



MONASH University

**Between Two Masters: Dilemmas of English Language
Teaching in Iraq Today**

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Abstract

This study seeks to provide insight into Iraqi English language teacher identity construction through understanding the discourses surrounding such teachers within the Iraqi educational, socio-cultural, and religious community of practice. The role of teachers in Iraq has changed significantly in recent years along with the general status of teaching as a profession. At the same time, there are responsibilities and expectations placed on English language teaching and teachers by the professional (education authorities) or non-professional (religious, cultural and social authorities) communities. After 2003, the Iraqi government was very aware of the importance of English language and was anxious to improve the English language education. Various steps and strategies have been adopted in order to renew Iraqi education in general and the English language teaching in particular. Associated with the modernizing strategies the government has offered scholarships abroad for teachers in order to contribute in developing the Iraqi educational system. These teachers are expected to return to Iraq after their further training to be part of the education system and thus to support the education reform.

This qualitative case study explored how some Iraqi English language teachers respond to and negotiate these factors. It examined how these Iraqi English language teachers construct, shape and re-shape their identities within the religious, cultural, social, and political context of Iraq. Two groups of teachers participated in this study: Ten Iraqi English teachers who are a current secondary school English language teachers and living in Iraq and ten Australian TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) trained

Iraqi teachers who were intending to return to Iraq. Data were collected in Iraq and Australia in two stages: focus group discussions and semi structured interviews.

The study found that teachers who are currently teaching English in Iraq are torn between the government intention to increase the spread of the English language in Iraq and the social/ religious concerns regarding the spread of English and the accompanying culture, at the expense of Arabic language and Iraqi Islamic culture. On the other hand, those who studied in the West seemed to entertain a broader range of resources and strategies when it comes to teaching English. They were more likely to have a liberal approach which may place them in conflict with the educational and social realities in Iraq.

The findings suggest that the Iraqi English teacher needs to be seen as a whole person (who is a Muslim teacher employed by the government but at the same time belongs to the local community); who is surrounded by factors such as the culture of teaching authorities and components, the status of the English language, the education policy and curriculum which work together to create an ongoing process of struggle, negotiation, and construction. This complex relationship creates an on-going process of being, becoming, and belonging and shapes the way the teacher constructs his or her role. At the same time, it creates expectations and limitations of how to teach, what to teach, how to act and what to use, and whom to serve. In particular the findings suggested a struggle inside the Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers to create harmony between what they gained from their Western TESOL courses and the culture of teaching in

Iraq; to fit themselves within the borders of the powerful culture of teaching of
Iraq yet to be able to take part in educational reform.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zeki Al Attaby', is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Signature:

Print Name: Zeki Al Attaby

Date: 25/04/2019

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

The research for this thesis received the approval of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) on

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| CLT..... | Communicative Language Teaching |
| EFL..... | English as a Foreign Language |
| EIL..... | English as an International Language |
| ELT..... | English language teaching |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GDPITED..... | General Directorate of Pre-service and In-service Training and Educational Development in Iraq. |
| MoE | Iraqi Ministry of Education |
| MOHESR | Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |
| NABA | North America, Britain, and Australia |
| NNESTs | Non-native English-speaking teachers |
| RISE program..... | Revitalization of Iraqi Schools and Stabilization of Education |
| TEFL..... | Teaching English as a foreign language |
| TESL | Teaching English as a second language |
| TESOL | Teaching English to speakers of other languages |
| UNDGIF..... | United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund |
| UNESCO..... | The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| WW2..... | The Second World War |

