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

Submitted by Fariba Khoddami to the University of Exeter

as a thesis for the degree of

Doctor of Education in TESOL

In January 2011

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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
Acknowledgement

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.

First of all, I am profoundly grateful to all the participants who took their time out of their tremendously busy lives and their various commitments to work with me in this highly collaborative research study. They sincerely shared their innermost feelings, ideas and experiences with me at a time and place that the mere speaking of their struggles and challenges might have jeopardized their profession. Their strength, courage and care as well as their invaluable insights as female EFL professionals have been a great source of inspiration to me.

I would like to acknowledge my supervisor Dr. Salah Troudi who patiently guided me through every step of the thesis process, encouraged me in my days of frustration and restlessness, and was always generous in providing me with invaluable comments and insights. I would like to extend a special thank you to my second supervisor. Dr. Alexandra J. Allan who read my thesis drafts, and contributed greatly with her enlightening comments and insights.

This thesis would not have been possible had it not been for the compassionate support and rigorous encouragement of my friend and mentor Professor Adnan K. Abdulla throughout the entire doctorate years. I gratefully acknowledge his reading
and editing the thesis with care and precision. I am also very grateful to Runak Hamad’s generous support, especially through the final stages of my work.

Finally, my deepest gratitude goes to my parents, Pari Rais Danaie and Dr. Massoud Khoddami, my greatest teachers whose unwavering support and unconditional love have always been the reason for my ongoing enthusiasm and unquenchable zest for life in the face of all adversities. To them I dedicate this thesis.
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## List of Abbreviations

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