

Formulation of Language Teachers' Identity in the Situated Learning of Language Teaching Community of Practice

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Abstract

A community of practice may shape and reshape the identity of members of the community through providing them with situated learning or learning environment. This study, therefore, is to clarify the salient learning-based features of the language teaching community of practice that might formulate the identity of language teachers. To this end, the study examined how learning situations in two communities of practice (English and Arabic) developed the professional identity of language teachers. The results of the semi-structure interviews with 5 language teachers highlighted some differences between English and Arabic language teaching communities of practice in terms of the situated learning activities they provide for language teachers to develop their professional identity. Furthermore, since the community of practice can be considered a potential curriculum that may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access, it would be considered as a main source of identity formation of both English and Arabic language teachers. The findings of the study can be used to better understand the nature of being a professional language teacher in non-native contexts. They have implications for novice and experienced language teachers as well as for teacher educators to review the content of the teacher training courses.

Keywords: Language Teachers' Identity, Situated Learning, Teacher Education Program, Language Teaching Community of Practice

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1. Introduction

Historically, English Language Teachers' Identity (ELTI) has appeared not as a main field of study in sociolinguistics since identity in the past was mainly concerned with language variation to explore solely individual aspects of language speaker (Dyer, 2007). Nowadays, however, sociolinguistics is concerned with the process of identification that is a by-product of the social actions (Omoniyi, 2006). This latter view rejects viewing identity as an end-product which tries to assign individuals into pre-existing categories of identity and rather it tries to support a view that considers identity as produced within social actions. Accordingly, it is possible to say that ELTI is valued from sociolinguistics when the societal factors are explored from process-oriented perspective.

According to Clarke (2008), the concept of 'community of practice' is considered as a theory of learning as well as a theory of identity. So it is best theorized how the learning process and structure in the community of practice may relate to the formulation of identity. The framework of the current study focuses on Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning theory which considers learning as an identification process in the way that "learning involves the construction of identities" (p. 53). As with this framework, English language teachers identify themselves in the language teaching profession through a continuum of learning participations which help them to be and become a member of language teaching community of practice (Clarke, 2008). They develop their professional identity through learning about their environment, social engagement, and co-participation in the community of practice (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). Therefore, this study focuses on how ELTI develops within the structure of group practice and how a

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language teacher passes through a learning process to become a member of the language teaching community of practice.

2. Review of Literature

The importance of community of practice can be best described by Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning. That is because of the attention that the community of a practice model has given to the role of learning in shaping the communities. Accordingly, learning can be considered as "engine of practice" and a "source of social structure" (Wenger, 1998, p.96). Lave and Wenger define a "community of practice" as a "set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (1991, p. 98). From the sociolinguistic perspective, a community of practice creates social interactions by which preferred actions and practices shape the mindsets of participants. Participants learn how to talk and behave from the community of practice (Preece, 2006).

Clarke (2008) introduced dimensions of a community of practice as mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. These dimensions shed light on the language teaching community of practice in the way that a language teaching community involves shared practices and activities (mutual engagement) "whose meanings are negotiated among participants" (p. 30), common focus on subjects that link members of a community of practice, and "the common resources for creating meaning that result from engagement in joint enterprise" (p. 31). Accordingly, within a community of practice new meanings are produced which, in turn, participants learn the created meanings through participation in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This learning may shape and reshape participants' identity.

The early definition of identity as a social practice might date back to the 1960s when stages of identity such as ego identity, identity crisis, and identity group were introduced (Erikson, 1968). However, interaction between identity and SLA was discussed seriously after the publication of Firth and Wagner in 1997 (Block, 2007). In their article, they opened up language learning and teaching to the theories from social theory and sociology including identity. Then, conducting research on the relationship between SLA and identity turned into a major trend of study. However, since there is vagueness in identity definition (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004), it lacks a universal theoretical framework upon which researches can be established.

It is possible to say that professional identity has mostly been explored from general education theories rather than English Language Teaching (ELT) and what Beijaard et al. (2004) introduced as “a separate research area” (p. 108) in professional identity was teacher identity from teacher education in general rather than a teacher education in applied linguistics. Therefore, English teachers’ professional identity has recently emerged as an area of research and, accordingly, relatively little attention has been paid to language teacher identity (Clarke, 2008; Varghese et al., 2005).

