations, and is highly respected by her peers as well as her students. The question is why despite the brilliant record of achievements, she shows little

confidence in her knowledge, abilities and performance? Why is it that she is not able to recognize this competent, knowledgeable, successful person as herself?

As an English teacher, I'm well aware of my shortcomings and my capabilities. I never undertake to teach subjects in which I'm not skillful enough like listening – which is my Achilles' heels – and I do my best to learn as much as possible about the subjects which I usually teach even those which I have taught for many years... I don't believe in my own capabilities, I lack self-esteem and self-confidence, I'm not brave enough; I can say I'm rather timid ... I'm not as successful as I always wished to be. My achievements have never lived up to my expectations (Ramesh, interview).

The same feeling of lack of confidence is also traceable in the narratives of three other participants in this study (Shirin, Simin, and Tara). This might be interpreted as their being modest and humble about their achievements. However, they explicitly articulated a feeling of lack of or insufficiency of knowledge and competence, while showing a deep sense of frustration. Tara, for instance, describes herself as a “well-mannered, punctual and hard-working” teacher who tries to be:

helpful and be a giver to them [her students] and let them express themselves freely; but, you know what? If I were my own student, I would expect of me to be much more knowledgeable than what I am now. I always think I am in the first step, this feeling doesn't leave me, I feel I am still on the first step; I am always on the first step! (Tara, interview).

As is evident in the quotes from Ramesh and Tara, no matter how much these women have tried to achieve or have already accomplished, they feel insecure and need to constantly prove themselves, professionally. The self-acknowledged lack of confidence and pursuit of approval evident in the data demonstrate a perceived sense of 'poor performance' in these women.

In his study on self estimated intelligence, Furnham (2000) reports an interesting insight:

When participants are asked to rate overall intelligence there is a clear, consistent sex difference: males rate themselves and their male relations higher than females rate themselves and their female relations (p. 512).

Beyer (1999) and Beloff (1992) also report women's under-estimation of their success and performance. Girls' modesty training in the process of socialization, as Beloff (1992) argues, might be accountable for such feelings of lack of confidence. Walkerdine (1989), describes the phenomenon as, "the way in which femininity is read as a constellation of signs which mark it off as antithetical to 'proper' performance to an incredible degree" (p. 268). She believes this feeling of poor performance despite women's success is the result of the discursive production of femininity as "antithetical to masculine rationality to such an extent that femininity is equated with poor performance, even when the girl or woman in question is performing well" (p. 268).

I also think that, for these women who have stepped into the public sphere, a masculine arena, there exists a feeling of educational and professional

inadequacies that forces them to constantly try hard to prove to others as well as to themselves that they are 'equal to men.' As, Simin points out: “I accept a lot of responsibilities at work and do much more than my male colleagues... I guess it is because I want to show them I am good enough for the job” (interview).

Walkerdine (1990) argues that the inner "struggle to perform academically and to perform as feminine"(p. 144) results in a splitting of identity in women who find in themselves a powerful part, the academic, and a powerless part, which is the woman.

Lack of Ambition

I was also able to observe in all the participants' narratives an insistence on their lack of ambition. Sousan expresses this feeling:

I don't have dreams like for example being the university chancellor or a college dean. In my department, I am the most qualified to be the head of the language center, experience-wise. Of course, I don't want to accept it. I am not the kind of person to deal with the stuff going on the upper levels. If I were a man, I would have been the head of this department (interview).

A similar attitude was seen in the narratives of Afsoun: “I don't like administrative or high positions” (interview); Shirin: “I just wanna' be a simple teacher” (interview); Tara: “ Cannot deal with managerial duties, never!” (interview); Sara: “ work as an administrator? Never thought about it. I don't think so. I am happy the way I am” (interview). As we can see, they show a strong unwillingness to approach administrative positions in their institutions.

Statistics in Iran, as in many other contexts, show that women are underrepresented in the administrative positions within higher education (Mehran, 2003). The 'glass ceiling' effect reflects the visible and invisible gender barriers for women to rise high in the hierarchy of jobs, despite their educational and professional qualifications (Cotter, et al, 2001). Within the framework of this study, however, we are not concerned with the Iranian women's underrepresentation in high administrative positions (which can be a topic of great significance for another research project). My main concern here, however, is the reason for these female teachers' lack of incentives for promotion to higher administrative jobs. In order to understand this phenomenon, we need to look into the discourses that shape these ideas and feelings. Court (1997) asserts that, "women are constructed as 'naturally' suited (as a consequence of their biology and child-bearing capacities) to the primary roles of mothers and wives" (p. 19); therefore, their domestic duties become their first priority. According to Court (2007), such restricting and disempowering discursive constructions and practices can shape women's sense of self. Falling in these biological and 'natural' stereotype traps (Begley, 2000), they may feel lack of desire for higher leadership roles in the hierarchy of administration. This observation is significant since it may show how the discourse of difference aims at gender dichotomies that are hierarchic, and , as a result, leads to discrimination, oppression and marginalization of women in all their personal and social aspects of life (Weatherall, 2002, Stone, 2004, Render, 2006). Even the seemingly positive attributes, such as kindness, care-giving and nurturing would ultimately result in the reinforcement of the traditional gender roles and ultimately, gender inequality

(Hurst, 2007). These roles are “false notions,” as Render (2006) describes, that function as a “mechanism of control” perpetuating “a cycle of subordination, justifying and defining women’s roles in the social structure” (p.108).

Masculine Femininity

The theme of masculine femininity emerged in some of the participants' description of their behavior in the public sphere (Sousan, Afsoun, Tara, Noushin). The interesting contradiction apparent in the data is that despite their feelings of professional insecurity and lack of achievement, these participants described how they had to perform as strong, dominant, and in control female teachers at their institutions. This aspect of identity is more evident in classes where they teach male students. Tara, feels she needs to act differently in a male class in order "to keep the order." She believes that:

If I were male teacher I am sure that male students wouldn't have treated me like that, because in our society men feel superior, no matter what social class, or how knowledgeable you might be, you are a woman in the end. And it is not only in teaching...I have to use my power to keep the order" (interview).

Afsoun, too, feels the need to act differently in her all-male classes because men "naturally ... don't want to be ruled by a woman in the class. So they don't like it and they want to boss the class but, of course, I don't let them"(interview). She recalled an unpleasant experience:

I used to teach a class for a top managerial professional development project in a government organization. There

was this one male student [who was a high executive and well connected]... he thought that he could control my class and could dictate me what to teach and what to do. But the very second session, very bluntly, I told him this is my class, not his. He didn't like it of course, and the next day I heard that my class was cancelled (Afsoun, interview).

Despite the bitterness she feels from the experience, she is still intent to show her male students that, "it is my class and I am the one who decides what they should do. They don't like it. I am a strong character, and they need to know that" (interview). Sousan also talked about her twenty years of teaching experience in "dealing with the male students and colleagues":

I have a lot of experiences of rejection by men at universities that feel strongly against women being university teachers...I learned it the hard way...NO, they cannot take advantage of me being a woman and an academic. I always thought I can prove to them that a woman can be like this...they noticed that this woman is a very strong woman. They wanted to find something in me, something to prove that, you see, she cannot, but I wanted to prove to them that I can, and I was successful in the end. You know, they (male students) used to call me Mr. Sousan not Mrs., behind my back! Because they thought if a person can control the situation like a man, she is not a woman!...The expectation of the society is that you have to be silent and obedient. I think I have something in myself – part of my personality, to show that I am confident and strong.... I have always been fighting to get my right and I never quit. That was and is still in me. This is me (interview).

This 'me' that knows how to fight, be strict, and be more assertive and aggressive becomes meaningful when we view these traits as the masculine values of the public sphere. Masculinity, as a certain pattern of behavior, can be enacted by females, just as femininity can be performed by males. From a poststructuralist feminist perspective, gender is performative and manifested through our social performances (Butler, 1997, Weitz, 2003). By constructing themselves as strict, determined, dominant and outspoken beings, the female academics perform masculinity (Ashmore, DelBoca, and Wohlers, 1986) and as a result, "the male as norm deficiencies" are reinforced (Acker, 1994, p. 140). Renouncing the feminine inside them and showing a masculine image of themselves, even if it is limited to the time they are in the all-male classes or dealing with the male co-workers, is a way for them to compete and survive in the male's world of the academia, where "the professor's Chair seems uniquely shaped for the male body"(Walker, 1998, p. 337).

3.1.2. Discourse of the good wife: 'The Marriage Plot'

Another important theme in relation to the women's desires, duties and behaviours evident in the identity narratives of the participants, whether married or single, is their idea of womanhood as supporting and complementing men. The theme was articulated in the data by all participants in different forms. Shirin's response when asked how she saw her role as a wife was:

Having the chance to be a man's best friend and a true partner in all aspects of his life. Enjoying the company of the opposite sex, *waiting for him to come home and feeling like a woman*, could be some advantages, which

are of course possible via a romantic relationship (email; my emphasis).

The romantic relationship between a man and a woman perhaps is one of the oldest and deeply rooted in our consciousness. A fairy tale we all have been exposed to since early childhood, when we were told the stories of the beautiful princess who is waiting on top of an inaccessible tower or in a snow white slumber, to be kissed, awakened and led to the happy ending of marriage by a charming prince who comes from an adventurous quest. For centuries women have been defining themselves as the one who is passively "waiting for him to come home to feel like a woman" (Shirin, interview). This traditional normative discourse that emphasizes the subordinate role of females applies to all women, whether married or single.

Considering the cultural background, the ways girls are brought in a traditional country, I think to have a good marriage is much better than being single. *You feel secure; you feel being taken care of* (Sara, interview; my emphasis).

What is implied in the statement is that, the subordinate role is disguised under the feeling of security and "being taken care of" by the male figure in the framework of the family. In their study of women academics, Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) diagnose this discourse as the 'marriage plot'. Woman's primary goal and role, within this discourse, is to "provide support for the male as the head of the household of which she forms a part" (Aisenberg and Harrington, 1988, p.6).

Marriage is a privilege for women in Iran if the husbands are good men. Especially in financial matters, in a

traditional society that to bring money home is still the job of a man. ... I agree with this (Sara, interview).

Tremayne's (2006) study of early marriage in Iran shows that "marriage itself remains fundamental to the social identity of all women, regardless of their achievements in other spheres of life" (p.65). To the participants in Tremayne's study who are women from a small town in Iran, "marriage remained ultimately the prime value" (p.82). These women who were either illiterate or at most had finished secondary school, "the identity of a married woman is clear at all times, unlike that of an unmarried woman, who is viewed as a failure and remains in limbo in her social interactions" (p.84).

In the narratives of the participants in this study who are educated, independent academics, the traditional 'marriage plot' emerges in a more modified form; however, the core of it remains the same. As Aisenberg and Harrington (1988) argue, "the central tenet of the [marriage] plot is that a woman's proper goal is marriage, or, more generally, her primary sphere is private and domestic (p.6). In the modified modern version, the princess is not restricted to the domestic sphere, anymore. Clad in her armor, she too, is leaving the castle now for the social academic quest. In her mind, however, she needs to deal with a double mission at both domestic and public sphere. Now women have to function both as supporter and caregiver within the domestic sphere, as well as the active participant in the workplace (Friedman, Ellen, and Jennifer Marshall, 2004). Tamboukou (2000) refers to this oscillation between the two worlds of the

domesticity and public life, the unpaid and paid work, as the paradox of being a female.

The narratives in this study clearly reveal the priority of the domestic duties in the married women's minds (Sousan, Shirin, Sara, Simin). Shirin teaches as a part timer merely because she wants to attend to her primary tasks at home:

My work hours are quite flexible, so I can be there for my family whenever they need me. What's more, since teaching gives me this inner satisfaction, I can be more pleased; a better wife and a happier mother, I suppose (email).

