

CULTURE & IDENTITY CHANGE AMONG IRANIAN EFL TEACHERS

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Abstract: Learning English means crossing the boundaries of one's home culture into a foreign culture – a challenging cross-cultural experience influencing one's home culture attachment. Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL teachers) are products of degrees of identity conflict experienced while learning English. The major aims of this study were to investigate, firstly, to what extent EFL teachers have preserved their home culture, and secondly, whether and how six demographic factors, namely, age, length of being bilingual, knowing other languages, length of teaching experience, gender, and marital status can influence their home culture attachment. To this end, a previously constructed and validated home culture dependency questionnaire was administered to a sample of 342 Iranian EFL teachers from more than 25 private language schools in Mashhad, a city in the northeast of Iran. Finally, the statistical results were discussed and implications were provided in the context of English language teaching.

Key Words: Culture; EFL learners; EFL teachers; Home culture attachment; Identity change

INTRODUCTION

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

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

Along with learning a second language, a second identity is internalized; that is, the learner's worldview, self-identity, and ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and communicating can be disorganized by a new culture contact (Brown, 2007). Though, in EFL learning, the identity conflict is not as severe as in English as a second language (ESL) learning, it still gives learners a chance to critically examine their home culture. Language learning, as a reflexive process, intends to help students achieve new perspective on their own society (Osler & Starkey, 2000) and look at different aspects of their home culture with fresh eyes (Gao, 2008) and helps them critically discover what was previously taken for granted as good or bad, interesting or boring in their society. This is the point where individuals' different historical, social and cultural backgrounds determine the strength of their home culture dependency (Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011). They may appreciate or depreciate their own cultural values after such a cultural contact and subsequent reflection.

The role of EFL teachers and textbooks is of high importance in shaping EFL learners' perspectives on their home culture and language, their views of the target culture and language, and their stances on the continuum between the two points. Canagarajah (1999) insightfully warned EFL teachers of imposing a foreign value system on their learners at the cost of bringing them a common language. In our study, we addressed EFL teachers who are products of degrees of identity conflict experienced while learning English. We have attempted to extend the recent conceptual and empirical work in this area by investigating the extent of EFL teachers' home culture attachment, and examining six demographic factors' influences on their home culture attachment in the context of private language schools.

Theoretical Framework

Language teachers' attitudes towards culture have sharply changed since 1950 (Nostrand, 1988), from cultural sterility (Allen, 1985) to an organized and systematic understanding and appreciation of the foreign culture incorporated both in class activities and tests (Chastain, 1988) which could be regarded as the fifth dimension of language learning (Damen, 1987; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Tomalin & Stempleski, 1994). Advances in pragmatics and sociolinguistics (Levinson, 1983) resulted in bridging the cultural gaps in language teaching in 1980's and 1990's (Valdes, 1986). Rosaldo (1984) noted that personhood, identity, culture, and language are interwoven constructs in the social setting. Recognizing the inseparable link between language and culture led language teachers to believe that one will not teach language without implicitly teaching culture (Higgs, 1990).

Robinson-Stuart and Nocon (1996, cited in Brown, 2007, p. 194) observed some people wrongly suppose that culture learning can be achieved automatically alongside language learning as a "magic carpet ride to another culture". Although culture is "always in the background, right from day one" (Kramsch, 1993, p.1), what could be implicitly learned is merely several target language (TL) cultural features without acquiring sensitivity and awareness or even how to behave in certain situations. Kramsch, Cain, and Murphy-Lejeune (1996, cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1997) have stated several reasons why bother focusing on culture overtly in classroom when it is covertly interwoven with language. Explicit culture teaching enables learners to understand how to use TL to accept difference, to be flexible and tolerant of ways of doing things which might be different to theirs. It is an attitudinal change expressed through the use of language.

Languages develop in a cultural setting. In the case of the English language which is spoken as the native language in many countries, the problem arises whose culture EFL educators should be prepared to teach and to what extent. Even in one country there is a variety of cultures let alone in so many countries of "the inner circle" and "the outer

circle” (Kachru, 1985), all claiming English – “World Englishes” (Kachru, 1992,1985; Kachru, 2005; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; McArthur, 2001; McKay, 2002). However, in the context of globalization, English is increasingly associated with a global identity, rather than that of a target nation. In this regard, “L2 learning and identity work is freed from integration in the target culture” (Gao, 2010, p. 7).