Drawing on the work of Britzman (1991), Clarke (2008, p. 8) distinguished two interpretations of language teacher identity: first; “being the teacher” that is learning the skills and knowledge to perform the functions of a teacher and second “becoming a teacher” that is developing a sense of oneself as a teacher. According to these interpretations, Clarke claimed that learning to teach means “becoming” a teacher rather than “learning” techniques and skills. The implication of this idea is that teacher education programs are for *identifying* teacher rather than getting new skills and knowledge (Mayer, 1999).

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In a similar work, Varghese et al. (2005) introduced the ways in which language teacher professional identity can be theorized. They outlined three predominant themes in understanding language teacher identity and listed four substantive areas of research on teacher professional identity. To paraphrase them, language teacher identity is “multiple, shifting, and in conflict; related to social, cultural, and political contexts; and is being constructed, maintained, and negotiated primarily through discourse” (p. 35). Accordingly, language teacher identity is considered as being individual, psychological, social, process-oriented (discoursal), and a real-world phenomenon. It might affect teachers' position in the community (e.g., marginalization) or their working conditions. Identity might also affect the classroom discourse since it is discoursal and psychological.

The social dimension of teacher professional identity was also examined from cultural perspectives. Duff and Uchida (1997), for example, conducted a study on teachers' sociocultural identities in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms. They examined professional, social, and cultural roles of English language teachers. According to this study, identity is not context-free but interlocutors, institutional settings, and so on influence on the ways English language teachers perceive and interpret themselves and, as a result, identity affects their choices and strategies of professional development and the way they get involved in the profession of teaching community. Buzzelli and Johnston (2002) also found a similar aspect of language teacher identity. They introduced concepts of ‘assigned identity’ and ‘claimed identity’ that the former imposed on by others and the latter acknowledged or claimed for by someone for his/herself. The consequence of these findings affords some insights into the quality of teaching as well as the role of identity on professional development.

Some studies introduced quality of teaching and professional development as important factors influencing teacher professional identity since they are considered as indicators of measurement of teaching performance (Alsup, 2006; Battey & Franke, 2008; Bailey, Curtis & Nunan, 2001; Connell, 2009). Although these studies were mostly conducted on teaching profession in general, the findings can be generalized to language teaching and language teacher identity as well. In other words, language teachers are required to be consistent with the standards of teaching enacted by profession community in general and language learning institutions and universities in particular.

The relationship between identity construction and pedagogic activities in the classroom was investigated by Richards (2006). He believed that classroom interaction and exchange had to be analyzed in terms of identity rather than mechanical structures such as IRF. Richards proposed Zimmerman's model of identity (Zimmerman, 1998; cited in Richards, 2006) -discourse identity, situated identity, transportable identity- for analysis of communication in the classroom. Accordingly, he suggested that it is necessary to introduce the transportable identity in the language classroom since it has "the power to transform the sort of interaction that takes place in the classroom" (p. 72).

Findings of some other studies could implicitly stress teachers' professional identity construction. Todd and Pojanapunya (2009), for example, investigated attitudes of the learners toward the native and non-native English speaking teachers and found that learners in China showed explicit preferences for native speaker teachers. This aspect of language teachers' professional identity (i.e., nativeness) also stressed by Hayes (2009) in the context of educational system in Thai. He found that the primary professional identity for language teachers in Thai was teaching as a career teacher within their own societies

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rather than internationally. Non-native language teachers' problems, their perceptions, and challenges were also collected in L1urda (2009).

The individual aspect of professional identity was highlighted in some studies. Language teachers can enhance their professional identity with a continuous involvement in individual progress. In a study Tajeddin and Teimournezhad (2014) suggested that identity awareness has to be a part of cultural awareness content in teacher education programs. As a result, identity awareness is a responsibility for teacher educators rather than an individual process (Tajeddin & Khodarahmi, 2013).