Sara married her husband before college. She had her first baby while she was a BA student. Her second child was born while she was studying for her Master's degree:

While I was still working on my M.A. thesis, at the same time, I was teaching at a university, I had a small baby and a very busy social life. It was really hard for me to please my husband because he always expects me to be a perfect wife. *I expect me to be a perfect wife too.* (interview, my emphasis).

Despite the fact that she chose a part time teaching job at university so that she would be able to perform her domestic role efficiently, she still faces challenges regarding her demanding husband:

He can even be jealous of his own kids. So I always arrange my time to do my correction and preparation for work, whenever he is not at home. He believes when he is at home I need to be attentive to him. But if it gets more serious and more demanding, my husband wouldn't like it. In general, he is more concerned with my role as a wife than my role as a mom. Since I work as a part-timer, most of the time I don't feel the stress but at the peak of my work, like paper corrections and exam period and especially this year that we have changed the system at work, yes it has taken a lot of my time at home and caused me trouble (Sara, interview).

Throughout Simin's story of a demanding husband, a one year old son and her teaching career, we can see her feelings of frustration, anxiety, and disillusionment:

When I become tired as a result of teaching and studying, my husband cannot accept the fact. He has high expectations from me. When I spend too much time preparing an exam or planning a lesson, he starts nagging and sometimes he becomes jealous. I teach less hours just to be able to manage all of this. You know, before marriage I thought that finding a suitable partner can create a great deal of excitement in my career and in my life, but now this kind of life causes lots of depression and sometimes I lose my confidence completely (Simin, interview).

No matter how challenging, time-consuming, or successful, a woman's career is, the 'marriage plot' discourse demands her to be supportive, caring, and accommodating. Whether these women, have been able to create some form of

balance in their private/public lives or not, whether they are married to understanding partners or not, whether they are happy or anxious and agitated, we can view a "self-selected subjection to the traditional norms of marriage plot" (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988) that forces them to subordinate their own needs, desires and preferences to those of their husband's. As argued also in the Aisenberg & Harrington's (1988) study on the identities of female academics, a woman's "inner restrictions need to be replaced with an inner breadth of identity before she can claim professional authority" (p.21).

3.1.3. Discourse of Natural Duty: Motherhood

Another prevalent subject position that is the result of the normalizing discourses is the construct of motherhood. Within this discourse, woman's primary role as mother is portrayed as her 'natural duty.' All the participants attribute the highest, noblest, and most sublime qualities to 'motherhood', whether they are mothers themselves or not. Having no children of her own, Ramesh, however has

...always thought it [motherhood] was one of the greatest, most serious, demanding and even overwhelming responsibilities of a woman, to which one has to devote herself totally and wholeheartedly (email).

Most of the participants shared Shirin's perception of marriage as:

...a chance to be[come] a mother and as a result having higher motivations for leading a happy and healthy life.... On the whole I see it as a crucial significant role which requires knowledge, patience and insight to be best preformed (interview).

Sara, on the other hand, has a fixed task distribution regarding the roles of each parent: "I think a mother should be warm, kind and friendly but a father should be more authoritative. He should be the last resort of power" (interview).

The notion of motherhood as a 'natural duty' is an instance of the organic individuality; a disciplinary construct that ensures the activities required of the body are considered as 'natural' (Foucault, 1977). The experience of reproduction and motherhood is used by hierarchies of power to place the responsibility on mothers for being the source of ultimate support and sacrifice. In its Islamicized version, the 'natural' is emphasized with the divine:

If you think about these characteristics that God has inscribed in men and women and what is expected in creation of world, you will see that a woman has a broad capacity to bear child, deliver, feed and breed the baby. (Hosseini-e Tehrani, 1994 quoted by Mohammadi, 2007, p.5)

Conceptualizing motherhood as a woman's noblest function, the discourse of natural duty aims at shaping it as her greatest fulfillment and highest goal. According to the discourse, mother is the one who has the ability, by nature, to love, care, and nurture children within the unit of family. As a result, she is required to prioritize her *natural duties* within the familial framework over all her other roles and rights. Within the Iranian cultural context, "motherhood has been reemphasized as women's most important role, and any work outside the home is clearly expected to be secondary in the lives of women" (Higgins and Shoar-Ghaffari, 1991, p.213). This is what is known as the organic individuality, a disciplinary construct that ensures the activities required of the body are 'natural'

(Foucault, 1978a). Through stories of exemplary mothers depicted as models of affection and self-sacrifice, the concept is widely propagated for women to meet the ideal image. As a model of female gender role, a mother finds “significance in maintaining strong family bonds and affectionate relationships” (Women’s Bureau of the Presidential Office, 1997, cited by Mehran, 2003, p. 273).

It is interesting to see how Ramesh who is not a mother, herself, has internalized the main attributes of motherhood as her ‘duties’ in such a way that she admits has led to self-neglect:

Sometimes I put myself under too much pressure emotionally or I have to spend a lot of time which I really should spend for myself for so many other things. Sometimes I get involved in matters which are really none of my business and put too much of my spiritual energy to solve a problem which in fact concerns other people. Sometimes I’m so responsible and devoted that I forget my own rights. Above all, generally I regret the precious time which I lose due to my stubborn insistence to perform my duties as a woman (interview).

As we can see, the portrayal of woman, as a devoted caregiver and nurturer is not restricted to women who have children, but to all women. Women tend to internalize the notion of the nurturing caregiver which takes form in diverse roles of the dedicated daughter, the caring sister and the loving wife. Inside all of us, women, there is a mother figure who is ready to give love and make sacrifices for the welfare of her loved ones. Self-sacrifice and self-denial becomes the greatest and most justifiable component of the gender role and expectations.

What is interesting to note is that all these notions of femininity are embraced by most of the participants in the study and they show almost no sign of rejection to these normalizing restrictions because, apparently, they have been internalized and incorporated into their very being as women throughout years. According to McLaren(1993), “femininity may seem voluntary, but this underestimates the power of internalization” (p.156).Socially and culturally acceptable gender codes and gender conducts are the products of patriarchal discourses that tend to regulate the relationships and interactions between men and women by instilling a façade of ‘truth’ and ‘normal’. Once constituted as an object of a particular sort, individuals can be dispersed into disciplinary spaces within the “grid of social regularity” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 98). Butler (1997) describes this process as “the ‘on-going’ subjugation that is the very operation of interpellation, that (continually repeated) action of discourse by which subjects are formed in subjugation” (pp. 358-359).

3.2. Disciplinary Discourses of Exclusion

Concentrating on the participants' multiple identities as female academics and how these identities may have been formed, I tried to ask questions related to the motives and circumstances that led to their choice of career, the reasons why they maintain their jobs as university teachers, as well as their feelings towards their work conditions. The participants’ responses reveal a particular discourse which I choose to call the disciplinary discourse of exclusion.

Asking the participants about their choice of career, I found out that they chose the profession either because they were pursuing their childhood dreams of becoming a teacher, or they were forced to choose it because they were not accepted in their

desired fields. For Simin, Ramesh and Noushin becoming a university teacher was realizing an old dream, as Ramesh states: “becoming a university instructor has always been one of my top list choices, always” (interview).

Tara, however, who wanted to become an artist, gave up her dream since her parents were strongly against it. She bitterly adds: “I didn’t choose my major and my profession. Choice does not seem much of an option in our society”

(interview). Shirin admits that she wanted “to be a doctor, as every kid used to be encouraged to be by the parents. It was very fashionable back then, you know”

(interview). Becoming a physician was in the 80’s and 90’s, what every Iranian middle-class parents would wish for their children. Afsoun, had to face strong objections in her family, when she refused to become a physician:

In the family it was not welcome; they all wanted me to be a physician. They, themselves wanted to be physician, my mother, especially, then she wanted to see that in her children. They wanted titles of doctors. My other brothers & sisters are all physicians. But I was the only one who was always unruly and never followed what they wanted so I became an English teacher. You may not believe this, but after all these years, I still face a lot of objections! (interview)

Sara chose her major, English Literature, simply because she failed to be accepted in a Science major. She decided to study English literature only because she was certain she would be accepted in the Entrance Examination. Interestingly enough, at first she had strong feeling against becoming a teacher:

I never wanted to be a teacher, because my Mom was a full time teacher herself and I always had seen how tired she was. That was not a very good impression for me.

But when I first started teaching everything changed. Teaching at high school and teaching at universities are two different cases. Physically, *it is less demanding, because of the work load; more rewarding prestigious wise* (interview, my emphasis).

Sara's opinion regarding the two advantages of teaching as an ideal profession applies to most of the other women in the study, as well. Shirin, Simin, and Tara who are also part-time teachers emphasize the flexible and limited work hours as the best part of their job.

All the participants admitted that the social status of academia is also an important factor in their positive feelings towards their profession. Almost all participants express great satisfaction to see that their parents, husbands and children take pride in their prestigious profession as academics, as Ramesh feels, "They are very happy and proud, I suppose, that I'm a university instructor" (interview). The social status of academia places them among the elite and privileged.

Teaching is considered the most appropriate profession for women by most men and women, as we could see in narratives of the participants, as well. As the modernist discourses of women's role and contribution in the social sphere gained momentum in Iran, as in many other countries, the patriarchal social expectations of women have been undergoing dramatic changes (see Chapter Three). Women have stepped out of the boundaries of homes. The traditional discourses employ new disciplinary means and methods to redefine the nature and role of women in the modern era. Therefore, a particular disciplinary discourse is used which aims at distributing gendered spaces (Foucault, 1978a). From a poststructuralist feminist

perspective, we can see how women are located within fixed and defined spaces that are considered most appropriate for them by mechanisms of power. Based on the data, I was able to identify two main disciplinary techniques of enclosure and partitioning. My main concern here is to show the role and goal of the discursive practices of enclosure and partitioning and how they impact the way female teachers think of themselves and those around them.

3.2.1 Enclosure: Schooling as an Extension of Domestic Space

A significant theme that emerges from the data is that most of the participants associate the teaching profession with femininity. Tara, for example, believes women function better in their role as teachers:

It can be somehow associated with the fact that women are more patient and patience is necessary in the world of teaching. I don't know about other fields, but in humanities, in general, I think that women can be more successful. I have seen it that way that women teachers try better, they are more prepared, they are easygoing, they are much more responsible teachers (email).

Ramesh identifies herself as a 'mother figure' whenever she tries to define herself as a teacher:

It means being someone who is responsible, always ready to learn, willing to renew and increase my knowledge, prepared to help those who may need my assistance, and finally who is truly something like a mother for innumerable boys and girls who happen to become my students....I think that , the potential mother in me has sometimes successfully impressed the innocent

souls of many the young people I teach. I think if I were a man I never could achieve this (interview).

As data shows, teaching is recognized as a ‘caring profession’ by the participants. Acknowledging the differences concerning professional identities within school and academy, however, I am more concerned with the genesis of teaching as a profession for women. Defining teaching as a caring profession is rooted in the fact that there was a need to extend women’s domestic space by the patriarchal relations of power. When women were finally allowed to step out of the enclosed space of their homes, the boundaries of a feminized space were built through the technique of enclosure (Foucault, 1978a), so that a legitimate profession could be created for them. In this regard, education can be considered the modified version of women's homes, since the duties of a nurturing and supportive mother is now ascribed to the devoted mother-teacher. The normalizing discourses of ‘motherhood’ and domesticity were used to create, define and justify a nurturing and caring profession for women (Walkerdin, 1989; Fransechet, 2004). The feminist poststructuralist view enables us to see how “woman’s space is ... an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined” (Bartky, 1988, p. 30).