Interest in identity and language learning extends to the early 1980s (Norton, 2008). Norton (1997, 2000) considers language learning as an identity construction process – that is, whenever language learners speak, they exchange information and at the same time organize and reorganize a sense of who they are and how they are socially related to the world around them. Thus, they construct and negotiate their identity. Following West (1992), Norton (1997) has asserted that who a person is (one’s identity) is related to one’s desires for recognition, affiliation, and security which are, in turn, related to one’s access to material resources in society, and hence, to one’s access to social power and privileges, and eventually to what one can do (future possibilities). While West (1992) relates a person’s identity changes with changing material relations of power, and Bourdieu (1977) relates identity and symbolic power, Weeden (1987) relates language, individual experience, and social power in a theory of subjectivity. Subjectivity and language are considered as fundamental to the nature of each other (Norton, 1997).

The sociocultural view (Hinkel, 2005, p.891) reveals how language helps “the formation of identity and culture within the social contexts and the politics of power” as well as “how cultural identity is continually threatened by economic, political, and power-balance insecurities”. Bourdieu (1977) mentioned that there is a relationship between identity and symbolic power and that an “expanded definition of competence” should include the “right to speak” or “the power to impose reception” (p. 75), which is exactly the point where language learners do not feel comfortable, because while being taught English, their inferior position as an English speaker has been pointed out, though often implicitly. If learners of English cannot claim ownership of the language, they might never consider themselves as legitimate speakers of it (Bourdieu, 1977). They might always confront “with processes of Othering , ... feel like an ‘imposter’, an illegitimate speaker of English, mainly because of their local ‘accent’ - their voice not being heard as an ‘authentic English voice’” (Bourdieu, 1991, cited in Lin, Wang, Akamatsu, and Riazi, 2002, p. 310).

The notion of “investment” (Norton Peirce, 1995), inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1977), represents learner’s desire and commitment to learn a language, which is socially and historically influenced by the relationship of learners to the speakers of the TL. Investing in the TL, learners look for a wider range of symbolic and material resources to further increase the value of their cultural capital (Norton Peirce, 1995). Notion of instrumental motivation assumes learners to have unitary, fixed, and ahistorical personalities, while the notion of investment assumes them to have complex identities, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction; thus, investing in the TL is investing in the learner’s own identity (Norton & Gao, 2008). While learners make attempts to develop the command of a new language/culture, they simultaneously develop their own new identities.

Among the three ways of belonging to a community (engagement, imagination, and alignment) (Wenger, 1998), those who belong to the same community through “imagined community” are “groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of the imagination” (cited in Kanno & Norton, 2003, p. 241). Norton (2001, 2006; Norton Pierce, 1995) stated that language learners belong to their desired community through “imagination” (Wenger,1998) where their future dreams may come true and they can gain L2/FL mastery as a kind of “cultural capital” to provide them with the “symbolic capital” (Bourdieu,1977) required to realize their “imagined identity”. The pain required for such a gain is to “invest” efforts (Norton Peirce, 1995), in learning English in order to achieve an internationally impressive career without wishing to become members in British or American culture – no integration in the target culture (Gao, 2010). Kanno & Norton (2003) suggested that these imagined communities are quite real and probably even more effective on learners’ present investment than communities immediately accessible (engagement). Although the empirical support of Norton’s theory is mostly from ESL contexts, the idea of “imagined community” can also explain EFL learning and identity in the context of globalization (Gao, 2010). Since English is the language of globalization, EFL learners desire the membership of an “imagined global community” rather than the integration with a target culture community (Ryan, 2006). Approvingly, Dornyei, Csizer and Nemeth (2006) have asserted that bicultural identity is derived from local culture and global culture associated with English.

In traditional models on language learning and identity, identity changes are limited to the result of interaction between identities of the “native culture” and “target culture”; however, this dichotomy encounters challenges in the context of globalization and postmodernism. To meet these challenges, Gao (2010)’s revisited models have

suggested certain types of *relations* between different group identities associated with different *linguistic varieties*. The linguistic varieties in identity work include dialects, styles, registers, etc. in communicative practice (discourses); they are not limited to “language” as narrowly defined (Gao, 2010). She has emphasized that from a constructivist perspective, imagined identities do have psychological reality involving stable behavioral investment. In other words, cultures may exist as imagined communities, in learners’ subjective apprehension actually influencing their conducts. The culture cores and distinct cultural boundaries are recognized in the subjective domain of identity formation; nevertheless, complexity, fluidity, and dynamism are also believed in (Gao, 2010). In this regard, bilingual/multilingual identities are dynamic processes.