Exploring professional identity of language teachers in the Iranian EFL context has also brought about some unique conceptions. For example, self-efficacy, self-regulated professional development, and intrinsic job motivation shape EFL teachers professional identity positively (Tajeddin & Khodarahmi, 2013). Tafazoli and Jafari (2013) showed that teachers' perception of professional identity differ significantly from the early days of experiencing language teaching as a prospective teacher. In other words, language teachers perceive their identity as a process in flux and like a pendulum swinging back and forward. Teachers' agency and how it can be manipulated to change professional identity has been examined by Zolghadri and Tajeddin (2013). Construction of professional identity in the EFL context is also influenced by language teachers' colleagues as well as their previous teachers. It was revealed that language teachers follow and imitate some characteristics of their teachers who taught them in the past (Ghasedi, 2013).

These studies show that identity development and its influence on professional development is as important as language skills for language teachers. But few of the above-mentioned studies focus exclusively on the language teaching profession as a community of practice which underscores the

role of situated learning. Although the life story of language teachers can clarify the extent to which they can identify themselves with language teaching profession, this identification process seems to be more related to the situated learning such as teacher training programs and teacher education experiences. The situated learning concept has not been focused on as a research agenda in many of identity studies and, therefore, most of the research findings lack the sociolinguistics perspective of identity exploration. Therefore, the current study is an effort to clarify the role of context and community of practice on EFL teachers' identity with emphasizing on how situated learning might formulate identification processes through the comparison of English and Arabic language teaching communities of practice. It is to find how different communities of practice (English-Arabic) might formulate language teachers' identity through the situated learning happened to them.

3. Research Questions

The following questions form a framework for data collection:

1. How does learning situation in language teaching profession contribute to formulating English language teachers' identity?
2. How differently does the development of learning in the communities of practice shape English language teachers' identity from Arabic language teachers' identity?

4. Method

4.1. Participants

Sample of the study was EFL and Arabic language teachers. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Best & Khan, 2006). Three EFL

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teachers and two Arabic teachers teaching language for at least 5 years in academic or institutional contexts were selected. They were both male and female (4 males and 1 female) teachers with various background information and experiences. The participants were mostly interviewed in a face-to-face interaction and sometimes through online communication.

5.2. Procedures and Instrumentation

After sampling, the participants were invited for interview sessions which lasted between 20 to 35 minutes. Since Weinreich (2003) necessitated interviewing participants with native language, interview sessions were conducted in native language. Questions were planned according to the similar studies reviewed from the literature (e.g., Fraser, 2011) as well as through expert judgments (Appendix 1). All the questions of tape-recorded interview sessions were designed to find those features of identity which language teachers found as effective features in foreign language learning contexts. They also reported how this identity-making process might be changed in institutionalized settings of language learning. These reports were narrative constructions of the meaning of identity perceived in situated learning contexts by the participants. At the end, language teachers were asked to remember at least 5 critical events happened to them in the learning situation which affected their professional identity. Although the interviews were pre-planned in terms of the concepts of professional identity, the participants had a free and open discussion about topics they wished to discuss.

5.3. Data Analysis

The sociolinguistic interviews were examined through an in-depth analysis in order to find related and reemerging themes. The framework of analysis was Varghese et al. (2005) by which the identification process in language teachers could be analyzed according to 3 general categories including continuum of participation, level of access, and motivation. Since motivation needed an extensive discussion and study, two other categories adopted as the main frameworks of analysis. These frameworks, then, adapted to the situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991) which explained how language teaching as a community of practice might formulate ELTI. Lastly, the themes and processes of identification were compared between community of ELT and Arabic language teaching in a way compatible with macro-sociolinguistics (Mullany, 2006) to find how the learning-life stories in the professional workplace context in these two communities might formulate identity differently.

6. Results

How does learning situation in language teaching profession contribute to formulate English language teachers' identity?

The extracts from participants (see Appendix 2) showed that how the English language community of practice was shaped in the context of this study. The themes identified here showed that how they might shape and reshape a language teacher's professional identity in this community (figure 1).

Learning stories of the first participant illustrated that an English language teacher was required to have academic degrees and know the routes of getting certificates in order to have access to language community of practice and to

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learning participation in this community. He is identified with the academic knowledge even in non-academic language learning communities. This requirement is also underscored when someone is attended at conferences and interview sessions as a language teacher volunteer.

In some cases, legitimacy to participation in language teaching came from the sociopolitical structure of the educational systems. For example, language teachers graduated from state universities identified differ from their counterparts in non-state universities. Another example is identifying language teachers with some international certificates such as IELTS and TOEFL which let a novice language teacher get involved with and has access to the language teaching community of practice.