Enclosing women within a work environment that is considered 'appropriate' for them involves another significant issue worth mentioning: time. As we could see in the narratives of the female faculty in this study (Shirin, Simin, Sara), their work hours can be restricted to part-time attendance. Therefore, these women can perform their domestic roles and duties in such a way that best serve the patriarchal needs and expectations.

Furthermore, by essentializing teaching as the most appropriate and prestigious profession for women, the hegemonic discourses help exclude women from those occupations that are labeled as 'masculine'. This is how a network of patriarchal power relations attempts to control and restrict women by disciplinary discourses, the result of which, are further inequality and discrimination. Consequently, female teachers not only come to occupy spaces in the social hierarchy but, through their continual subjugation and internalization, come to know and accept their place (Leavy, Gnonng, and Ross, 2009).

3.2.2 Partitioning within the Enclosed Space: 'Dangerous Bodies'

Foucault (1978a) argues that regimes of truth are regimented through a specific disciplinary technology that chooses the body as its site and target. Thus, the body is peered into, inscribed, and controlled. These regulatory practices aim at producing docile bodies. In patriarchal societies such as Iran where power is gendered, the female body is the site of the disciplinary and regulating practices. Throughout the data, two of these partitioning practices were identified which are based on the construction of female bodies as threatening and dangerous.

Segregation

In their descriptions of their academic institutions, the participants pointed to the issue of gender specific spaces. Sara teaches at a girls' college, while all the other teachers teach at classes that are either all-male or all-female. Sousan, Ramesh, and Shirin, however, also teach mixed classes. Sara's description of segregation in her workplace is interesting:

There are no male creatures in that place. We sometimes joke about it with a couple of my colleagues. One of my colleagues used to say that, in this place even the male birds are not allowed (interview).

When asked why there are such sex specific spaces within their academic institutions, they all referred to the ideological/religious rules within the society. Simin believes what happens inside the universities is a reflection of the society: "Look at the public buses; they have even partitioned the buses, let alone universities. It is like a threat to them to see men and women anywhere near each other" (interview). Sousan , Ramesh and Shirin teach mixed classes but they explain that the students are not allowed to sit where they choose. It is a common practice that men sit on one side and all the women sit on the opposite side of the classroom.

According to the participants, segregation was pursued in form of separate physical spaces after the Islamic Revolution. As students, they all either studied at women colleges themselves or at mixed-sex universities, where segregation was practiced in form of dividing the classroom among men and women. Sara, remembers her student days:

We were watched all the time. It was in the 80's and I remember how we were afraid to even say hi to our male classmates. There were these morality security students that were always watching and observing us (interview).

Sousan is the only participant who experienced the mixed-sex education without any restrictions before the Islamic Revolution. She believes those days were important in shaping her personality as a self confident woman.

In Iran gender-based segregation in public life has been institutionalized in a way that it has become part of women's daily routine. The proliferation of sex-specific spaces in Iran needs to be interpreted as the focus of regulatory efforts that are regarded within the ideological discourse as preconditions to the survival of the Islamic society and the protection of the Islamic nation from corruption (Paidar, 2002). However, it is significant to note that beneath the seemingly religious appearance, issues of power and domination are involved. Gendered allocation of space might be sanctified in the name of religion, or society's safety, but it aims at the restriction of women's mobility and their status (Sansarian, 2005).

Asking about their opinion regarding any kind of gender segregation in the public sphere, they all strongly objected to the idea. Approving of the coed education, Simin, believes,

our society is made up of people with all kinds of ideas and beliefs, we all learn from each other. When both sexes are allowed to mingle in the universities, they can develop the social and personal skills to deal with the opposite sex (email).

The data, however, shows a strong tendency on the part of the female academics towards keeping a certain distance from their male students and colleagues. They all showed a certain feeling of discomfort and unease in teaching male classes.

Sara, who teaches in an all-girls university, feels "very close and friendly in a girls class, I couldn't be in a boys class. I should keep a distance. My students are all girls so as a female teacher I feel more relaxed and my class atmosphere is very relaxed too" (interview). Afsoun, also feels she cannot express herself "freely in a mixed or boys classroom. .. you have to be careful with the male students ...they take things wrong, wrong impressions of you" (interview). The participants also report a similar cautious and distant attitude towards their male colleagues. Tara defines her relation to her colleagues as "socially fine and acceptable; with a cautious distance from the male colleagues" (email). The irony involved in these observations is that these participants who did not hesitate to show their objections towards the gender segregation imposed on the educational institutions they work at, all stated that they felt less tension within these sex specific places.

The construction of women as threatening sexual creatures, aims at trapping the female body within a complex grid of disciplinary and regulating powers that constantly observe, measure, judge, correct and regulate its every move (Foucault, 1978a). Central to the ideological/religious discourse in Iran is the concept that regards the female body in terms of shame, secret, and sin (see Chapter Two). The female body has been inscribed as the source of danger; thus, in order to neutralize its destructive impact on the social domain, it should be defined, separated, regulated and even concealed (Neshat, 2004).

The fundamentalist discourse, thus, imposes the fragmentation of spaces within the educational institutions and attempts at placing the bodies inside the ordered and controlled slots. We can, therefore, see how the fear of the erotic bodies (Tobin,

1997) has discursively impacted the spatial organization of educational institutions in Iran in a way that males need to avoid the ‘dangerous bodies’ and females need to isolate themselves through self-restraint and self-discipline. Godazgar’s (2002) study on the issue of gender in Iranian schools addresses such behavior manifested in the ways teachers and students employ addressing each other. The study reports the existence of a sensitivity towards the moral propriety of these relationships. As is evident through the data, in their interaction with their male students and colleagues, the participants of this study attempt to wrap themselves in a shield of cold and sexless attitude separating themselves from the male bodies. It is striking to see how the disciplinary techniques of partitioning visibly imposed on the female bodies have led to the invisible internalization and legitimization of their own self-exclusion. Through constant surveillance of the female bodies (Turner, 1996), women within the academia are not only confined in polarized spaces, they, themselves prefer to keep a distance in their everyday interactions with their male colleagues or male students. What is interesting here is that female students and teachers are mentally regulated and controlled, through the physical control of their bodies, gestures, and movements within a spatial confinement (Foucault, 1978a).

Hejab

In this section I look into the concept of *hejab* as emerged from the data, mainly as a partitioning device creating enclosed spaces. I do not intend to focus on the historical roots or religious nature of the phenomenon since it is beyond the scope and purpose of this study. Hejab will be examined as a disciplinary tool that targets the body to control and regulate.

Throughout the data, there is a dominant negative attitude towards wearing *hejab* or the Islamic covering in the public domain, especially at workplace. It is significant to note that the word *hejab* may mean a wide range of dress forms, but what the participants define as their *hejab* consists of a long loose-fitting uniform that covers the shape of their bodies, and a scarf that should cover their hair. Six of the participants in this study reported that the Islamic uniform or *hejab* is imposed on them. Ramesh considers it as:

an imposition which restricts women's right to choose their own clothes. It kills variety and sometimes even self-confidence. Almost all the female students look alike and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them from one another... The dark colors which we are confined to choose for our garments also contribute to the feeling of depression, lifelessness and captivity (email).

Sara's attitude towards wearing *hejab* at her workplace is significant in a different light:

Although I don't wear *hejab* willingly and it's a governmental force, but surprisingly I'm very comfortable with it at work. I think it saves me lots of problems (what to wear, how to keep your hair,...) Appearances is not a distraction in teaching. But maybe it's just the question of habits. It's more than thirty years that we're wearing *hejab*! (email)

As viewed in the data, despite most of the participants' negative attitude towards the imposed *hejab*, most of them have developed a certain mechanism of indifferent habit or passive acceptance in order to protect themselves from feelings

of frustration and anger caused by being forced to wear *hejab* without truly believing in it.

The fundamentalist ideology constructs femaleness based on the discursive grid of sin. This kind of patriarchal discourse that associates sin with women can be detected in many ideologies and cultures around the world (Moaddel, 1998). Nevertheless, the Islamist discourse's preoccupation with danger inherent in female nature leads to highlighting and bringing her body under "the misogynistic gaze and surveillance" (McLaren, 2002, p.155). This is how according to Scheurich (1997), a "group is seen or known as a problem" (p. 107). Discursively constructing women as problematic and threatening sexual creatures, a complex web of power relations attempts at desexualizing the female body by covering it since the female body is only safe when it is covered. At the same time they instill certain gender-appropriate behavior which includes virtues such as, virginal innocence, asexuality and keeping a proper distance from men. Therefore, the female body that steps out of the safe confinement of home needs to be separated and partitioned from the male by physical and mental boundaries created by ideological discourses. The disciplinary practice of *hejab* is exercised directly on the female body by the patriarchal power relations since "gender subordination is the covert agenda behind the construction of the feminine body" (Mc Laren, 2002, p.156).

Sousan and Afsoun are two participants who show resistance in accepting *hejab*: "I cannot get used to it [*hejab*]" (Sousan, interview). Afsoun shows no reluctance in hiding her detestation towards it:

For me *hejab* and the fact that we have to cover ourselves which I hate, it is a big problem. You know what is amazing? I haven't gotten used to it. Each time I leave the house, I wish I didn't have to wear it and when I come back, I start cursing them for forcing me to wear it, every single day! (interview).

As a teacher, she has also come up with an interesting mechanism of resistance which I call it the 'lipstick effect':

Before going to class, I wear a pink lipstick! Just to refresh my students, so when they see me I create a lively, happy atmosphere. Just to send the message that here, this classroom is not like other places, they can be themselves (Afsoun, interview).

The important question here is whether the act of wearing lipstick before entering her classes is a gesture of her 'Sexual identity' or it needs to be interpreted differently. Feminist research regarding make up and physical beautification is mainly concerned with the norms of femininity established and prescribed by contemporary Western patriarchal values (Dellinger and Williams, 1997; Leavy, Gngong, and Ross, 2009) and how they pressure women to appear sexually 'feminine' in the workplace. As we can see in the case of the Iranian academics, the institutional pressure on them is directed towards the exact opposite. The dominant discourse within the female academics' workplace, prescribes desexualization of the female body as the 'appropriate appearance.' It is interesting to note that while wearing make up in the other parts of the world may be construed by feminists as an act of submission to the commercialization of the capitalist market values,

within this context, the 'pink lipstick' performs an opposite function of denouncing a context specific patriarchal principle. Wearing the pink lipstick is Afsoun's way of challenging the dominant patriarchal disciplinary norm through flaunting her sexuality. Hence, when Afsoun wears her pink lipstick before entering her classroom, she is demonstrating an act of resistance against the hegemony of prescribed femininity.

The 'lipstick effect' serves another function which, I think is of educational significance. As an educator, she is sending a particular message to her students, as well. By wearing the pink lipstick before entering her classroom, she is communicating the message that she is a different teacher and her class is a different place. Thereby, she is making a statement to show her students that she is being her genuine self, and that within the walls of her classroom, they can also be themselves. The 'lipstick effect' is not only signaling her freedom of spirit to her students, more importantly, it is her particular way of creating a lively and colorful atmosphere of freedom and trust for her students, as well. By refusing the norm of 'the sexless teacher', she uses a technology of self that enables her to resist the dominant normative discourses (Tamboukou, 2003). As Foucault (1978b) contends, the same discourses that aim at subjugation hold within them the possibility of strategies of resistance.

Only two of the participants (Noushin and Shirin) chose to wear a scarf over their hair as part of their religious beliefs. They both come from traditional families that insisted on their daughters' observing the Islamic *hejab*. Although Shirin had

always been convinced of the necessity of wearing *hejab* for herself, she expressed a new feeling of doubt and uncertainty at the time of the interview:

I don't know, I am not sure why I need to cover my hair, any more. To tell you the truth, I have strong doubts now. But I keep on wearing it. It is so difficult now to let go of it, after so many years. You know, somehow it becomes part of you. I guess I just feel comfortable with it. (Shirin, interview).