The major theoretical models of bilingual identities are presented below together with their reframed and expanded versions in the context of globalisation:

Traditional Model: Subtractive bilingualism – L2/FL is learned at the cost of L1, and target culture (C2) assimilation threatens to substitute values and life styles of the native culture (C1) (Lambert, 1974).

Revisited Model: Subtractive Identity Change (1-1=1) – One identity associated with a certain linguistic variety is replaced by another identity associated with a different linguistic variety (Gao, 2010).

Although subtractive change is often found among immigrants in a country where the L2 is the country’s native language, it may also occur when, for instance, an Iranian student from a remote village goes to a big city and replaces his/her dialect and identity with those of a young metropolitan individual. Furthermore, subtractive bilingualism is the very type of bilingualism which leads to destroying native languages and cultures by the imperialistic effect of the spread of English (Brown, 2007; Canagarajah, 1999). Similarly, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) warned of Iranian EFL learners’ “cultural derichment”, a coined term which means that teaching English language and culture could lead to Iranian learners’ gradual loss of home culture due to lack of mutual respect as an essential prerequisite for the dialog between the cultures (Bakhtin, 1986). Seemingly, mutual respect between the two cultures is absent in some Iranian EFL teachers’ classrooms, where Iranian culture is depreciated by appreciating English culture. Pishghadam and Kamyabi (2009) noted that the more native-like accent EFL learners try to acquire, the less home culture attachment they preserve. Approvingly, both in TESOL and the broader educational community, a frequently asked question has been whether TESOL educators are unintentionally strengthening Western cultural hegemony, and weakening the cultural and linguistic resources of people in different parts of the world (Kachru, 1990; Lowenberg, 1993; MacPherson, 1997; Ndebele, 1987; Ngugi wa Thiong’o, 1986; Peirce, 1989; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson & Skutnabb Kangas, 1996; Swales, 1997; Tollefson, 1991; Widdowson, 1994).

Traditional Model: Additive bilingualism – L1 and C1 identity are maintained while L2 and C2 identity are acquired. The two co-exist and function in different communicative situations (Lambert, 1974).

Revisited Model: Additive Identity Change (1+1=1/2+1/2) – Two (or more) identities associated with different linguistic varieties co-exist in one’s linguistic and identity repertoire, and have respective roles to play in different communicative situations or for different purposes (Gao, 2010). This is the case with Iranians whose mother tongues are minority languages in the country, namely, Turkish, Kurdish, Arabic, Balouchi, Gilaki, Turkamani, or strong dialects of Persian not understandable by the majority. They do speak different linguistic varieties in different communicative situations: they speak their own linguistic variety to family members, relatives, and the peers whom they regard as insiders; however, they switch codes as soon as they speak to an outsider, namely a classmate, a teacher, a colleague, a client, or a customer who speaks another linguistic variety in the outer society, at school or at work. For an Iranian EFL teacher whose mother tongue is Turkish, for instance, three identities associated with Turkish (mother tongue), Persian (the official language of Iran), and English (the international language) co-exist and are used for different purposes. All FL teachers develop a specific case of FL identity, which may further cause an identity crisis (Demirezen, 2007). Bilingual teachers sometimes doubt if they have two personalities since they feel that they change their personalities when they change from their mother tongue to the target language. In response to such doubts, Roberts and Penfield (1964, cited in Demirezen, 2007) stated that the so-called change in

personality is simply a code shift in emotional attitudes and social roles or behaviors due to a shift in the socio-psychological situation.

Traditional Model: Productive bilingualism – In publications from her doctoral dissertation completed in 1992, drawing upon “productive orientation” of Fromm (1948, cited in Gao, 2010), Gao (1994, 2001, 2002) proposed the concept of “productive bilingualism” in which the command of L2 and that of L1 positively reinforce each other and deeper understanding and appreciation of C2 goes hand in hand with that of C1. The learner benefits from a vertical progression of general cognitive and affective growth and increased creativity instead of the horizontal progression along the continuum of target culture assimilation in the case of subtractive bilingualism (Gao, 2008).