Glossary of Arabic terms and place names

- Ayatollah..... A high-ranking Shia Muslim cleric.
- Baath Party..... A political party that ruled Iraq from 1968 until 2003.
- Baghdad The capital city of Iraq.
- Basra.....A city in southern Iraq. It is the only port of Iraq and rich in Oil.
- Bedouin..... Groups of nomadic Arab people who inhabit the desert regions.
- Da'wah The Islamic call.
- Fatwa..... A religious opinion that is given by a recognized authority.
- Holy Qur'an..... The religious Holy book of Islam.
- Imam..... The religious leader in the Islamic faith.
- Imam Ali..... The cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad whom the Shia Muslims regard as the first Imam and consider as the appointed successor of the prophet Muhammad.
- Imam Hussein.....The grandson of the prophet Muhammad.
- Iraqi Dinar..... The currency of *Iraq*.
- Karbala A city in central Iraq. It is another Shia Muslim sacred city. It has the shrines of Imam Hussein and his brother Imam Abass.
- Kufa..... A city in southern Iraq. It is an important city in the Shia Muslims' faith because it was the capital of the Islamic state during the ruling time of Imam Ali.
- Mudhif.....The 'house of reeds' has a tribal and cultural symbolism in social, political and cultural life in the southern society of Iraq.
- Najaf..... A city in central-south Iraq. It is the Shia Muslims' sacred spiritual capital, and the centre of Shia political power in Iraq. It has the shrine of Imam Ali.
- Nasabiya.....The tribal belonging and they way people recognized by the name of their tribes.
- Nassiryah..... A city in southern Iraq. It is the capital city of Dhi-Qar (or Thi-Qar) Governorate.
- Saddam Hussein The president of Iraq from 1979 until 2003.
- Shattra..... A city in southern Iraq in Dhi-Qar (or Thi-Qar) Governorate.
- Sheikh.....A tribal leader.
- Shia..... A sect of Islam.
- Sunni..... A sect of Islam.
- The Euphrates and Tigris Rivers..... The two rivers of Iraq.

Thi-Qar.....A Governorate in southern Iraq.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

With the onset of globalization, the English language has become a powerful tool for development in many areas including economics, culture and education. English language proficiency is regarded as a key component in the generation of opportunities in today's interconnected world, and it is a must for anyone who wants to move forward in our changing world.

English has ridden the wave of globalization, urbanization, technology, and international communication like no other language in the history of mankind. Various factors such as British colonialism, the post-war economic expansion of the US, and technology, have catapulted English into the position of the world's most taught, learned, and researched language (Chowdhury & Phan, 2014). According to *The Economist* (August 5, 2004), knowledge of English is a "basic skill of modern life comparable with the ability to drive a car or use a personal computer".

This study aims to understand the social, educational, and cultural dimensions of teaching English in the new Iraq, in particular in reference to teachers' professional identities. It seeks to offer a significant contribution to the literature about English language teaching (ELT) and English language teachers in Iraq.

This chapter begins with some background to the study, and then an introduction to the research questions which drive this project. These questions relate to the discourses surrounding the English language teaching and teachers

in schools in Iraq, and the ever-changing professional identities of these teachers. The final question relates to the role that overseas trained English teachers may be able to play in the process of improving and reforming the English language teaching curriculum of Iraq.

This introduction continues with an account of my own personal and professional background, which has stimulated my interest in the topic, followed by an explanation about the reasons behind refining the research focus. This is followed by a discussion of the research aims and the significance of the research, introducing some dilemmas of English language teaching in Iraq today. Finally, the chapter briefly outlines the thesis chapters.

1.2 Background to the study and my personal interest in this topic

Iraq is a place where successions of wars have affected the social and educational settings and it remains a focus of the attention of both the Western world, and the Middle East – with a history of major powers, neighbouring countries, sects and rebel groups often being in conflict in regard to nation formation. The selection of Iraq for this research is due to its unique situation that encompasses openness toward the Western educational experiences on the one hand, and its role as the heartland of Shia Muslims on the other. Moreover, it is the country I came from, and the country I will be returning to as part of its educational system.

The research questions informing the present study relate to four main issues: firstly, the ongoing debates around the expansion of English language and English language teaching in the Arab–Muslim context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iraq; secondly, discussions in the literature about teacher identity construction; thirdly, the debates around Western TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) trained teachers and what aims they serve and what perspectives they hold; fourthly, a Master’s study I conducted in 2010 to explore the aspirations of some Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers.