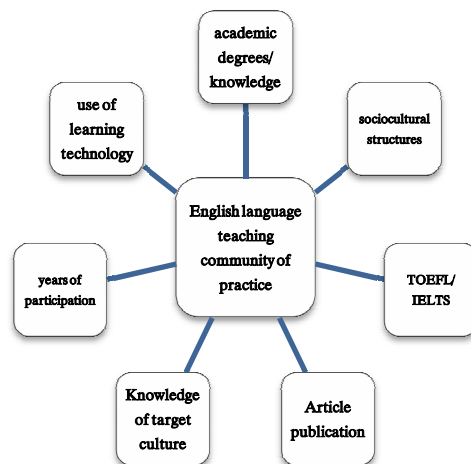


Figure 1. Themes of Shaping ELT Community of Practice in Iran

Participants also referred to the publication of articles in established journals as a way for access to knowledge and, in particular, how knowledge is circulated in the community of practice of language teaching. This access, then, contributes to be identified as a professional language teacher. In the continuum of learning participation, years of participation also played a key role in the identification of a person as a language teacher among the

community of practice. This participation was mainly through language teaching although the participant referred to other forms of activities.

The themes that emerged from the life-story of the second participant also intensified access to knowledge from the academic contexts. Although not explicitly, the second participant referred that this access happened to him from the university. He criticized the pre-university system of education in terms of the fact that access to participation and knowledge almost started from university. This reference also intensifies the role of the sociopolitical structure of teaching English in the community of practice. This structure insisted that it was the academic context that conveyed the ELTI as a message to the community of practice. A language teacher, for example, who graduated from ministry of education couldn't be relied on in terms of having the enough knowledge of language teaching.

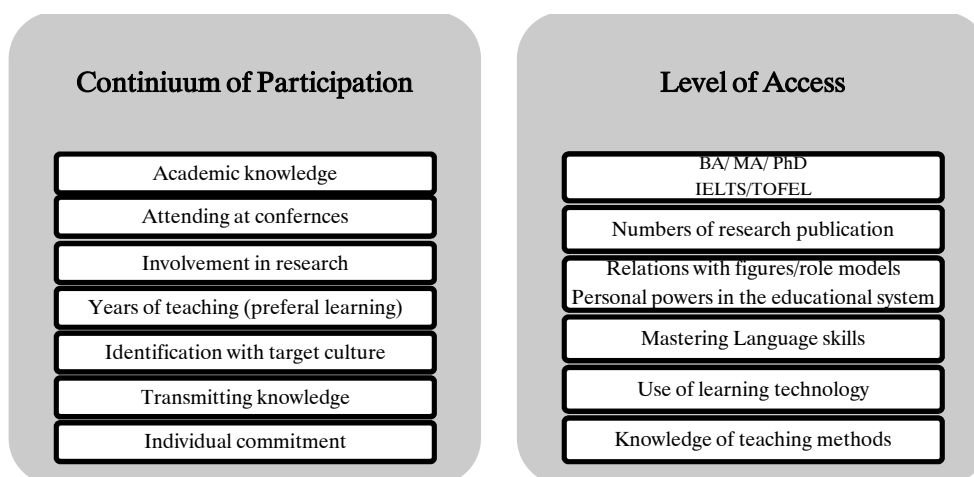


Figure 2. Themes of Formulating Identity in the ELT Community of Practice

The story of the second participant also stressed that the language of the participation in language teaching community of practice includes the language of culture in the way that a language teacher should learn from the culture of

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the target language to access the knowledge of language teaching and becoming a language teacher. This narration also underscored the ways of transmitting knowledge as well as peripheral learning and participation. The stories of this participant indicated that this transmission occurred through watching films and animations from other cultures. However, this participant recognized the role of understanding technology specifically computer skills in becoming a language teacher. This narration could also best describe the significance of artifacts and its transparency in becoming a language teacher. He believed in getting knowledge from books and journal as a way of access to participation and in this way confirmed having the abstract knowledge of language teaching. He, however, added the role of acquiring the knowledge of psychology on becoming a language teacher. Accordingly, it is possible to say that the genre of participation in the language teaching community of practice includes the genre of psychology that in turn is a form of access to knowledge. Moreover, the participant emphasized intentional relations with other professionals. These professionals are considered as key elements in access to participation and access to knowledge. He exclusively stressed the role of role models in becoming a language teacher.