Revisited Model: Productive Identity Change (1+1>2) – The two linguistic and community identities reinforce each other. Deeper understanding, appreciation, and empathy with one community go hand in hand with that of the other. The original identities are kept as a “whole” while interacting with each other (Gao, 2010). In a general overview of Turkish prospective EFL teachers’ experiences as language learners, Atay and Ece (2009) have reported a specific cultural difference that affected a prospective teacher’s behavior positively, namely, Eastern societies do not encourage people to speak up in public, but Western societies do. For instance, in an interview with a female participant in their study, she declared that it was her English teacher who made her a self-confident person by letting her express herself without being afraid, because it was easier to criticize each other in the Western identity which she had acquired in her English class. Encountering different Western norms and practices made them think about their own personalities and behaviors, and encouraged them to express their views openly in public and to be more tolerant while judging others. Atay and Ece (2009) have regarded this broadening process of their worldview as “cultural enrichment” effective in shaping their new identities.

Hybrid Identity Change (1+1+...1=1): A Newly Added Model to the Traditional Ones – Elements from different linguistic varieties are mixed to form a new variety, which is associated with a distinct identity. Hybrid identity change is different from productive identity change in the sense that in productive identity change, the original identities are kept as separate wholes interacting with one another, but in hybrid identity change, pieces from original identities are assembled in a mosaic manner to make a new distinct whole (Gao, 2010). The individual may not be highly proficient in each of the blended languages and cultures (often more than two), a case which is beyond strictly defined bilingualism. The blended linguistic variety is not a language, but it is a discourse type, like hip hop fans’ distinct discourse with mixed codes to name a good example of hybrid identity in the context of globalization (Pennycook, 2007).

Gao (2010) has pointed out that it is wrong to label one group as subtractive bilinguals or another group as productive bilinguals, because subtractive, additive, productive, and hybrid are not personality traits and individuals are not permanently one type of bilinguals. Therefore, bilingual/multilingual identity work is a dynamic process and L2/FL users may change their orientations in different moments or situations. They may experience, namely, subtractive or productive moments or events.

It seems that Gao (2010)’s notion of “productive identity change” is in line with Bakhtin (1986)’s concept of “mutual cultural enrichment” of the two cultures in contact; however, Gao (2010) seems to be more realistic. Bakhtin (1986), as a postmodernist, claimed that interaction between two cultures is a vital condition of their existence and that cultural contact leads to cultural enrichment and awareness, which proved to be an optimistic generalization in this study. Gao, Cheng, Zhao, and Zhou (2005, p. 44) have empirically indicated that “productive bilingualism” does not exclusively belong to some recognized “best foreign language learners” since it *was* a reality within their participants’ reach in their study on 2278 ordinary Chinese undergraduates: “about 30% to 50% of the students reported ‘productive self-identity change,’ higher than the percentage of the students who did not perceive such change, though there were still about a third who were uncertain about this issue.” However, in their study, Pishghadam and Navari (2009) noticed that exposing students to English culture in Iran, seemingly still in the modernist era, led to students’ alienation from their home culture. As a result, they suggested that the age, location, and attitudes of Iranian language learners be taken into account before highlighting English culture in EFL classrooms. Brown (2007) has warned that English as an international language (EIL) is like a two-edged sword both breaking down barriers of communication throughout the world and risking the imperialistic devastation of a

global ecology of languages and cultures. In this regard, it seems quite a challenging job to teach English and help learners stop seeing English as only a subject, a barrier, a difficult task in their life, but as a friend who would open up new spaces, new challenges, and new lands for them, both sociologically and intellectually and at the same time try to guide learners to be critically aware of the imperialists' linguistic and cultural hegemony.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The authors of this study are interested in identity changes of learners of a new language, especially when it comes to the impact of their identities as proficient bilinguals in the role of the teachers of that language on their learners' identities. Therefore, a survey has been conducted among EFL teachers in private language schools. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the strength of home culture attachment of EFL teachers who have had contact with foreign culture since their school days, the time they were EFL learners themselves.

Therefore, in this study we attempt to answer the following two questions:

Q1: Are Iranian EFL teachers attached to their home culture?