Noushin, on the other hand, feels completely comfortable with her scarf which she has chosen to wear due to her belief in the values it stands for.

Wearing *hejab* is a natural thing for me. I have no difficulty, at all. Maybe because it is rooted in my beliefs. I am able to move and maneuver freely in the society. It also protects me from the male gaze (Noushin, interview).

In a way, the exclusion device of *hejab* can also work for many women who come from more traditional families. It allows them to enter the public sphere by continuing their education and seeking a career. As Alavi (2005) contends,

For many women from orthodox families, wearing the veil helped them define new roles for themselves: it permitted freer movement outside the confines of the home, as well as a route to education and emancipation (p.169).

Concerned mainly with the immigrant Muslim women wearing their head scarf in the public sphere, as a symbol of self-reflection, Seyla Benhabib (2004) believes wearing the head scarf allows these women to gain access to the public sphere. Women from traditional Muslim background who were not able to appear in society are now able to use their *hejab* as “the symbol of the home to gain entry into the public sphere” (p. 187). Regarding these women’s insistence of wearing their *hejab* in society, Benhabib (2004) thus argues:

Although their struggle at first is to retain their traditional identities, whether they choose it or not, as women they also become empowered in ways they may not have anticipated...My prediction is that it is only a matter of time before the public selves of these women...will also engage and contest the very meaning of the Islamic traditions which they are now fighting to uphold. Eventually these public battles will initiate private gender struggles about the status of women’s rights within the Muslim tradition” (pp. 209-210).

In this light, it seems important to consider the restrictions, as well as the advantages of the Islamic *hejab* for women from different backgrounds. As we can see through the participants’ responses in this study, the issue of dress code in the Iranian public sphere is far from simple. Honarbin-Holliday (2009) addresses the complexity of various gender discourses and strategies including the dress code which aim at women’s invisibility. Yet in her analysis of young Iranian women’s narratives, she reports a “visual dimension,” that “despite Islamization, possessed particular power” (p. 5). *Hejab* as the marker of the public/private spheres is employed and assimilated by the new generation of women in Iran to make them

more visible in the public spaces. Empowered especially by education, Iranian women have been able to gain a new visibility within the public sphere which has led to implementing change in the male-dominated society. Therefore, whether Iranian women believe in wearing *hejab* or consider it an imposition, they have been able to attain the ‘visual dimension’ that helps them create spaces to actively engage in the public life. Despite all the challenges and limitations of life under patriarchy, educated Iranian women have become active agents in the life of their society by constantly seeking visibility through transporting the power of their minds from the domestic to the public.

4. Female Teachers' Professional Identities

The questions asked in both interviews and emails also aimed at highlighting the teachers’ personal and pedagogical ideas, preferences, and challenges, as well as their evaluations of their own competencies as English teachers. By examining their pedagogical preferences and their own accounts of their instructional practices, I intended to explore the ways in which their professional identities are constructed within the particular network of educational values and norms. It is significant to understand that the female academics are constantly engaged in a process of assuming their roles as English teachers according to pedagogical and cultural discourses that are available to them (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, Ellwood, 2009). We need to pay attention to the fact that the formation of the participants' professional identities are context dependent, that is, they draw from the historical, socio-cultural, and pedagogical discourses that hover around them to construct their teacher subjectivities.

These subjective patterns, we also need to remember that, are multiple, constantly changing and sometimes even contradictory (Tamboukou, 2000, 2003). The multiple subject positions that these women take at different times and places may indicate how we can detect the existence of “many voices within us and the many perspectives that have constituted our field of vision. (Benhabib, 1999, p.349-350) It is important to remember that the construction of teacher identity is continuously modified depending on the availability of the discourses within the particular time and space. We cannot expect coherence and consistency within these discursively produced subjective patterns that can also impact teachers' practices (Ellwood, 2009).

4.1. Discursive Field of Good Teacher

In hope of shedding some light on the teachers' identities and the discursive positioning they adopt in their role as English teachers, I inquired about the participants' pedagogical concepts, ideals and preferences. How these women identify and position themselves as English teachers reveals a discursive field of 'Good Teacher' that impacts their ideas, roles, and goals. In the next section, I will try to explore what it means to be a 'Good Teacher' and how it constantly shapes and reshapes the teachers' identities.

4.1.1 Good Teacher: Born or Made?

An interesting observation according to the narratives is the issue of good teacher being made or born. The dominant attitude among the participants was in favor of the 'charismatic discourse' of inherent qualities of good teachers. Most of the participants, including Simin agreed on the priority of nature over nurture:

Definitely, I believe that a successful teacher is someone who possesses an innate quality. You may receive a lot of training and education to be a teacher but you might not be a good teacher because teaching is an art itself, the art of dealing with the inside and heart of your students (email).

Shirin considers teaching an art, and Afsoun believes in what she calls “knack of teaching”:

It is not something teachable even in Teaching Training Courses... These [TTC] are useless because if they [teachers] don't have it in them, no matter how much you teach them, they will never learn it (Afsoun, interview).

Ramesh emphasized the necessity of training and experience; however, she too believed "no amount of education, training and theoretical knowledge can create a good teacher"(email). Interestingly, none of the participants supported the notion that good teachers are made through the process of training and education. By choosing a middle way, Sara and Tara are convinced that nature and nurture are equally important in making a good teacher: "I believe both training and some innate gift are the essential ingredients of a successful teacher. It won't do if either is missing" (Sara, email).

As Freeman and Richards (1993) assert:

Teaching can, for example, be seen as a science, a technology, a craft, or an art, and each of these characterizations carries with it defined orientations toward the activity of teaching and the knowledge base of the teacher (p.194).

In his book, *The good teacher: Dominant Discourses in Teaching and Teacher Education*, Moore (2004), identifies three discourses in this regard: 1) good teacher, being made through education and training; 2) good teacher being born with certain innate qualities; and 3) the 'professional pragmatism' which is considered a middle way. Despite the bulk of publications and research on teacher effectiveness and teacher reflectivity, Moore (2004) reports a dominant conceptualization regarding good teachers that "continues to haunt a large numbers of teachers"(p.4):

successful teachers are perceived not as having been "made" (not, at least, through processes of teacher training and education)., but as simply possessing "the right stuff" – the capacity to command enthusiasm, respect and even love through the sheer force of their classroom presence (pp. 4-5).

As we can see in this study, the popular conceptualization of instinctive good teacher is hegemonized among the participant teachers. This is a powerful discourse that has been popularized through films and fiction as well as a series of "cultural myth" and "folk pedagogy" [(Britzman, 1991; Bruner, 1996) cited by Moore, 2004, p. 5].

4.2. Subject Positions Related to Good Teacher

We also need to consider a significant aspect of these women's professional identity which is related to the distinctive nature of the subject they teach, that is, English language. The respondents are teachers of English language; therefore, in order to explore their identity construction, we cannot overlook issues and discourses that are involved in their choice of the material, the content, the

methodology they employ, and their actual classroom practices. In other words, by these particular choices and methods, they find themselves positioned within multiple identity slots as English language teachers in their particular contextual circumstances. Teaching is not separate from teachers. In this light, teaching is formulated as various ways of being.

Through critically analyzing the narratives, the following subject positions surfaced that comprises the participants' notions of good teacher and the normative classroom practices: 1) Teacher as knower, 2) Teacher as Transmitter of Knowledge, and 3) Teacher as Controller. These specific teaching norms define how an English teacher should teach and perform inside the classroom, according to the participants in this study. I need to clarify here that the following subject positions are far from comprehensive or clear cut categorizations. They are only representing the most dominant of a complex intricate web of professional subject positions that are available to the English teachers and were most evident through the data. The subject positions related to the 'good teacher' may manifest an ideal image that the participants envisage and try to live and work up to, as Ramesh, describe it as "too idealistic and even impossible to realize"(interview), or as Noushin feels, "is up there but the problem is the more I try to get there, it keeps moving, it goes higher!" (interview). On the other hand, the subject positions may simply comprise the way they actually see themselves as language teachers. Either way, the discourses related to 'good teacher' give them certain directions in their everyday professional lives by shaping and molding them as objects so that they believe, behave and perform in certain ways in their professional role. The idea of the good teacher, however, is not a fixed and stable entity; it is an elusive concept

that is the result of the interplay or clash of different existing discourses in the Iranian EFL context.

There are also certain points we should keep in mind. Firstly, whether what the teachers reported in the interviews are in complete accordance with their actual teaching practices and activities inside the classrooms or not may be of little concern here. Since what they actually do and what they believe they should do, both reflect the impact of the professional discourses on them. Secondly, these subject positions illustrate their past experiences, the present-time life and their future goals (He, 1995). Thirdly, we might see some of these subject positions as contradictory to some others. We need to keep in mind that these experiences and conceptions, including the way we see ourselves are discursively constructed within the framework of existing power-relations. Therefore, based on the participants' narratives, the following subjectivities are identified as the possible selves either idealized or taken up (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000) in their construction of teacher identities.

4.2.1 Expert-Knower

None of the teachers in the study hesitated to recognize the 'expert-knower' identity in herself. They all considered knowledge as an important element in defining a good English teacher. Afsoun emphasized the issue of teacher's knowledge: "Teacher has to know her area well, definitely much more than her students" (interview). Shirin, however, believes, improving her knowledge as an academic is related to both the expectations and the level of the students:

You need to keep on improving your knowledge or being up to date because we have to present a professional face to the learners....a university lecturer is required to have much broader knowledge of the subject she teaches, than teachers at schools or institutions (interview).

Simin too argues that "to me the main difference between myself and my students relies on the fact that I know much more than them in my field" (interview).

Part of being a 'professional' to the participants as we can see through the data, relies on recognizing themselves as experts in the field who are in possession of 'knowledge.' In his discussion of "professionalization", Rose (1998), explains how the "claim to possess esoteric knowledge and technical capabilities not available to others (p. 84) contributes to creating a sense of self and leads to exercise of power.

It is interesting, however, to see that, alongside this expert-knower identity, some of the participants recognize a teacher-learner identity, as well. Part of being a teacher, for Ramesh is to be "always ready to learn, willing to renew and increase my knowledge" (interview). While Afsoun refers to the necessity for teachers to keep on learning: "she has to improve her knowledge, and learn more"(interview), Tara believes what makes teaching "such great profession is the joy of learning" (interview). What Osborne (1998) believes occurs in the process of teaching is that the teacher also becomes a learner.

The next issue raised in the data related to teacher knowledge is what in their minds constitutes 'knowledge'. According to Ramesh, a teacher must be:

a knower of her craft, of the subject matter which she is supposed to teach, of her students' characters, abilities and needs, and of the theories and techniques which help her perform her job properly (email).

Ramesh's quite comprehensive description of teacher's knowledge confirms the three distinct dimensions discussed by Beijaard et al. (2000): "the teacher as a subject matter expert, the teacher as a pedagogical expert, and the teacher as a didactical expert" (p.750). Teachers are expected to master the knowledge of the subject matter (Schelfhout et al., 2006). In EFL, the most essential prerequisite for a good language teacher is perhaps her language proficiency (Brown, 2001). In Sara's view, "having the knowledge of English language skills and culture is very important. In my opinion an English teacher should be well-armed with these and also should know how to teach" (email). Briguglio and Kirkpatrick (1996), sum up what Sara referred to in three distinct components of language proficiency: linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical knowledge.