My Master’s study suggested that there is a growing recognition of the importance of English as a global language among Australian trained Iraqi ELT teachers. Also, this earlier study found that these Iraqi teachers desired to change and update their teaching concepts and perspectives in relation to their teaching approach, their teacher role, and the English language curriculum in Iraq. Furthermore, casual conversations with other Iraqi English language teachers, who currently teach English in Iraqi secondary schools, revealed the need to renew the Iraqi education sector. This renewal (or perhaps overhaul) would need to involve areas such as teacher development and preparation, teaching approaches, and English language textbook content.

The earlier research found that teachers believed that the traditional teaching approaches and their roles as language teachers did not adequately address their students’ need to learn and communicate in the English language effectively. These Iraqi teachers understood that restoring critical infrastructure and re-vitalizing the education sector is now a top priority for Iraqis and must be at the

heart of the reconstruction effort in the new Iraq. Through living and studying in Australia, the teachers appeared to change their views about the educational reality of Iraq and re-negotiated and reconstructed their professional identities. However, they still had a strong connection with their religious practices and Iraqi origins, which was clear when they described themselves as ‘Iraqi’ teachers among other Australian or international students.

The views of the participants in my Master’s research led me to wonder about the value they had placed on the English language and EFL teaching in the Iraqi context. From here I became interested in researching the social, educational, and cultural dimensions of teaching English in the new Iraq and teachers’ professional identities. When I first explored the idea of undertaking a PhD, my primary interest lay in exploring how English language teachers might be able to improve the Iraqi English language curriculum, including textbook content and teaching approaches, and how Australian trained teachers might employ their new educational knowledge in order to re-structure the Iraqi education system. I also wanted to explore to what extent the experience of living in an English-speaking country with a different teaching system and culture impacted upon pedagogical priorities.

However, after I carried out a pilot study, I redirected the focus of my research which also led to change the research project title (see appendix 7). Instead of focusing only on teacher training programs, English language curriculum, and ELT in Iraq, the study shifted toward a heavier emphasis on the contexts and discourses that construct English language teaching in Iraq and particularly in relation to teachers’ identities.

1.3 Refining the research focus

The focus of this research clarified after investigations were made into what was required before I could collect data from English teachers in Iraq. It was at this stage that I was able to reconfigure the general themes of the current study, refine the research questions, and reassess the guiding questions for interviews and focus groups.

After being granted ethics approval from Monash University, I initiated the process of data collection with teachers in Iraq. On speaking with the Secondary Education Managers in the Directorate of Education in Shattrah and Nassiriyah cities in the province of Thi-Qar in Iraq and given the fact that my research project was to be conducted by an overseas university, I was told that I needed two types of approvals in order to conduct interviews with English language teachers in Iraq. The first was an official approval from the Iraqi Directorate of Education (of which the participant teachers are officially employees) to make sure that the research project would neither conflict with the Ministry of Education (MoE) guidelines nor criticize the educational policy of Iraq. The second were the informal cultural and religious approvals from the Directorate of Education managers, the school principals and the teachers themselves so they could make sure the research project would comply with and not conflict with the Islamic socio-cultural norms of the Iraqi society. A research topic had to be approved by all of these authorities and not be 'forbidden' in terms of politics, religion, and culture.

To avoid any misunderstandings about what the research was about, before commencing any data collection I first conducted an information session and an open discussion to illustrate the general themes of my research, as well as to listen to their questions and concerns. From that session, I realized two points. First, the teachers had been directed not to talk to any outsiders about any issues or opinions regarding the Iraqi educational system. Second, the teachers made a clear statement that they were not prepared to talk about or discuss the foundations of education in general and ELT in particular, as they believed education to be a holy mission that stands on strong principles which are ‘undebatable’.

Certainly, I was once part of the Iraqi educational system; but conducting interviews as an outsider is an entirely different matter. The difficulties highlighted the heavy weight of responsibility on the shoulders of Iraqi teachers, and how difficult it is to find harmony among all the pressures, limitations and prohibitions as well as carry out the educational goal of teaching English, the Western language.