The third participant added some other factors to the previous comments. She supported the integration of concrete knowledge with procedural knowledge or knowledge-in-practice that the community of practice creates and proposes to language teachers. Therefore, it is possible to say that language teachers formulate their professional identity through peripheral participation in the formal teaching activities (concrete knowledge) as well as ways of instruction that are currently used in the community of practice.

Another point here is that formulating identity in this community of practice is an individualized process. This participant also referred to the role

of the figures in creating and circulating teaching knowledge in the community of practice. It is generally believed that there are some people in the language teaching community of practice who can change or affect the processes of becoming a language teacher. These figures can be native or non-native language authors and scholars and those, for example, attend at conferences.

From these results, it is possible to divide findings into two groups of themes. One showed how language teachers tried to develop their identity in the ELT community of practice through participating in this community and, second, how they can access to the knowledge required for their development (figure 2).

The views and comments from Arabic language teacher showed almost different themes (see Appendix 3). These participants indicated that Arabic language teachers' professional identity was interwoven with the knowledge from out of the community of practice. They can perceive themselves as professional language teachers if they are able to discuss the present issues and dilemmas from the sociopolitical structure and environment. This means that an Arabic language teacher tries to equip himself/herself with necessary information about Arabic topics currently discussed by the Arabic world rather than getting information from the Arabic language teaching community of practice.

The first participant even referred to the structural knowledge of Arabic language as 'traditional' knowledge that is not valued by language teachers. The implications of these statements might be that access to participation in the community of practice comes from learning from out of this community, mainly through intentional relations with people from out of the community. The participant mentioned that the situated learning of the educational system supported the inapplicable traditional knowledge of the language. He

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explained how Arabic language teachers thought and behaved in traditional ways. The intentional relations of an Arabic language teacher are mostly with the colleagues and professionals from abroad and out of the language community of the practice.

Results from the participants stressed the fact that there is a lack of any formal learning programs pre-planned for Arabic language teachers by the community of practice. The second participant said that he acquired his knowledge of language teaching through the philosophy of education inherited in Arabic and Islamic texts. For example, there are a lot of related subjects about language teaching methods in the letters that Imam Ali (the first Shiites Imam) issued for his followers. Therefore, it is possible to say that it is the access of participation through years of teaching English that help an Arabic language teacher how to teach although participants referred to attending at conferences and using internet as sources of access to knowledge (table 1)

Table 1. Themes of the Situated Learning in Arabic Language Teaching

Community of Practice

Arabic community of practice	Continuum of participation	Level of access to knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Political knowledge rather than language knowledge -Religious knowledge -Personal teaching experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Involvement in political environment -Religious studies -Attending at conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relations with other communities of practice -Relations with figures from non-language teaching community of practices -Traditional Arabic language knowledge -Access to the internet -Religious knowledge

How differently does the development of learning in the community of practices shape English language teachers' identity from Arabic language teachers' identity?

Continuum of participation: The two communities of practice become distinct in terms of individual relations of the participants within the community. ELT community of practice does facilitate in-group communications between participants and therefore enhancing learning from other participants. Arabic language teaching community, however, encourage out-group participation in the way that language teacher learn from the people that are not member of the language teaching community of practice. Moreover, learning in the Arabic language teaching community of practice is more individualized than English language teaching community of practice (table 2).

Access to knowledge: First, knowledge in the Arabic community of practice is more concrete than English community and sometimes come from the sources out of the learning situation of the community of practice such as getting knowledge from Islamic texts or referring to the language teaching books written for ELT. Second, access to knowledge is more convenient in ELT community of practice as distinct from Arabic language teaching community of practice. In other words, language teacher educators in the English community of practice encounter more learning sources than Arabic ones. As far as peripheral learning is concerned, the paucity of learning activities in the Arabic community of practice implies that peripheral participation has not been paid attention to. Third, both of the communities intensify the role of artifacts and technology in access to knowledge about language teaching. They also stressed the sociopolitical factors of the both communities in circulation of knowledge in the community although the Arabic community claimed the explicit agenda

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of the English language community and marginalization of the Arabic community (table 2).