Linguistic Knowledge

Most of the participants believed that they may not be as highly proficient as they themselves expect to be, but they also mentioned that they felt they were linguistically proficient enough for their role as English teachers in their institutions. Linguistic proficiency, for most of the teachers in this study covers the area of the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing), as well as, grammatical rules and vocabulary. Simin's view on this topic is interesting: "I don't want to pretend that my knowledge of English grammar or vocabulary, for example, is perfect. After all it is not my mother tongue. But I believe I am a good

language teacher" (email). Many researchers (Tang, 1997; Inbar, 1999, 2005; Rajagopalan, 2005; Bernat, 2009) have reported the non-native English teachers' insecure sense of language proficiency as compared to their native speaker counterparts. Tang (1997) reported feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt expressed by non-native speaker teachers. To most of the participants of this study, their language proficiency was far from ideal; yet, they did not show as great a sense of weakness as compared to their counterparts in a mixed native and non-native EFL context.

The results from the study indicate that the participants are conscious about their language choices in English. Their evaluation of their own accents of English is interesting since it may shed light on their identity as English teachers. Regarding the issue of 'good accent', all the participants emphasized on the necessity of speaking in a 'clear', 'understandable' and 'correct' accent, rather than a native-like accent. Noushin believes that an English teacher should improve her accent, "but that doesn't necessarily mean that she ought to have an American or British accent" (email). According to Shirin, "a teacher should be able to speak with correct accent, stress and intonation and no need for an exaggerated native-like accent" (email). Sara feels quite confident of her accent: "I don't need to have a native-like accent because I'm well understood by my students, and I can communicate with them (email). The reason for these teachers' feeling quite comfortable in their non-native skin may simply be related to the fact that the Iranian EFL context is a non-native one. Within this homogenous context, they are not being compared to native-speaker teachers, by their students, by administration or even by themselves. The popular discourse of native-speakerism (Holliday,

2005; Pennycook, 2002) within many ELT contexts seems irrelevant within the totally non-native EFL context of Iran. Hence, within their particular EFL context, the participants feel the privileged position of the academic expert-knower and not that of the 'peripheral Other' (Holliday, 2005).

Cultural Knowledge

Another aspect of expert-knower identity, emphasized by all participants is the necessity of possessing a good knowledge of the target language culture by a good teacher. What all the participants defined as 'cultural knowledge' included the facts about or objects of the daily life routines and occasions, and not so much the underlying values, attitudes and beliefs. They specifically referred to topics such as food, clothes, music, tourism, holidays, the media and special occasions which may be categorized under the culture products (Moran, 2001). Afsoun's notion of the cultural knowledge includes: "food habits, life habits, locations, monetary system you should know about all these" (interview). This shows that the pragmatic discourse of cultural knowledge is dominant among the participants. According to research (Wright, 2000), this is a more traditional and more common approach to teaching culture that does not go beyond the functional aspects of teaching culture, namely: effective communication, appropriate behavior and avoiding miscommunication (Smith, Paige and Steglitz, 1998). Within this discourse culture is considered as cognitive factual knowledge which is homogenous and static (Hellsten, 1999) and 'transferable' to the passive recipients as a bulk of information, which reveals an underlying traditional information transfer pedagogy.

The narratives further suggest that none of the teachers reported any formal cultural training throughout their education and training. They stated that the ELT MA syllabus, teacher education programs or TTC courses offer no courses specifically aimed at development of cultural competence. Therefore, most of them acquire their cultural knowledge from informal sources. Afsoun, signifies that, " I work really hard, I use internet, watch satellite TV, I read books; because it is absolutely necessary to learn about the culture" (interview). They also reported that, within their workplaces, the cultural objectives are not outlined in the institutional curriculum or even informally required. In Simin's view, this is due to the fact that, in her institution, the main focus is on linguistic competence. As Majdzadeh (2002) also reports the main concern within the ELT context of Iran is with linguistic aspect of the language, rather than the communicative or cultural functions. While most of the other participants reported a similar situation, they also added the existence of a social, political and ideological opposition to Western culture within the EFL context of Iran, as the underlying reason for this.

Another important observation according to the data is that the teachers' definition of target culture included merely the American and British cultures. Some of the participants preferred one of the two countries over the other, depending on their own personal knowledge and experience regarding that country and culture. Afsoun who went to an international elementary and secondary school, and travels regularly to the States (she holds an American Permanent Residence visa) believes, "I am familiar with the culture" (interview). Underlying the participants notion of English culture is the fact that the discourse of 'center Englishes and cultures' (Phillipson, 1992). Ironically, despite the educational system's anti-Western attitudes, the discourse of center-Englishes has been able to maintain its hold on

the teachers' conception of English language and culture. Second, it also implies that the participants are not aware of the discourse of the family of World Englishes (Kachru, 1986; Jenkins, 2009) and subsequently the possibilities of English-speaking cultures other than the American or the British.

Pedagogical Knowledge

By pedagogical knowledge the participants referred to the mastery of methodological principles and strategies necessary in their classroom practices. Some of the participants considered knowledge of teaching methods as an important element in their role as an English teacher. Most of these participants believed what they had been taught in their college Teaching Methodology courses or TTC programs were irrelevant to or inadequate for the real-life classroom teaching. Simin, refers to the methodology courses offered them in their B.A and M.A programs, as "merely theoretical, mostly comparing the Grammar-Translation Method and Communicative methods; plus some innovative methods that we cannot really use in the classroom" (email). Freeman and Johnson (1998) refer to the body of theories and methods that are assumed to give directions to teachers in any language teaching context. In the case of the respondents, they try to seek their own personalized methods, within the restrictions of the syllabus they teach, of course. Simin tries to find experimental ways for improving her methods while teaching. Noushin believes the best way for her is to share with her students "the useful strategies that helped me learn the language" (interview). As Johnson (1999) asserts, teachers' classroom performances are mostly based on their own previous experiences as students. Afsoun employs her "self-made teaching method which is the result of twenty years of teaching experience" (interview). Most of the

teachers showed reluctance in following the prescribed methodologies in the textbooks or imposed on them by their institutions. It is interesting to note that, the more experienced teachers in the study felt more confidence to maneuver around and beyond the prescribed methods, what Richards (2001) believes requires certain training to support novice teachers become independent-minded "investigators of both their own classroom practices and those of their learners" (p. 177).

Overall, we can conclude that the expert-knower identity may in a way lead to other relevant subject positions of these teachers. It is interesting to view Tara's observation in regard to 'knowledge'. She is the one participant who is not obsessed with her role as an 'omniscient' teacher': "sometimes I think it is not important how much you know but how much you can make students learn" (interview). She believes, the notion of 'knowledgeable' teacher is rooted in the 'teacher-centered culture' of the Iranian educational landscape:

The teacher is believed to have the authority in class and the students should be passive listeners, and classes here, are teacher-centered, so there is this expectation from the teacher to know everything (interview).

This observation can lead us to the next teaching subject position: the teacher as transmitter.

4.2.2 Transmitter

We need to remember that the discourses related to 'good teacher' are highly elusive and complex. The expert-knower subject position is directly related to the transmitter identity, since teachers as 'holders of knowledge' are missionaries to

transfer their 'valuable treasure' to their students. The teachers in the study, however, prefer to define themselves as facilitators and guides, that is, someone who helps learning happen (Voller, 1997). Sousan does not hesitate to show her tendency towards a more student-centered classroom: "I believe in group work...I don't want to be the sole speaker in classroom...because it is individual effort" (interview). Sara's definition of the teacher's role is that "she is definitely a guide; she shows the students different ways of learning different skills" (email). Most of the teachers talked about the necessity of engaging learners in the classroom activities and emphasized the student participation; yet, the data also reveals that they are reluctant to take the position of the facilitator as their preferred subject position in the classroom life.

Despite their explicit references to the priority of a student-centered method, learner-autonomy and student participation which are all components of Discourse of communicative teaching, the subject position of teacher as transmitter can be identified in the participants' descriptions of their classroom performances.

Asking the teachers about the time they allocate to student participation (individual, group work and peer work), most of the participants reported that they could not give more than half of the class time to student participation. Ramesh, for instance, confesses that:

at least %50 percent of the time in every class, even in conversation classes is allocated to the teacher in different ways unless there are a few very active and well motivated students with at least a satisfactory level of language proficiency who can take a number of the roles

and duties a teacher usually has in a language classroom, which rarely happens (email).

Simin complains that " Most of the time, it is really difficult to make them talk " (interview); yet, she also finds it challenging to make them listen to her "explanations or follow directions"(email).

Within the discourse of cooperative and collaborative learning which depends on the students' participation in form of group and individual part-taking (Mc Groarty, 1993), learning is viewed as the result of peer interaction rather than expert-novice interaction (Swain and Lapkin, 1996, 1998; Swain, et al., 2002). What surfaced in the teachers' narratives, however, was the overall existence of learner-dependence strategies which aim at depositing knowledge/ information in the learners' mind (Freire, 2000).

The interesting point in the data is that there seems to be an overt concept of teacher as facilitator and mediator, alongside a covert notion of teacher as transferor and transmitter of knowledge regarding their role inside the classroom. While, believing in her function as teacher/guide, Sara refers explicitly to the role of transmitter in her description of a good teacher: "A good teacher should have the appropriate skills to transmit her knowledge to the students"(email) and Tara finds great joy in "transferring knowledge" to her students. The notion of students as the passive receiver of knowledge is in the core of the teacher as transmitter discourse (Barnes, 1992). The expert-knower attempts to pass her accumulated knowledge of the language to her students. Within this discourse, students are dependent on the teacher as the source of knowledge.

Noushin points to the frustrating dilemma of English teachers:

Self discovery, or teacher is just a guide...these are all just empty words, in actuality none of it is happening. What is happening in practice is very different. In our culture we are familiar with teacher-centered classes and everything should come from the teacher. I want to show my students that they need to be independent. This is my ideal and it hasn't happened yet, I am trying different ways but to tell you the truth the more I try the less results! I feel lost. I guess it is strongly rooted in our educational culture... this context in which teachers are the Gods. Our students, even don't like the teacher-guide concept; they feel lost (interview).

In their study of the Iranian university students' learning strategies, Sarani and Kafipour (2008) emphasized both teachers and students in Iran depend mostly on the traditional approaches despite the fact that communicative approach is mainly promoted within the academic EFL context. Talebinezhad and Aliakbari (2002) also reported the existence of a teacher-centered approach within the Iranian ELT. As the data in this study also reveals, the transmitter identity emerges as the most powerful within a very complex field of competing and contradictory discourses of teaching.

4.2.3 Controller

For me, it's joyful to teach things to people they don't know, and, I also think it's a source of power, as well, since you can establish your own rules" (Tara, interview).

What is interesting in Tara's remark is that the natural outcome of the legacy of transmitting and banking pedagogy is the issue of power (Freire, 2000). In close association with the expert/knower and teacher/transmitter subject positions, is another subject position that I identify as teacher/controller. Issues of power, authority and control surfaced out of the data that are rooted in the teachers' beliefs regarding their role.

In her work, *The Classroom as an Arena of Teachers' Work*, Freund (2009), refers to the popular portrayal of teacher as the heroic image of a capable and strong individual who is able to manage her class firmly. Establishing order in classroom seems to be an essential role most of the participants try to assume. Keeping the class disciplined and orderly to Simin who needs her students to listen to what she has to say is a challenge: "It does get on my nerves when they don't listen to me or talk with each other; so I just show the students who is in charge"(interview). For most of the participants the best strategy is a combination of friendliness and discipline. What Shirin calls 'quiet authority':

She [teacher] has to be in complete control of the class, but in a friendly manner so that both authority and intimacy are preserved, in fact, she should maintain some sort of quiet authority in her class (email).

Sara, too, employs a similar strategy:

Of course the teachers should be in control, but covertly in a way that the students wouldn't know....I always try to be very friendly with my students but at the same time keep an acceptable distance to show authority in times needed (interview).