When these Iraqi teachers finally opened their hearts to talk, it became clear to me that they were living under the pressure of incompatibility between many discourses. These discourses included the status of the Arabic language and the requirements for English language teaching; the openness of Iraq after 2003 and the enduring cultural limitations; English as an international language and the particular English of Britain and America; English as a Western language and Arabic as a representation of national and religious identity; Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) principles and the traditional teacher’s role;

educational goals and reality; the Western trained policy makers and the actual classrooms; their community of practice and their personal considerations. I show these contradictions in the following table:

Table 1: Contrasting discourses obtained from interviews in Iraq

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Status of the Arabic language | Requirements for English language teaching |
| Openness of Iraq after 2003 | Enduring cultural expectations |
| English as international language | English of Britain and America |
| English as Western language | Arabic as a national representation/ imagined community |
| CLT principles | Traditional teacher's role |
| Educational goals | Reality |
| Western trained policy makers | Actual classrooms |
| Teacher's community of practice | Personal agency |

At the same time, initial interviews with some Western TESOL trained Iraqi teachers in Australia revealed a major concern about what role they could play as curriculum designers in the educational improvement of Iraq after 2003, and what cultural and educational message they could bring to the Iraqi education.

As a result, I started to think more about how these Iraqi teachers negotiate and construct their identities among all the contradictory linguistic, religious, cultural, political, and professional discourses surrounding their identities.

1.4 The research aims

This study researches the professional identity construction of some Iraqi English teachers. This includes the relationships between the (Islamic) Middle East and the Western world, which shape the ways in which teachers of English from Iraq perceive English teaching and through which they negotiate their professional identities.

In the context of Iraq, the role of teachers has changed significantly in recent years along with the status of teaching as a profession and specifically the demands and expectations the community places on English teachers. Accordingly, the study explores how some English language teachers respond where there is, firstly, governmental policy toward building an open society and new educational policies that work toward educational, economic and social advancement, yet where secondly the education system remains based on values and principles derived from the traditional religious, social, cultural, and national characteristics of Iraq. Thus, it explores teachers' assumptions about their own roles and responsibilities in relation to their teaching community, as well as their belonging to that particular context of Iraq.

Two groups of teachers were involved in this study: some Iraqi English teachers who are current secondary school English language teachers living in Iraq, and some Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers who are intending to return to Iraq and be part of its educational system.

On the one hand, those teachers who are currently teaching English in Iraq are torn between the government tendency to increase the spread of the English language in Iraq and the social and religious concerns regarding the spread of English and the accompanying culture, at the expense of Arabic language and Iraqi Islamic culture.

On the other hand, those who have studied in the West seem to entertain a broader range of resources and strategies when it comes to teaching English. They are more likely to have a liberal approach which may place them in conflict with the educational and social realities in Iraq. They face a dilemma – how best to teach English in Iraq.

These teachers' identities had been reconstructed in particular ways through their experiences in the context of Iraq (which they are/were all part of and participated in as teachers of English) or in the context of Australia (for the TESOL trained teachers). Discourses influencing them and constructing their identities as teachers ranged from the traditional foundations of education, the cultural influence of Islam on education, the relationship between Iraq and the West, new ideas in Iraqi education, the receptivity of Iraqis to changes in educational structures and frameworks, and of course for the TESOL trained teachers the influences from the West that accompany Iraqi teachers when they return to Iraq after studying abroad. All these discourses might contribute in varying degrees to the construction of their teaching identity as well as to shaping the community of practice they are part of. Thus, this thesis explores the following questions:

1. What discourses and experiences are involved in the construction of these teachers' identities?
2. What does the English language represent to these teachers?
3. How do these teachers perceive educational reform of English language teaching in Iraq?
4. How do these Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers of English perceive English, English language teaching and their identity as teachers?

1.5 The significance of this research

The contribution of this study lies in its uniqueness in exploring English language teacher identity in the context of Iraq, where the ELT research has mostly been limited to the effectiveness of teaching approaches.