Q2: Do demographic factors such as age, length of teaching experience, length of being bilingual, knowing other languages, gender, and marital status play any significant roles in home culture attachment of Iranian EFL teachers?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Setting

This study was conducted on 342 EFL teachers: 231 females, and 111 males, aged between 19 and 58, their length of being bilingual ranging from 2 to 46 years, 164 married/174 single/4 missing, family number ranging between 1 and 10, having different lengths of teaching experience (ranging from 3 months to 32 years), and teaching English to students of different levels of proficiency in private language schools in Mashhad, a city in the northeast of Iran. The participants' average teaching hours ranged from 3 to 72 hours a week (including their private teaching). Most teachers held degrees in English but there were a few who had degrees and/or other jobs irrelevant to teaching English, e.g. engineering, dentistry, theology, French, even a retired pilot. The participants held degrees ranging from High School Diploma to PhD: High School Diploma (N=12 teachers); Associate Degree or BA/BS student (N=21); BA/BS Degree (N=216); MA/MS student (N=23); MA/MS Degree (N=61); Above MA/MS: PhD student/PhD Degree/MD (N=4); missing (N=5).

Almost half of the participants (N=173) knew at least one Asian or European language in addition to Persian and English, 155 participants knew no other languages, 6 participants knew an Iranian minority language as their mother tongue (e.g. Turkish, Arabic), 5 participants knew both an Iranian minority language and an Asian or a European language in addition to Persian and English, and 3 participants had missing information.

Private language schools were preferred as our context of study for several reasons: First, in Iran, lots of EFL teaching goes on outside the government school sector in private language schools. Second, they can provide an informal setting on which the government does not exert strict monitoring regarding their teacher recruitment, course books, teaching methodology, class time, arrangements, and so forth. Third, teachers have to work under competitive conditions due to the fact that none of them are permanently employed. Fourth, they teach the commercial EFL textbooks available in the global market without any modification, except for 2 or 3 language schools in our study, which either had some sort of eclectically chosen materials or some sort of censorship or omission of a few lessons or pictures. Finally, private language schools are in constant competition with each other

for attracting more English learners. As such, private language schools' teachers would teach according to more up-to-date EFL teaching methodology and also would/could reveal their cultural or social achievements/biases more openly than those in public schools.

Instrumentation

The participants were required to answer a questionnaire (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009) consisting of 36 items concerning "home culture attachment/dependency" in about 15 minutes according to a four-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree", assigning 4 points for the choice showing "strong home culture attachment", 3 points for "moderate home culture attachment", 2 points for "moderate foreign culture attachment", and 1 point for "strong foreign culture attachment". The questionnaire consists of both positive and negative phrasing to make sure the participants pay close attention while answering. The scale has been validated through Rasch measurement and its reliability has been reported to be 0.85 utilizing Cronbach alpha. While in our study, Home Culture Attachment Questionnaire's reliability is 0.87.

Procedure

To detect home culture attachment, the questionnaire (Pishghadam & Kamyabi, 2009) was administered to EFL teachers in October, November, and December of 2010. Some answered them in the break between their classes and some in their free time at home spending about 15 minutes. Despite the overt openness in private language schools, we faced some "red band" during data collection, e.g., there were the directors of four private language schools who prohibited distribution of our questionnaires among their teachers as well as several teachers (more often the older ones as breadwinners of their families) who themselves avoided participating in our study accusing our questionnaires to investigate into their private lives, actually being afraid of the probable political or social consequences, although participants were not asked to reveal their names. After collecting the data, they were entered into and processed with SPSS 16 program. The correlation between the computed scores of home culture attachment questionnaire and several demographic factors were calculated using Pearson product-moment correlation. To further analyze the data, t-test was also used. To use t-test, the participants were divided into two groups as "High" and "Low" based on their demographic variables.

RESULTS

As Table 1 suggests, the mean, median, and mode have almost the same value showing that our sample population has a normal distribution. There are 36 items in the questionnaire according to a four-point Likert-scale assigning 4 points for the choice showing "strong home culture attachment", 3 points for "moderate home culture attachment", 2 points for "moderate foreign culture attachment", and 1 point for "strong foreign culture attachment". Therefore, the maximum possible score of the questionnaire could be 144 and the minimum possible score might be 36, yielding the average score of the questionnaire (90). Thus, the mean acquired by EFL teachers (99.13) is just a bit higher than the average score of the questionnaire (90).

Table 1: Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation (SD), Lowest & Highest Achieved scores (Min & Max) as well as those of Possible Sores

Variable	N	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Achieved Min & Max	Possible Min & Max
Home Culture Attachment	336	99.13	99.00	100	14.22	57 & 136	36 & 144

To measure the relationship between “Home Culture Attachment” and four demographic factors, we employed Pearson product-moment correlation. The results of the correlational analysis are summarized in Table 2. The findings indicate that only one of them is not associated with Home Culture Attachment: Length of Teaching Experience ($r=.094$, $p>.05$). However, Age, and Length of Being Bilingual are associated with Home Culture Attachment: Age ($r=.139$, $p<.05$), Length of Being Bilingual ($r=.160$, $p<.05$). These findings reveal that the older the EFL teachers are and the longer they have been bilingual, the more home culture they maintain. In other words, the younger bilinguals (younger generation) are less strongly attached to their home culture.