Assuming an imaginary 'border', Tara who also tries to create a "cheerful and friendly atmosphere," also supports the same strategy:

I try to be friendly with them [students] but don't let them cross the *border*. The atmosphere of the class should be one of cheer and joy, with the disciplines followed. With reluctant students who don't want to accept my authority in the class, I try to make a friendly atmosphere, but it happens that sometimes it doesn't work... once with a student I had to argue to maintain him in the position of student, it was a rare incident. I have never had that problem ever since (interview).

The Maxim of Order (Richards, 1996), is reported as a dominant notion among teachers in other EFL contexts. Tsui (1995, cited by Richards, 1996) reports maintaining discipline and order as significantly important to Hong Kong ESL teachers. While Matbouli (2009) believes keeping order is considered important to the Middle Eastern teachers, as well as, to the students who themselves believe in the authority of their teachers. In her study of Japanese female students, however, Fujimura-Fanselow (1996) report how this kind of unequal power relations in the classroom can lead to students' resistance to participation.

Sousan and Afsoun are the only participants that show signs of exposure to a discourse other than the teacher/controller. Sousan, who does "not believe in what they [other teachers] are doing in their classes and their methods," explicitly refers to the Critical Pedagogy and how teachers should be more sensitive to the issues of power and control. Afsoun feels students should "play a greater part in the classroom, to involve them more with some of the decisions such as choosing topics for discussions or bringing material they like"(interview). As seen in this

part of the data, the teachers refuse to see themselves as agents of control and order, rather, they assume the identity of the empowering educator who by decentering their positions as teachers, try to give more control to their students.

Alongside the dominant traditional discourse within the Iranian EFL, few studies have documented the existence of “Critical Pedagogy” as a marginal counter discourse within the mainstream EFL. Ghahremani-Ghajar and Mirhosseini (2005) describe how the dialogue journal writing functioned as a critical classroom practice among their Iranian students.

Another important result from the data indicates that all the respondents show a feeling of power, rooted in the fact that they believe they are conveying a new kind of knowledge and way of being while teaching English. As Sara explains:

Maybe my teaching them English would enable them to see more... [I don't think] my responsibility is just to teach them general language, but I think this is my duty to open other windows for them (interview).

Afsoun also wants her students “to be aware of another culture to learn from it” (interview). For Tara, the fact that she can present her students with the cultural content which is “sometimes in no way similar to what we are already exposed to” (interview) is a source of personal satisfaction. As Borg (2006) contends, “language teaching has a dimension of power, and control, inducting learners into ways of thinking and being which reflect those of the target culture” (p.13).

Summary

This chapter attempted to merge analyses of the dominant discourses at both gender and professional levels. The female teachers' subject positions at both levels were context-specific and locally produced. As shown through the analysis, the interplay between discourses created a series of subject positions that the participants assumed in and out of their classrooms. It is significant to note, as was evident in the data, that "teaching identity is indeed multifaceted, fluid and even contradictory" (Moore, p.25). As agents of discursive formation, these women viewed themselves as female teachers as a result of a combination of preferred or imposed practices that attempt at shaping their self concept and self recognition. It is important also to remember that "self construction is ...profoundly conditioned by circumstances and available resources"(Holstein and Gubrium, 2000, p.153). By concentrating on the ways and resources of self-definitions, I tried to focus on the ways in which these women were engaged in positioning themselves within or against a multiplicity of discourses available to them. Moreover, I attempted to show how these women deal with the challenges, struggles, and frustrations involved in achieving a sense of self and interpretation of their positions as Iranian female English teachers.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

Of ourselves we are not 'knowers'.

(Nietzsche, 1998, p.1)

And you? When will you begin your long journey into yourself?

(Rumi, 1997)

Introduction

This study focused on the multiple identities of Iranian women who work as English teachers within the Iranian academic institutions. My interest in the topic was due to the fact that the literature on Iranian English teachers' identity formation was disturbingly inadequate. Moreover, as an Iranian female teacher, I was inspired to tell the stories of these women who struggle to keep a seemingly balanced sense of self in a patriarchal social and cultural context. In this concluding chapter, I intend to offer a summary of this unforgettable journey, including all the steps I took as well as the obstacles I encountered on the way. I will also share what I learned in form of the main research findings, hoping that these results would prove to be practical and applicable to people who work in TESOL as well as those interested in women's studies.

1. Research Findings

Trying to shed light on female English teachers' identity formation in Iran, I will reflect back on the findings of this study that stemmed from the following research questions:

- What constitutes the participants' identities as female ELT teachers in Iran?
- What are the discursive practices that shape their identities?

The two main questions are somehow merged since the way these women see themselves is shaped by the cultural, social and institutional discourses that are available to them. Therefore, the first main issue revealed through the examination of the data compiled in this study was the multiplicity, complexity, and contradictory nature of these teachers' identities created through the available social, cultural and professional discursive practices. These heterogeneous, inconsistent and impermanent identities are the result of the complex interplay of gender and professional discourses within the context of Iranian TESOL.

Regarding the gender identities, the first finding is that despite the female teachers' awareness of the gender inequality and discrimination embedded within the patriarchal society, they adhered to the binary gender notions and cultural stereotypes formed by dominating gender discourses that have slithered into their consciousness throughout ages and are at work in most subtle and invisible ways. The major normalizing gender discourses related to femininity work through a subtle network of discourses including: 1) the discourse of difference, 2) the discourse of the good wife (marriage plot), and 3) the discourse of natural duty (Motherhood).

The discourse of difference shapes women's understanding of themselves in a way that they see themselves as 'creatures of emotions,' capable of caring and nurturing - as opposed to male capacities of making rational judgments; moreover, it shapes the participants' feelings of educational and professional inadequacy in a way that they feel forced to constantly try hard in proving to others as well as themselves that they are 'equal to men.' The discourse of difference also produces the subject position of the 'unambitious female teacher,' who lacks any incentives for promotion to higher administrative jobs. Despite the feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence caused through the discourse of difference, some females academics performed 'masculinity,' renouncing the feminine inside them by showing a strict, dominant and outspoken self, in other words, 'a masculine woman' in order to compete and survive in a male academic world. The paradox of being a female in their oscillation between the two worlds of the domesticity and public life is caused by the two discourses of 'marriage plot' and the 'natural duty of motherhood' ultimately leads to a self-selected surrendering of their own needs and desires in favor of being supportive, caring, and accommodating in their domestic roles. Prioritizing the domestic roles shows how the discourse of difference creates a stereotype trap in a subtle and beautified way so innocently that it seems like a timeless and universal truth for women, while leading to their marginalization in all aspects of personal and social life.

The second set of gender discourses are the disciplinary discourses of exclusion which aims at locating women within fixed and defined spaces that are considered most appropriate for them by mechanisms of power. The two main disciplinary techniques include: 1) enclosure, which builds boundaries of the feminized space

of schools confining female teachers within the ‘appropriate spaces’ in the social hierarchy, and 2) partitioning, which based on the fear of the erotic bodies, functions through segregation and veiling. This kind of gendered allocation of spaces within the Iranian educational institutions is sanctified in the name of religion, or society's safety, and attempts at placing the bodies inside the ordered and controlled slots. The result is a sense of isolation and alienation that leads to a feeling of lack of belonging to the workplace.

The second set of discourses that shape female teachers’ identities is related to teaching profession. The findings in this regard are related to the construct of English teacher associated with particular subject positions or rigid identity slots that are the products of professional discourses with normalizing and regulating functions. The first finding worth noting is that the participants believed teaching is more of an art that can hardly be learned through teacher education programs, although they all valued both education and experience. Moreover, underlying the teachers’ professional ideas, conceptions and preferences was a particular discourse that I refer to as ‘the discourse of good teacher.’ The most dominant subject positions related to ‘good teacher’ available to the English teachers that shaped their perceptions and actions included: teacher as the expert-knower, teacher as the transmitter of knowledge, and teacher as the controller agent of order in class.

The expert-knower attempts to acquire the required knowledge and tries to transmit her accumulated knowledge to her students. Within this discursive field, teachers are agents of control, order and discipline, and students are dependent on

them as the source of knowledge. Raising the standards of the essential knowledge for an English teacher high, some of the participants revealed a sense of frustration in their inability to reach the satisfactory level of knowledge in the three areas of linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge, and pedagogical knowledge. Through the whole labyrinth of normative, disciplinary and inquisitorial practices and operations, the discourse of good teacher has paved its way in and has instilled certain notions as how an English teacher thinks and behaves. Thus, these women come to accept, justify and embrace these fixed notions that define them as English teachers.

In conclusion, the findings provide a glimpse to the fact that the Iranian female teachers' experiences in reconstructing a professional identity at Iranian universities are the result of an interplay of gender and professional discourses. In this evaluative summary of the findings of the study, we see how these women encounter challenging restrictions and contradictions that involve their status as female English teachers within the Iranian academy.

2. Implications

In order to relate this thesis to the real world, I will concentrate on the practical applications of the findings of this research. I hope this study could go beyond a theoretical analysis of narratives and discourses, and the implications that arise from it can be meaningful to fe/male English teachers, their students, administrators, and teacher educators. I also believe there are implications regarding female academics and gender equity policies, in general.

Firstly, the results of this investigation can be useful to all women who work as educators within the academy, in general. As I have tried to show in chapter five, patriarchal normative and disciplinary discourses are constantly at work constructing female academics' identities. I do believe that this aspect of my findings can be significant and therefore, useful not only for female English teachers, but for all female teachers as a marginalized group within the academic world. The Iranian female teachers in all disciplines continue to face various discriminations inherent in the culture and ideologies that tend to regulate and control their minds and lives. The stories of the participants in this study not only allows them to voice the dilemmas they have to live as female academics on a daily basis, but they may also enable us to gain insight into our approach to the institutional biases and the underlying unequal power relations within the academy. Such insights into the discourses that shape subjectivities as women and teachers would allow us to see through the haze of discourses and perhaps seek counter discourses that may expand our awareness and experiences and eventually lead to the resolution of gender tensions and prejudices in female academics' lives.

Female English teachers who teach in the Iranian academy may also draw insights from this thesis and become more aware of themselves, their classroom practices, their relationships with their students and the people they work with. This study may help direct a focus on the discourses that shape female English teachers' identities and how these discourses are effortlessly and even unconsciously internalized . In order to reach a more balanced sense of self, it seems necessary for female English teachers in Iran and in culturally similar countries to understand the complicated layers of various discourses, whether modernist or traditional, that

are constantly shaping and regulating their subjectivities. Under the pressure of their multiple roles and duties as women, mothers, wives, as well as academics, their minds and bodies are subjected to particular models of appropriateness in terms of their knowledge that leave them with a feeling of frustration and inadequacy. By becoming more aware of these forces, and problematizing the dominant patriarchal and professional discourses and practices in their teaching profession, they can seek counter discourses and various strategies that help them overcome the sense of frustration and lack of achievement evident in the stories of the participants in this study. Through an understanding of the normalizing and disciplinary discourses that shape their identities and by revisiting their subject positions, they are able to problematize their existing assumptions and practices, and find empowering strategies and counter discourses to adapt, negotiate and improvise.

As Ramanathan (2002) points out:

it is crucial for all language teachers to engage in peeling away the layers that make up the commonsense or the natural if only to understand how their knowledge/cognitions are being shaped. Encouraging this meta-awareness of their socialization process is the first step toward making them critical, proactive educators. (p. 65)

Maintaining a critical attitude towards their ideas and practices would allow them to peel away the multiple layers that make up their identities as female language teachers and pave their way towards becoming ‘proactive educators.’