The outcomes of this study will contribute to the limited literature about Iraqi education and Iraqi teachers of English language. Also, it will contribute to the rapidly increasing international literature in the field of applied linguistics, education, and TESOL about ELT teachers' identities. It provides insight into how we make sense of ELT teacher identity in the context of the Islamic Middle East in general and Iraq in particular, through understanding the discourses and experiences that work together to create an ongoing process of identity negotiation and construction. In addition, understanding the status of the English language means shedding more light on the characteristics of the community where the English language taught and learned. The study insists that understanding the English language teacher identity needs to be seen in association with understanding the status of the English language itself and what

the English language represents to the wider society where the teaching takes place. Thus, the study contributes to understanding English language teacher identity in Iraq, but also to larger debates in the field of applied linguistics and teacher education.

Moreover, it provides data to Western universities on how TESOL programs can contribute to non-Western language teachers' knowledge in terms of the educational context to which they will return. Specifically, the study will benefit Western universities, including those in Australia, with regard to understanding Middle Eastern students in general and Iraqi international teachers of English in particular. In this regard, the study suggests that TESOL programs need to invest in understanding international contexts, rather than advocating Western methodologies.

In addition, in recent times much debate has focused on the improvement of English language teaching, teacher education and teacher training in Iraq. Thus, the findings of this research might be crucial at this moment in Iraq for policy makers, curriculum designers and developers, in regard to teacher training and English language teaching practice.

The findings of the study are also expected to benefit the Iraqi education system because they answer questions about Iraqi English language teacher identity construction and negotiation. Further, it offers insight into the extent to which overseas trained Iraqi English language teachers are influenced by studying in a Western context and how can they better serve the education reform in Iraq through applying their knowledge gained through training in the West.

To summarize, this study will:

1. Examine these Iraqi teachers' identity construction and how that can shape and reshape their teaching perceptions, perspectives, and practices.
2. Provide a deeper insight into these Iraqi English language teachers' understandings of the English language, English language teaching, and the teaching profession.
3. Explore some impacting factors and attendant challenges, with regard to the improvement of English language teaching in Iraq in general,.
4. Explore what role the Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers might play in the Iraqi context of teaching English.

1.6 Limitations of the study and directions for further studies

It is important to acknowledge that all the participants are Shia Muslims who represent the majority Iraqi population (See figure 3) of southern and central Iraq, like myself. However, the study was not able to investigate Sunni Iraqi teachers in the western or Kurdish teachers in northern parts of Iraq due to time and safety limitations.

Also, it is important to mention that the issue regarding the female teachers and what is now termed 'intersectionality' - that is the way different categories of identity intersect; in this case, gender, religion and culture- needs further investigation with a larger scale of female participants.

Moreover, it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate the whole Iraq educational system. However, it is important to acknowledge that several authoritative reports have suggested the need for updating the educational

system in Iraq and the Middle Eastern region (Alwan, 2004; United Nations Development Programme 2004; 2003) and these suggestions face much resistance and are still under discussion by policy makers and educational supervisors.

Finally, I would like to mention that during the study I referred to the conflict between the West and Islam or the Islamic culture and the Western culture. However, I did not intend to endorse the ideas of a clash of civilizations or religious conflict. Rather, the term ‘conflict’ has been used by different authors as well as the research participants in order to illustrate that each country has its own cultural and religious perspectives that need to be respected.

1.7 Chapter outlines

This thesis consists of eleven chapters. I begin my study in Chapter 2 with a short auto-ethnography, putting myself under the lens of investigation to record my own experiences as an English language teacher which has also formed this research study.

In Chapter 3, I describe the context of this study including a brief historical account of education and linguistic affiliation in Iraq. The chapter includes an overview of English language education including teacher training in Iraq, which reflects the extent to which teacher education has been impacted by educational policy as well as the many changes in the country whether before or after 2003.

A review of relevant literature in Chapters 4 and 5 reveals that much work has already been done on the status of English and ELT in general and in the Arab world in particular where there are different cultural, social, and religious perspectives and beliefs (Al-Khatib, 2000; Dmour, 2015; ; Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Liton, 2012; Mahmoud, 2015; Rababah, 2003; Zughoul, 2003). Generally, such research investigates the status of English language, English language teaching, and the side effects of learning a foreign language.