Table2: Results of Correlation between Home Culture Attachment and Age, Length of Being Bilingual, Length of Teaching Experience

Variables		Age	Length of Being Bilingual	Length of Teaching Experience
Home Culture Attachment	Pearson Correlation	.139	.160	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.004	.091
	N	332	328	325

Since the correlation between Age and Home Culture Attachment, though significant, was not so high ($r=.139$), t-test was run and further investigated their relationship. As Table 3 demonstrates, there is a significant difference between Home Culture Attachment and Age groups (High and Low) in general ($t= 16.642$, $p<.05$); that is, the High group (teachers over 26 years old) were more strongly attached to their home culture ($\bar{x}_H = 34.16$) than the Low group (teachers under 27) ($\bar{x}_L = 23.83$).

Table 3: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment among EFL Teachers over 26 years old & those Under 27

Variables (Age)	N	Mean	T	df	Sig(2-tailed)
High (27-58 years)	165	34.16	16.642	330	.000
Low (19-26 years)	167	23.83			

Similarly, the correlation between Length of Being Bilingual and Home Culture Attachment, though significant, was not so high ($r=.160$); therefore, t-test was run and further investigated their relationship. As Table 4 shows, there is a significant difference between Home Culture Attachment and bilingual groups (High and Low) in general ($t=17.169$, $p<.05$); that is, the High group (bilinguals from 16 to 46 years of length) were more strongly attached to their home culture ($\bar{x} = 22.91$) than the Low group (bilinguals from 2 to 15 years of length) ($\bar{x} = 12.34$).

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment among EFL Teachers with Length of Being Bilingual (LOBB) over 15 years & those under 16 years

Variables (LOBB)	N	Mean	T	df	Sig (2-tailed)
High (16-46y)	164	22.91	17.169	326	.000
Low (2-15 y)	164	12.34			

As Table 5 indicates, there is a significant difference between Home Culture Attachment and Knowing Other Languages groups in general ($t=3.504$, $p<.05$); that is, the teachers knowing no language other than Persian and English were more strongly attached to their home culture ($\bar{x} = 101.93$) than the European or Asian Languages group (teachers knowing at least one more language) ($\bar{x} = 96.5896$). This shows that multilinguals are less strongly attached to their home culture than bilinguals.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment among Individuals Knowing Asian /European Languages and Knowing No Other Language/None (in addition to English and Persian)

Variables (Knowing Other Languages)	N	Mean	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
No other languages	155	1.0193E2	3.504	326	.001
European/ Asian Languages	173	96.5896			

The correlation between Length of Teaching Experience and Home Culture Attachment was not significant ($r=.094$, $p>.05$); however, as Table 6 suggests, the t-test further indicated that High group (EFL teachers with teaching

experience from 5 to 32 years) were more strongly attached to their home culture ($\bar{x} = 9.2212$) than Low group (teachers with teaching experience from 3 months to 4.5 years) ($\bar{x} = 2.3626$).

Table 6: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment among EFL Teachers with Length of Teaching Experience (LOTE) over 4.5 years & those with LOTE under 5 years

Variables (LOTE)	N	Mean	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
High (5-32 years)	165	9.2212	16.566	323	.000
Low(0.25-4.5 years)	160	2.3626			

As Table 7 reveals there is no significant difference between male and female EFL teachers in their home culture dependency ($t = -.798, p > .05$). In other words, gender plays no significant role in EFL teachers' home culture attachment.

Table 7: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment between Males and Females (Gender)

Variables (Gender)	N	Mean	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Male	111	98.2432	-.798	340	.426
Female	231	99.5541			

According to Table 8, t-test reveals that there is a significant difference between Home Culture Attachment and Marital Status groups (Married and Single) in general ($t = -4.229, p < .05$); that is, the Married were more strongly attached to their home culture ($\bar{x} = 102.23$) than the Single ($\bar{x} = 95.8793$).