The search for gender-sensitive and feasibly suitable materials and procedures, female teachers are also able to implement change in their lives. There is indeed, “no one right way to enact resistance to oppressive power relations,” as Chaudhry (2000) emphasizes, “the specific circumstances of a particular life” can decide the conditions of resistance and the paths to empowerment (p.106). Female teachers may utilize the findings of this study in creating an atmosphere of sisterly collaboration and support for the female teachers in spite of the rigid confinement of the academic system in Iran. For instance, the mentorship (Quinlan, 1999) of beginner teachers by the older staff members who are able to share their own experiences may help increase the younger generation’s morale and confidence. The younger teachers can also share their recent readings and updated knowledge with the older generation of female teachers who may not be able to follow up all that is happening in their field. This kind of peer support system would lead to a sense of belonging and could decrease the sense of isolation and alienation that was perceived in the stories of the women in my study.

One important implication of the findings of this thesis can be utilized by the educational administrators within the academic ELT in Iran. Understanding the sense of inadequacy and lack of confidence and ambition that female English teachers experience could help the educational management and administration to re-examine and revisit all the restricting and domineering discursive practices within their territory. In order to fill the existing gender gaps within the Iranian academic ELT, they also need to involve more female teachers in the leadership and administrative positions. They can also try to restructure the excluding spaces as well as practices that are based on the ideologically marginalizing notions of

dangerous female body. This might seem beyond the educational administrators' capacity and power at this point, considering the political condition in Iran, yet I feel I need to address these implications for the time when the higher education is less repressed and free to plan and implement change. Educational administrators also need to tend to issues such as more flexible professional development courses planned and customized specifically to meet the real needs of the teachers and boost their sense of self. Moreover, a flexible teaching schedule that allows both full-time and part-time teaching for women (Drago & Williams, 2000).

Another important implication of this research is related to the messages that can be implied for the teacher education. There is a need for a restructuring of the teacher education if we aim at facilitating the development of efficient, knowledgeable, innovative English teachers who are confident enough to embrace new possibilities and fresh ideas, and therefore, achieve a positive sense of self as educators. In order to do so, teacher education in Iran needs to be thoroughly re-examined and restructured in its rigid application of theories and methodologies. Instead of reinscribing mechanical and rigid methodologies based on fixed theories that lead to regulating and objectifying future teachers, teacher educators need to allow them to envision themselves as free intellectuals and creative educators who seek fresh possibilities for a more critical and transformative teaching. Another significant implication for the teacher education programs is that they need to aim at student teachers' confidence building as well as concentrating on their knowledge and skills. These programs should be directed towards giving female teachers, in particular, confidence to experiment and expand the boundless possibilities within themselves and their students. Such flexible and unrestricted

notions of teaching and learning may lead to a more progressive and transformative teacher education.

3. Contribution to Knowledge

I see this study as contributing to various related fields of knowledge. First, as an Iranian female teacher, I wanted to tell the stories of women who struggle to keep a balanced sense of self within a patriarchal society and educational system which is highly oppressive, segregating and marginalizing. Giving voice to these women's long discredited and ignored feelings, views and experiences, this study adds the Iranian experience to the women's studies in higher education in other parts of the world (Acker, 1994; Packer, 1995; Brooks, 1997;; Morley, 1999; Morley & Walsh, 1996; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2003; Acker & Armenti, 2004). Contributing to the feminist scholarship in the Global South (Petersen & Gravett, 2000; Twombly, 1998), as well as the Islamic world (Mir-Hosseini, 2005; Keddie, 2006; Thompson, 2003), this study may also extend the literature regarding women's position within the Iranian academy (Mehran, 2009; Namaghi, 2009), and thereby, open new venues in exploring the various discourses available to or imposed on the female academics from a feminist poststructuralist perspective.

Thirdly, focusing on English teachers' identity formation, particularly from a poststructuralist theoretical perspective, this study can enrich the body of knowledge on the formation of subjectivities within the TESOL context. My goal was to add the Iranian experience to the body of research about female academics within the TESOL context, and thereby, to present understanding of the lives and

identities of English teachers with regard to the dominant regulatory and disciplinary discourses.

Fourthly, I believe this qualitative thesis has contributed to bridging a huge gap in the TESOL studies in Iran which is mainly positivistic and uncritical. The data collection tools employed in this thesis and the in-depth thematic analysis of the participants' narratives, helps add this study to the already scarce body of qualitative research in the Iranian educational research, in general, and the TESOL research in particular. I also believe the feminist poststructuralist theoretical perspective applied in this thesis highlights the need for more interdisciplinary approaches and can contribute to expanding views and enriching the already scarce body of qualitative research within the Iranian TESOL.

Finally, by problematizing the fundamental conceptions regarding the teaching profession, the position of a female teacher and the professional expectations regarding ELT, this study may also add to the critical studies within the Iranian educational research which aim at understanding, challenging and changing the status quo.

4. Further Research

Now that I have reached this final stage of my journey, I feel the need to seek an answer to the question "what now?" While doing this thesis study, I encountered several additional topics and ideas worth expansion and exploration. Therefore, at this point, I intend to share these beginning ideas as additional research areas that could be expanded within both the Iranian and World TESOL contexts.

Recommending alternate research methods would also offer additional insight into the topic of identity formation and TESOL. I see my thesis as a starting point for more profound explorations into the following topics and alternative methodological options:

- In this study, my main concern as the researcher was directed towards the dominating regulatory and normative discourses that are at work shaping the female teachers' subjectivities. This, however, is only one side of the coin. The other side of the coin, however, which shows the technologies of resistance, is worth dealing with. I am personally interested in concentrating on the exploration of the multiplicity of counter discourses that are available to these women and how they shape their identities. In the future investigations the focus can be on these available gender or professional counter discourses and how these female teachers are affected by them in their various subject positions.
- The female academics in this study come from well-educated middle class families with Western modernist tendencies. I do believe the aspect of privilege could further be investigated if we look into the participants who come from a more traditionalist backgrounds or smaller town contexts. It would be interesting to see how cultural background of the participants from smaller cities and more traditional families could affect the English teachers' sense of feminine and professional selves.

- It would be instructive to do a comparative study on how patriarchal discourses in other Islamic countries of the region can affect female English teachers' sense of self. This kind of comparison between the Iranian context, as an Islamic State versus other Islamic countries of the region whether secular (as in Turkey) or non-secular states could provide more insight into female teachers' sense of self and dominant normative and regulatory discourses in the Islamic World. I do believe much broader perspective can be obtained through this kind of research involving female TESOL academics in similar or completely different context than Iran.
- Another interesting direction for further investigation is applying a similar approach in analyzing male university teachers' experiences and identity formation. Such investigation could prove to be beneficial to gain better understanding of how gender discourses function in construction of teachers' identities. It is interesting to know how male teachers see themselves in this profession. Questions and issues such as the reasons and motivations involved in male teachers' choice of the teaching profession, their evaluation of various aspects of their profession, their actual classroom experiences as well as their views, beliefs and feelings towards their gender and professional roles can be interesting to explore in future investigations.
- Now that I can evaluate the methodological aspect of my work, I believe employing more data collection tools would have been more beneficial. Although, the in-depth interviews and email correspondence proved indispensable in my study, in order to gain better insight into the discourses

that shape teachers' identities, I recommend using classroom observation as well as teachers' diaries as complementary data collection tools. In the future research, these complementary tools alongside the in-depth interviews would make it possible to further examine and explore teachers' inner lives and their classroom practices.

5. Concluding Notes

Now that I have reached the end of the doctoral experience, I can have a better image of the whole thesis process, what I went through at every step of the way, and what were the forces that gave this thesis its present shape.

First I need to address the ironical situation that I found myself in as the researcher of this study. On the one hand, as a doctorate candidate, I needed to write a thesis which must be in accordance with the required academic standards and norms. On the other, the poststructuralist paradigm underpinning my study had enabled me to view a doctorate thesis as an instance of the Foucauldian concept of "claim of Truth" and knowledge-making games. I need to clarify, here, that in doing this research I do not intend to substitute my own truth for another. As Wetherall (2001) rightly points out, "there can be no universal truths or absolute ethical positions"; therefore, the idea of "social scientific investigation as a detached, historical, utopian, truth-seeking process becomes difficult to sustain" (p. 384). This is why it is necessary to avoid viewing the results and interpretations presented within the frame of this study as "new Truths". They should be considered as themes and categories that emerged through an attempt to illuminate the discursive practices at the local level where they are played out (Foucault,

1982, 1980). Like all other doctorate candidates, I have attempted to make claims of knowledge through representation, documentation, and categorization of subjects, in this case, the female Iranian English teachers. In doing so, I have used a knowledge-producing practice that in a Foucauldian perspective is understood as making the individual an object of inquiry through examination (Foucault, 1983). The participants were subjected to research procedures such as confession, examination, categorization that may, as well be interpreted as techniques of power. In this light, the claim of truth and knowledge made by this study, I need to confirm, is the result of an operation of power which is far from objective. Locating my thesis within a poststructuralist analytical paradigm which is complex as well as uncertain, and is based upon a "reflexivity about its own production and its claims to knowledge" (Ball, 1995, p.269), I also find it necessary to explain that the façade of clarity, certainty and simplicity of meaning which might appear to the reader throughout the analyses of the data in this thesis needs to be considered as "illusory. This is a reflection of a reflection, a shadow of shadow.

The other considerable point is that, in storying their lives or giving their account of certain personal experiences or perceptions, the participants in this study not only represented their worlds, they showed how they, themselves, are invented. Listening to my participants' stories, I was taken on a journey that was in many ways a journey of self discovery. Going through their family background, their significant personal and professional choices, the social and cultural circumstances they grew up and have been living in, as well as their professional and institutional experiences, enabled me to see through the haze of dominant discourses that have also impacted and shaped my own sense of self as an Iranian female English

teacher. Looking closely into their narratives, and analyzing their feelings, beliefs and accounts of experiences through a feminist poststructuralist perspective, I became more aware of some of those deeply seated patriarchal and institutional discourses that have moulded my own identities, as well. Therefore, this thesis project that involved eight female Iranian academics turned out to be a journey through the hazy pathways of dominant complex and sometimes contradictory discourses and led to the researcher's life-changing awakening. This journey helped me greatly in reaching a clearer understanding of the forces that are constantly operating to shape me as a women, as an educator, as an English teacher and finally as an Iranian citizen. I came to realize how as Caldron and Smith's (1999) warn us, the external policies "impose greater degrees of uniformity and conformity... restricting the number of potential positions the teacher might assume" (Caldron and Smith, 1999, p.771, quoted by Moore, p.17). At this point, my main concern is how we can escape from the labyrinth of some of these ideologically and culturally constructed subjectivities, and, as a result, finding new pathways to those unknown territories and unseen landscapes that would make a multiplicity of counter discourses accessible. Contrary to certain misconceptions regarding Foucauldian determinism, I do believe we are able to find our ways of resistance to the dominating discourses, and can go beyond our existing assumptions and subjectivities. In order to reach self-awareness, it is necessary to revisit our various subjectivities and try to step outside constraining boundaries of available discourses.

Summary

This chapter is a summary of the findings of the study that also offers the possible implications for teachers, administrators and teacher educators, with the emphasis on the significant need for reconceptualization of the roles, goals, capacities and positions of the female English teachers in the Iranian academy. The contribution of this investigation to the body of knowledge and the areas for further research were also discussed in order to expand and deepen this thesis study. This is definitely not the end of my journey. The flow of the narratives of the participants in this study will hopefully go on and touch the minds and lives of all the teachers from various times and places who will try to weave an understanding of these female English teachers' identities and eventually of their own identities; an understanding that is the essential requirement for any kind of change in the educational landscape.