However, reviewed literature indicates the available literature does not highlight social, religious, economic, and political discourses surrounding teaching English and teachers of English in Iraq. In addition, no studies have specifically set out to examine Iraqi teacher's identity construction. Also, few studies have investigated the role and contributions of Iraqi English language teachers in the process of improving the ELT curriculum after 2003.

Chapter 6 explains the conceptual framework of the study as a focus on teacher identity. In general, there is an increasing contemporary focus on the formation of teachers' identities. Understanding teachers' identities is significant because of the important role the teachers play in the classroom, especially in conveying their life experiences and cultural attitudes to their students (Danielewicz, 2001; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Miller, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, et al., 2005; Tsui, 2007; White & Ding, 2009). In their identity formation, teachers are under the influence of a range of factors both internal and external, such as emotion, beliefs, experiences, training, discourses, and the context where they teach (Flores & Day, 2006; Phan, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008). This literature suggests that a teacher's identity is neither fixed nor stable, but an

ever-changing process of construction and negotiation (Phan, 2008; Sachs, 2005). Teacher identity is a personal, social, and professional site of change, which is constructed through the influences of the personal, contextual, social, cultural and educational milieus that surround a particular teacher (Beijaard et al., 2004; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Varghese et al., 2005).

Chapter 7 explains the selection of a qualitative case study (Flick, 2006; Kervin et al., 2006) and recognizes my own participation in the life of my research participants. Twenty Iraqi English language teachers were the subjects of this case study. Ten of these were Iraqi English language teachers who were currently teaching English in Iraq. And ten were Iraqi English language teachers who had graduated from TESOL courses in Australia, and were still in Australia at the time of their interviews. These twenty participants were all involved in focus group discussions and open-ended one-on-one Interviews. I used thematic analysis to determine and link the various concepts and opinions of participants, as well as narrative analysis, in that the participants' stories reflected how the participants made sense of their experiences as teachers and members of the teaching community or the social community of Iraq.

Central to the present study is the question of how Iraqi English language teachers construct their identities and what factors or discourses surround their identities. The findings chapters (Chapters 8, 9 and 10) therefore explore this process in terms of three specific themes:

1. Teacher community of practice in Iraq: being, belonging and becoming.

2. The English language: status, role, and expansion as perceived by the Iraqi teachers of English.

3. Professional expectations and perspectives of the Iraqi English language teachers in relation to teaching the English language in the context of Iraq.

Finally, in Chapter 11, the study concludes that the expansion, status, and role of the English language need be considered as a multi-faceted phenomenon that is perceived within specific contexts. In the context of Iraq, ELT needs to be seen as an educational, social, cultural, and political activity. Hence, the English language teachers within this particular are impacted by the state's political orientation, whether before or after 2003, by the impact of the discourses around English language learning, the impact of the Islamic rules and perspectives with regard to what is to be taught and how it should be taught, and by the culture of teaching. These factors work together to negotiate and construct the teacher identity. These Iraqi English language teachers' identities are also sites of struggle to create a harmony between the authorities' requirements, and the educational authority is a site of change itself depending on the changeable circumstances of Iraq.

By the culture of teaching in Iraq, I mean firstly, the educational authorities and components which determine and draw up the guidelines of education and the teacher's work. Secondly, it refers to the cultural, religious, social traditions and perspectives which govern and dominate the Iraqi society and thus the context the teachers work in and are part of. The study also concludes that the Australian trained TESOL teachers did not exclude or differentiated themselves

from those teachers in Iraq. Although being Australian TESOL trained teachers enabled them to provide more reflexive analyses about the teaching reality in the context of Iraq, the effects of the Western cultural and educational atmosphere of Australia appeared to be limited to their educational views. Finally, Chapter 11 offers some general suggestions regarding the possibility or not for implementing new Western curriculum in non- Western context.