Table 8: Independent Samples t-test for Home Culture Attachment between the Married and the Single

Variables (Marital Status)	N	Mean	T	Df	Sig (2-tailed)
Single	174	95.8793	-4.229	336	.000
Married	164	1.0223E2			

DISCUSSION

The two goals put forward by this study were, in the first place, to investigate the degree of EFL teachers' home culture attachment, and in the second place, to examine whether some demographic factors, namely, age, length of being bilingual, knowing other languages (in addition to Persian and English), length of teaching experience, gender, and marital status had any role in their home culture attachment.

With regard to the first goal, our findings reveal that our sample population has a normal distribution; that is, it is not negatively skewed to the right side of the mean. Thus, the perfect home-culture-maintenance status has not been achieved by Iranian EFL teachers. Undesirably, EFL teachers, who experience more foreign culture contact, are just moderately attached to their home culture. This might be due to different issues discussed separately under each of the demographic factors' associations with home culture attachment.

With regard to the second goal, the role of the first demographic factor, "Age", in "Home Culture Attachment," was investigated. Correlation and t-test results indicated that the younger EFL teachers are less strongly attached to their home culture than the older EFL teachers. This could be interpreted at three levels: individual, national, and global levels. First, at the individual level, the older EFL teachers might have respected, understood and appreciated their home culture more and more in the course of time and their lived experience as bilinguals undergoing productive identity change (Gao, 2010); that is, the older EFL teachers who have experienced longer contact with the foreign culture might have been able to look at their home culture with fresh eyes and might have valued aspects of their home culture they had undervalued when they were younger. Second, at the national level, the younger EFL teachers might have distanced from their immediately accessible community and its culture and might have desired for an ideal imagined identity in an imagined community to psychologically avoid the insecurities they feel in life, which they see no reason to put up with as the older do. Socioculturally speaking, cultural identity is "continually threatened by economic, political, and power-balance insecurities" (Hinkel, 2005, p.891) and the young are obviously more vulnerable than the old. Imagined identities do have psychological reality involving stable behavioral investment (Gao, 2010) and imagined communities might even have a stronger effect on individuals' present actions than the communities they are daily engaged in (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Individuals imagine themselves as they would like to be, doing what they would prefer to do. Then each day, they take one step toward their dream. Though at times, it may seem too difficult to continue, they hold on to their dreams.

Third, at the global level, the younger teachers, or better to say, younger generation could have been more and more influenced by Western culture due to Westernization globally highlighted in the media. As Nye (2010) has asserted the country whose culture, values, and institutions incite admiration and respect in other parts of the world enjoys more "soft power" among them. That is why US first priority is to expand English language and to make American culture popular all over the world by glamorized American lifestyles presented in Hollywood movies, heavy US flavor of the internet, the ballyhooed freedoms of their government style, etc. In his study including several interviews with Iranian EFL teachers and EFL learners, Pishghadam (2007) noticed that the participants generally undermine the idea of World Englishes, and underline the idea of perfect American and/or British English and that some EFL teachers centralize the English culture in class while marginalizing their home culture. Based on a modification of matched guise technique, Pishghadam and Sabouri (2011) concluded Iranian EFL learners consider American accent of English to be quite superior to the British, Persian, and Arabic accents of English; moreover, they consider those with American accent to be better teachers. This study confirms the major tenets of postcolonialists who believe that ideology is conveyed through language leading to cultural hegemony (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008).

Examining the role of the second demographic factor, "Length of Being Bilingual" in "Home Culture Attachment," the authors realized that the longer EFL teachers have been bilingual, the more home culture they have maintained. In other words, the younger bilinguals are less strongly attached to their home culture. This seems to confirm the positive relationship between age and home culture attachment. According to Bakhtin (1986), in order to appreciate one's own culture, one needs to be in contact with another culture, which is foreign to it. It implies that bilinguals are more liable to be aware of the peculiarities of their own culture than monolinguals (Atay & Ece, 2009).

The role of the third demographic factor, "Knowing Other Languages" in "Home Culture Attachment," was also studied. It indicated that EFL teachers who know at least one more language (an Asian or a European language) in addition to Persian and English are less strongly attached to Iranian home culture. In other words, those who know more languages are less strongly attached to their home culture. This finding is against the claims made by Bakhtin

(1986), which might be simply because of the absence of mutual respect, the prerequisite for cultural enrichment, in the dialog between the dominant and the dominated cultures. Since learner's investment to learn a target language is socially and historically influenced by the relationship of learners to the TL (Norton Peirce, 1995), their commitment and desire to learn the TL depends on whether, based on social/historical contexts, they look up to the TL speakers, or the speakers of the source language and target language have mutual respect towards each other. Inevitably, in the case of an unbalanced respect between the two languages/cultures, language learning results in "subtractive identity change" among multilinguals in this study.