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Appendix A

Invitation Email

Dear,

Azizam , I would like to invite you to take part in my thesis as one of my research respondents. I am investigating the Iranian female EFL teachers' definition and interpretation of Self. I will also focus on the ways in which the female university teachers engage in the work of creating a sense of identity within the various existing dominant discourses in the context of Iran. The research tools are interview and email correspondence. Please let me know if you agree to participate in it. Your participation will not only help me in my work but it would definitely enrich my data and results.

Please inform me of your decision and hopefully your consent by responding to this email.

See you soon,

Fariba Khoddami

Appendix B

In order to establish a general background, all candidates were sent a questionnaire with questions on familial history, as well as educational and professional backgrounds.

Questionnaire

General Opening:

1. If I may ask, how old are you?
2. Where are you originally from?
3. What is your first language?

Family

4. Are your parents still living? Are they together?
5. Could you tell me something about your parents' educational background?
6. And what type of work do (did) they do?
7. Are you married, single, divorced, or in a relationship?

If you are (were) married:

8. At what age did you get married?
9. Could you tell me about the educational and professional background of your husband?
10. Do you have any children? (if yes) How many? What age?

Education

11. What are your educational credentials?
12. From which universities did you get your degrees?
13. Have you finished any teacher training courses?
14. How and where did you learn English?

Profession

15. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
16. Which higher education institutions have you been teaching in?
17. Where do you teach now?
18. Is it a State university or private sector institution?
19. Do you teach full-time or part-time?

Appendix C

The interview schedule below indicates a wide range of main and subsidiary questions that were used by the interviewer as directives to research-relevant topics for the unstructured interviews.

Interview Guiding Questions

Family

1. Are you married, single, divorced, or in a relationship?
2. What do you see as your role as a wife?
3. Do you see any advantages as being married or single?
4. Have your ideas about marriage changed over time?
5. Who may have been a factor in your thinking?

If you are (were) married:

6. At what age did you get married?
7. How does (did) your husband think about your ideas on marriage?
8. Could you tell me about the educational and professional background of your husband?
9. Do you have any children? (if yes) How many?
10. What were your thoughts about motherhood before your marriage?
11. How do you see your role as a mother?
12. What role do you think your husband should have in parenting with you?
13. What role does he have in parenting with you?
14. How does (did) your husband feel about it?
15. How has your work impacted on your family life?
16. Are your family members happy with your career?
17. Are there any challenging or unresolved dilemmas that you have to face regarding your family life?
18. I would like you to share with me the types of conflicts you feel have developed or could develop as a result of your pursuit of a career and a marriage, specifically with your role as a wife.
19. Have you ever gone through an important change in your thinking about marriage and career conflicts for yourself? Please describe that change. What started you thinking about such questions?
20. Do you describe yourself as a happy woman in doing your roles as a wife or mother?
21. When you were growing up (in elementary or high school) what were your future career dreams or plans?

Education and Profession

22. How did you decide on your major?
23. Did your parents have any plans for your future?
24. How do (did) they feel about your current job?
25. What do you think influenced your choice?
26. Have there been other types of work that you have pursued?
27. Why did you decide not to pursue them?
28. Do you think of changing your job at all?
29. How willing do you think you'll be to change your current job as a language teacher, if something better (by your standard) came along?
30. What might cause you to make such a change?
31. When did you first become interested in teaching English?
32. What does being *a teacher* mean to you?
33. What do you find interesting about teaching English?
34. How would you describe your feelings while you are engaged in teaching?
35. Why do you think you feel that way?
36. How do you describe yourself as a language teacher?
37. Do you have a sense of belonging to your workplace?
38. Are you involved in the life at your workplace or do you isolate yourself?
39. Are there any drawbacks in your present job? If yes, describe them.
40. How do you define your connection with other colleagues (male and female)?
41. How do you define your relation to the administrators?
42. How do you define your relation with your students (male and female)?
43. What are some of your daily challenges as a female English teacher? In relation to your bosses? To your students? And to yourself? Describe any memories of struggle in your work place(s).
44. If you disagree with your university policies, what do you do?

Society

45. Are there equal opportunities for women as in men in your context?
46. How do you think things should be in terms of what women are supposed to be like and what men are supposed to be like?
47. If you could have chosen to be a man or a woman in today's society, which would you be? why?
48. As you think about your activities as a woman in today's society, what would you say is most satisfying or rewarding for you?
49. Is there anything about these activities that you would consider a source of dissatisfaction?
50. What does being *a woman* in Iran mean to you?
51. Was there ever a time when you came to question, to doubt, or perhaps to change your ideas, expectations, and/or behavior about your roles as a woman in this society?

52. Do you feel that you've resolved these questions for yourself, or are you still working on them?
53. [If resolved:] What has helped you to answer these questions?
54. [If not resolved:] How are you going about trying to answer these questions?
55. Do you consider yourself a successful person?
56. What are the qualities in you that make you a successful person?
57. How do you see the present?
58. How do you see the future?
59. What are your fears?
60. What are your hopes?

Appendix D

Interview Transcript Sample

Fariba: Now I am going to talk about the dress code. Is there any dress code in your institution for teachers?

Afsoun: Yes, of course, for women.

F: Tell me a little about the dress code at your institution, please.

A: As you know, there is a dress code for women everywhere in our country. Schools, streets, and all public places. For me, *hejab* and the fact that we have to cover ourselves which I hate, [it] is a big problem. You know what is amazing? I haven't gotten used to it. Each time I leave the house, I wish I didn't have to wear it and when I come back, I start cursing them for forcing me to wear it, every single day! And my *hejab* is not even a proper one.

F: What do you mean?

A: Well, I don't observe the *hejab* completely. It is a loose mantau and a scarf which is not covering all my hair. At work they don't like it, but because they need me, they put up with this.

F: How would you describe their reason?

A: You see, my workplace is half-private [semi-private]. That is why, for instance, I can wear colorful & bright uniforms. My scarf is not also black or other dark colors.

F: Is there any supervision on the dress code?

A: In my workplace, there is a subtle kind of supervision. We don't have the "sisters" who sit at the gate like other universities. But there is an understanding about the dress code and we all know we are being observed.

F: So, in your case, what is it that as you said they put up with? Can you explain please?

A: I told you, my hair is not all covered and I love wearing lighter colors. Also, I like wearing a light make up. Before going to class, I wear a pink lipstick! Just to refresh my students, so when they see me I create a lively, happy atmosphere. Just to send the message that here, this classroom is not like other places, they can be themselves.

F: Do you do this in both male and female classrooms?

A: You mean the lipstick?

F: I mean both the dress code and the makeup.

A: Yes, I wear the same outfit in both classes. I also put on the light pink lipstick. I do that for both male and female classes, but I have a different attitude in my male classes.

F: Can you explain, please?

A: Well. It is very different for me. You cannot express yourself freely in a mixed or boys classroom. You have to be careful with the male students. You have to be rather strict, more serious, more controlling with the male students.

F: Why?

A: Because they don't have the capacity for humour and friendliness, for becoming intimate, you know they take things wrong, wrong impressions of you.

F: What do you mean?

A: They think that they can make friends with you; you know what I mean, in the other way. Although many of them are married. So they take wrong ideas. So you cannot get close to them.

F: Any other reasons?

A: Yes. Male students cannot be controlled easily because they always think they are better in everything, because they have careers, jobs, and responsibilities. Naturally, they don't want to be ruled by a woman in the class. So they don't like it and they want to boss the class but ofcourse I don't let them. I try to show them that it is my class and I am the one who decides what they should do and they don't like it. I am a strong character, and they need to know that. Sometimes, I feel it is like a chance to take revenge for all the other women in our society, if I can.

F: Can you give any example?

A: Yes. Once, I was teaching a training course. I used to teach a class for a top managerial professional development project in a government organization. There was this one male student who was maybe a couple [of] years younger than me, and he was the manager of a... industry, and he was a university professor himself, and had PhD in electrical engineering. He thought that he could control my class and could dictate me what to teach and what to do, but the very second session, very frankly, I told him this is my class not his. He thought that he could control my class and could dictate me what to teach and what to do. But the very second session, very bluntly, I told him this is my class, not his. He didn't like it of course, and the next day I heard that my class was cancelled. After that for 6 months I wasn't given any classes in that place any more, but then all the students got together and they said we don't care if the administration is

going to pay for us or not, we pay by ourselves and they told me they wanted me to teach them. So I started teaching them again but without that guy in the same place.

F: What about female classes?

A: Female classroom? No. Women in Iran are, I think, very nice, and they can easily be given the material, they listen to you, they do their assignments, they follow the instructions. They are good. They are nicer than male students, in general.

F: What about mixed classrooms?

A: I hate mixed classrooms in Iran, because if they are younger boys they think that they have come to a place to have fun, just laugh, [and] find girl friends. You know, because of the political limitations in society, they find a mixed classroom the best place to socialize with girls and find girl friends. So, there cannot be any teaching in those classrooms. If you want to make them happy, you have to follow their rules, and that is not called a classroom. So it is very hard to manage mixed classes here. The quality reduces, because you have to be a strict teacher, and just teach. Most girls are serious and their purpose is studying. Ok, you can manage the class, but if they are like the boys, you have the same problem.

Also, I remember in the past, there were cases when the boys tried to, sometimes, [to] find a difficult question to embarrass me and show off in front of the girls but nowadays no, the cases are very rare. They don't try to trap the teacher any more. I think the general atmosphere has changed. Not anymore. Maybe it is the job problems, financial problems, I don't know. But what is obvious is that, nowadays, all they care about is money, finding a good job. In most cases, I guess, they just want to get a degree.

Appendix E

Email Correspondence Sample

From:@yahoo.com> ☺

-
View Contact

To: Fariba Khoddami <faribakhoddami@yahoo.com>

Dear Fariba,

This is my answer:

I believe no amount of education, training and theoretical knowledge can create a good teacher. It's quite necessary and immensely helpful, of course, to receive all the above mentioned elements, yet a teacher is born by an innate quality and capacity of character which enables him/her establish rapport, create respect, love and trust, arouse eagerness to learn and finally impress students' mind and soul profoundly and permanently.

Let me know if you need more clarification, please.

Best,

--- On **Thu, 1/14/10**, **Fariba Khoddami** <faribakhoddami@yahoo.com> wrote:

From: Fariba Khoddami <faribakhoddami@yahoo.com>

Subject: thesis q. 6

To:

Date: Thursday, Jan 14, 2010, 8:22 AM

Dear ...,

I am so grateful to you for bearing with me and my dull questions!

In our previous discussions, the subject of successful English teacher and the different factors, including training and education came up. I would like you to elaborate a bit more on the factor of training and education in this regard.

Best,

Fariba

Appendix F
CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

If applicable, the information which I give may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....

(Signature of participant)

.....

.....

(Date)

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of Fariba Khoddami

Phone No: Email:

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....
.

OR

.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Appendix G



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

**READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR
COMPUTER** (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).

DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Fariba Khoddami

Your student no: 550013886

Degree/Programme of Study: EdD TESOL

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Salah Troudi

Your email address: **F.Khoddami@exeter.ac.uk**

Tel: 00971 50 330 3815

Title of your project: How Do Iranian Female Teachers Create a Sense of Self

within the Dominant Discourses in the Iranian ELT Context?

Brief description of your research project:

The phenomenon under investigation in this thesis will be the process in which Iranian female ELT teachers' define and interpret Self and gain a sense of identity. Moreover, this study attempts to analyze the ways in which the participants engage in the work of positioning themselves within, between and against the various dominant discourses in their context.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The participants are eight female Iranian ELT teachers who work at state or private higher education institutions in Tehran. Their ages range from 30 to 50 and their teaching experience is from 5 to almost 25 years.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) **a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:**

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference:.....

Signed:.....date:.....

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from

<http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php> then click on On-line documents.