Table 2. ELT Community of Practice vs. Arabic Language Teaching Community of Practice

Community of practice	English community of practice	Arabic community of practice
Continuum of participation	-In-group participation	-Out-group participation
	-Less individualization	-More individualization
Access to knowledge	-Procedural knowledge	-Concrete knowledge
	-Language-related source of knowledge	-Non-language related source of knowledge
	-More peripheral participation	-Less peripheral participation

7. Discussion and Conclusion

It can be concluded from the results that, in EFL and Arabic language teaching contexts, both Arabic and English language teachers try to formulate their identities based on the university contexts. This finding also was supported by Connolly (2002, cited in Clarke, 2008) who stated that language teachers' participation in the language teaching community of practice required education in academic contexts.

Although both communities of practice intensify the years of participation in language teaching community, this participation starts from learning at universities, and academic licenses are prerequisites for legitimacy to participation in the community. A difference, however, is that the English language teachers reformulate and reshape their identity after graduation from university more than the Arabic language teachers since they encounter more learning situations. It seems that there is no stable and definable community of

practice for Arabic language teachers in the context of Iran. In the Arabic community of practice there is a low attention to the teaching methods and the criteria is the concrete knowledge of the language teachers including fluency in speaking Arabic language.

These two communities are in contrast from the perspective of discourse features such as role models. Both participants from English community of practice insisted that their past language teachers have influenced their becoming a language teacher. This imaginative dimension of identity (Wenger, 1998) is perhaps the most obvious perception of the 'self' among English language teachers rather than Arabic language teachers. These inspirational models (ideal teachers) are created in the life story of the students (language teachers) mostly because students compare them with other teachers.

The sociopolitical perspective of the communities of practice plays an important role in language teaching community. First of all, EFL teachers mostly refer to Teacher Training Courses (TTC) as a fundamental issue shaped their professional identity. TTC in EFL context is a training period that is being hold by each institutes no matter language teachers are professional or being novices. It is intended to harmonize teaching activities along with the goals of the institute which has the upper hand over language teachers' agency. As a result, language teachers get a kind of assigned identity (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2002) imposed by language institutes. Although TTC seems to be necessary, Arabic teachers believe that no institute or formal educational system plan TTC programs for Arabic language teachers. It might be a result of the relational power of language status in the EFL context of Iran caused in general by the international hegemony of ELT.

Taken together, in the communities of practice that were analyzed in this study, what shapes and formulates the 'self' of language teachers is learning

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from the environment rather than learning from teaching. In other words, “the more basic phenomenon is learning” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 91) in the local community of practice rather than learning from an international perspective. This is confirmed by situated learning theory. This learning, in ELT community, comes mostly from the academic context, teaching experiences, and teaching training courses held by the educational system. These patterns, however, is not applicable to Arabic language teaching community of practice. In fact there is no real Arabic language teaching community of practice since in the context of this study the dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire as features of a community of practice are violated. Accordingly, a good Arabic language teacher is someone with enough social knowledge rather than teaching knowledge.

The conclusion here is that if learning is created through communities of practice, it can be considered as a potential “curriculum” in the broadest sense that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 93). Within this curriculum, there are some learning activities that shape the professional identity of the participants. As a result, language teacher try to be in harmony with the community of practice through access to these learning activities which can shape their identity in compatible with the whole enterprise. Therefore, it is suggested that the practitioners involved in conducting learning activities in the language teaching community of practice such as language policy makers develop a learning community which can contribute the development of a view of what the whole enterprise is about among language teacher educators. This community should situate learning activities in the way that language teachers formulate their professional identity enlightened by the principles of critical pedagogy (Pennycook, 1990).

From the perspectives of macro-sociolinguistics (Omoniyi & White, 2006), it is also suggested to examine communities of practice in terms of the significance of mutual engagement for development of harmony-without uniformity- between members of the communities.

Since almost all language teachers' ideas about professional identity and its components come from their academic experiences, it is suggested that the responsibility of professional development put on the teacher educators at universities to acquaint language-teacher students with new ideas from professional identity.