Exploring the fourth demographic factor, "Length of Teaching Experience," the researchers noticed that, at the first sight, there was no significant relationship between "Home Culture Attachment" and "Length of Teaching Experience." However, as the t-test further indicated, the High Group depended more strongly on their home culture than the Low Group. It means that the longer EFL teachers teach English, the more they develop home culture dependency. This also seems to confirm the positive relationship between age and home culture attachment and the resulting possible "productive identity change" (Gao, 2010).

Considering the fifth factor, "Gender" there is no significant difference between male and female EFL teachers in their home culture dependency. In other words, gender plays no significant role in EFL teachers' home culture attachment. This finding is in contrast with a quantitative study on college undergraduates in the Chinese EFL context where Gao, Cheng, Zhao, and Zhou (2005) explored their participants' self-identity changes associated with English learning and reported that female students' self-identity changes were generally higher than males', and that female students scored higher than male students particularly on self-confidence and productive identity changes.

Inquiring into the sixth factor, "Marital Status," the authors found out that the married were more strongly attached to their home culture than the single. This means that stronger family bonds keeps the individual within the home culture. Getting married provides an individual with new links in one's social network, namely, one's spouse, in-laws, children, etc. Those who have more social links with family members, peers, etc. are not easily stripped away from their collective beliefs and values called their home culture (Pishghadam & Sadeghi, 2011).

Based on the results of our study, some implications are presented: first, the most important result of this study is bringing about awareness for EFL teachers, EFL learners, EFL syllabus designers, teacher educators and policy makers of the fact that cultural dimension of language learning is an important dimension of foreign language studies, and that teaching the culture of a foreign language should be an integral part of the curriculum, but not at the expense of their home culture. Second, language teachers should become aware of cultural studies and the conditions under which individuals acquire or lose social, cultural, and historical identities (their home culture) through the use of various symbolic systems, including language. Blindly following the "teacher-proof textbooks" can change the EFL teachers to slaves of cultural/linguistic imperialism (Richards, 1993). "The measurement of language attitudes provides information which is useful in language teaching and language planning" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p.286). If EFL teachers are fascinated by a certain version of the English language as a more dominant or more prestigious one, they may convey this impression consciously/unconsciously to their EFL learners simply because students follow their teachers' language attitudes. They should also be aware of the importance of the cultural goods they choose to help them in their profession. Thus, the global EFL textbooks should be taught after they are cautiously supervised and localized. Third, learners should be taught to have critical thinking. Questioning and challenge should be encouraged in teaching and learning process, especially in EFL classes where acquisition of a new language, a new culture, and a new identity takes place. In an overlapping of language, culture, society and power relations, EFL learners should gain sociolinguistic competency by discussing the TL usage in classes. They should be warned not to gain intercultural competence at the expense of their own cultural identity. Fourth, the syllabus designers' challenging job is to offer language learners materials which acknowledge their norms and values as well as materials which include aspects of local culture to be discussed and compared with the parallel aspects of the target culture.

All in all, English teaching should *not* be banned in schools in order to preserve heritage languages and cultures, but "our zeal for spreading English needs to be accompanied by concurrent efforts to value home languages and cultures" (Brown, 2007, p. 207). As thus, it seems quite a challenging job to teach English and help learners love English as a friend who would open up new horizons of knowledge, new identities, and new lands to embrace the world, and simultaneously try to guide learners to beware of English as imperialism's means of linguistic and cultural hegemony. Ironically, the challenging, if not overwhelming, job of EFL learners is to beware of not being hostilely squeezed while warmly embracing English as a friend.

A potential limitation of this study is that it was based on correlational data, and therefore the results cannot support casual claims. A further limitation of our study is the unwillingness of some participants to fill out demographic characteristics section. In the end, a longitudinal study design among EFL learners is recommended to investigate their home culture attachment at different stages of their bilingualism qualitatively and quantitatively. It is also recommended that home culture attachment of holders of different jobs other than EFL teaching be investigated as a control group. The replication of our study in the context of another Iranian city or another country and comparison of their results with ours may further investigate the role of the different demographic factors in home culture attachment.

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