The identity transformation from individuation to an "open-ended, adaptive, and intercultural identity" (Kim, 2012, p. 89) requires a new form of professional identity. This identity should enable language teachers to preserve their own ideas and tolerate institutional factors while being critical toward the assigned identities from educational system. Imitating past teachers as role models by language teachers imply that language teachers' identity is a kind of 'cultural identity' (Erikson, 1950) in EFL context which language teachers imitate to be identified within the in-group ELT profession. This imitation might create ethnocentric views in EFL teachers which in turn impede critical thinking notion in both novice teachers and educational system. Therefore, it is suggested that professional identity inserted in teacher education programs to increase self-awareness as well as multiple views among language teachers and empower novice teachers to view their role models as critical as possible.

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Formulation of Language Teachers' Identity...

Appendices

Appendix 1: Semi-structure Interview Questions

The following questions were the introductory questions in each interview session that conducted the structure of the interview. Wherever possible, the complementary questions were asked to add more information to the answers.

- A. How is, do you think, a language teacher considered as a professional language teacher in the context of language teaching in Iran?
- B. What are the 5 learning events do you perceive as critical in your learning-life situations that affected your professional identity?
- C. How differently do you perceive yourself as an advance language teacher compare with the early days of teaching as a novice?

Appendix 2: Extracts Transcribed from Interviews with EFL Teachers

(Note: the blanks relate to unrelevant parts of the sentences or statements)

Hosein: when I passed the university entrance exam (Konkor) I really perceived that I'm a language teacher.... A language teacher should have an academic degree, at least BA, in one of the language learning majors... A MA/PhD holder is ...Having IELTS and TOEFL licenses... If I were teaching English at [referring to one of the universities in Iran] University, I could be a more professional teacher... The publication of my first article...According to my opinion, a professional teacher must have several years of teaching English... Teaching English is a long-life process. A professional language teacher acquires skill of teaching over years of teaching English

Ali: ... watching films, animations... We can't separate language knowledge from cultural knowledge.... In our country English language is not taught effectively, unfortunately. In the countries such as India or Pakistan language learning starts from elementary school.... A language teacher who works in ministry of education system doesn't pay attention to the method of language teaching... A language teacher learns from books, journals, magazines to find knowledge about newly-proposed language teaching methods, teaching psychology as well as vocabularies...A language teacher is actually a psychologist and has to make a good rapport with language learners... I owe a debt of gratitude to two ex-professors of mine...Learning from internet, having computer skills and using multimedia helped me very well...

Fatemeh:...use of the internet, films, and CDs to improve your skills... getting knowledge from your teaching methods in the classroom... knowledge of teaching methods from the books and knowledge that we acquire from teaching experiences... participation in teaching training courses such as TESOL... There are some people in language teaching who we can rely on them...

Appendix 3: Extracts Transcribed from Interviews with Arabic Language Teachers

(Note: the blanks relate to irrelevant parts of the sentences or statements)

Mohammadreza: Arabic language teaching requires an up-to-date knowledge acquires mostly through viewing the latest news networks broadcasting in Arabic language...there are some language knowledge questions that even our language teachers cant reply...if a language teacher relied solely on the traditional books that are published in the textbook market of Iran to get his/her knowledge, he/she could not be able to be a good language teacher since the subjects that are asked from language teacher [in the classroom] are from what's happening in the social world of Arabic countries...Structural knowledge (Sarf-va-Nahv) is traditional and out of date... what I perceived as a language teaching in the early days is totally different from today because of learning from the academic environment at the beginning... I found that it was the fault of learning that the educational system had given to me... the current situation of Arabic language teaching is completely traditional... When we go to the foreign textbook market, we perceive that this is the market of ELT and learning as if we walk in the London streets...I use the sources of language teaching prepared by natives for natives and non-natives language teacher since there is no alternatives for an Arabic language teacher in the context of language teaching in Iran. I participated and learned from language teaching conferences and seminars.

Hassan: since Arabic is the language of religion, learning from the religious ideas and worldviews affect me how to teach. Religious sources have contributed me to shape my identity as a language teacher in the way how I communicate and teach in the classroom... learning experiences teach us how to teach language... I believe a language teacher has to learn about philosophy of education... I took part in many conferences... most of the time I use internet how I teach...