Chapter 2: My personal account of Iraqi education and my career as an English teacher

2.1 Overview

The following narrative of my own identity formation as an Iraqi English teacher sets the scene for my research. It is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, through it I want to show how my positioning is intrinsic to this project. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue, insider status enables the researcher to understand the participants' lived social realities. Secondly, this narrative highlights some ways the themes played out in my research participants' lived experiences;

Thirdly, my motivation for including my own story here is also to activate my voice as a teacher researcher, in order to explore my own individual agency, as well as determine what values, factors and experiences underpin my own professional practice and have helped form my own identity as an Iraqi English teacher. Hence, writing my story here provides me with the insight to explore myself (as Zeki the teacher) by myself (Zeki the researcher) in order to determine how I (as Zeki the teacher and Zeki the researcher) have created, formed, and reformed my identity within my professional community of practice as a teacher, and as a member of the wider Iraqi community, and as a globally formed researcher.

2.2 My own identity within this study

By starting this thesis telling my story in this way, I am reflecting on my own socially constructed stance which is implicit in the research project. It is increasingly accepted that social and educational researchers clarify their own position in the research process, as an ‘insider or outsider’ (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Innes, 2009; Nakata, 2015; Witcher, 2010) or ‘in between’ (Breen, 2007; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Merriam et al., 2001). A considerable amount of literature discusses the insider/outsider researcher’s journey in terms of exploring advantages, disadvantages, dilemmas, and challenges in the research process (e.g. Adler & Adler, 1994; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Gilbert, 1994; Innes, 2009; O’Connor 2004).

Generally, “in qualitative studies it is increasingly common for researchers to be part of the social group they intend to study” (Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002, p.8). Likewise, Breen (2007) states that “it is common, but of course not necessary, for researchers using qualitative methodologies to study a group, organization, or culture they belong to, and in doing so, they begin the research process as an insider” (p. 163).

While there are various definitions for insider/outsider researchers, generally an insider, *emic* or *native* researcher is a complete member of the group being studied; *outsider*, *etic* or *stranger* researchers are not at all a member of the group being studied (Adler & Adler, 1994; Bonner & Tolhurst, 2002). Breen (2007) also identifies that “insider-researchers are those who chose to study a group to which they belong, while outsider-researchers do not belong to the group under study” (p. 163). Witcher (2010) argues that it is familiarity with the

group under investigation that distinguishes the researcher position as insider (familiar) or outsider (unfamiliar).

Bonner and Tolhurst (2002) identify three key benefits of being an insider researcher: “having a greater understanding of the culture being studied”; “not altering the flow of social interaction unnaturally”; and “having an established intimacy between researcher and participants which promotes both the telling and the judging of truth” (p. 8-9).

However, in fact it is an extremely hard and complex task for researchers to locate their own positioning within the research process. As Witcher (2010) states:

Did my background (being from the same geographic area in which I was proposing to conduct my research) make me an insider? Was I also outsider in some respects (After all, I was no longer living in NL)?...Bearing the distinction between these two sets of perspectives in mind, it appeared to me that I would be conducting research from an emic perspective; that is an ‘insider’. After all I was proposing to collect data in an area in which I was very familiar, located near my hometown ...Although it seemed plausible that I was an ‘insider’ in certain aspects, I felt like I was ‘outsider’ in others as I did not fit either category completely (p, 126)

In this research, just like Witcher (2010), I have had these questions in my mind: am I an insider or outsider researcher? I am ‘insider’ because in the past I belonged to the context of Iraq and am familiar with it, sharing the same cultural and even educational background as my research participants. Or am I now ‘outsider’, because I am no longer living in Iraq, not part of its educational

system, and not part of the educational reform being undertaken in the Iraqi educational system, especially in terms of teaching English?

At the same time with regard to my TESOL trained teacher participants, am I an insider because we are all living in Australia and from the same background; or outsider because our experiences are different and I am investigating the context of teaching English in Iraq but not in Australia, which means I am exploring their views while all of us are outside that specific context of Iraq?

Like Gilbert (1994) I found that my lived experiences matched neither those of my participants in Iraq nor those of the TESOL group. But like other insider researchers, my insider status (familiarity and background) enabled me to develop research questions and to allow research participants to accept and trust me.

In addition, my several years of living outside Iraq (and thus not part of the context of the study) endowed me with elements of the status of outsider. Besides, I had to negotiate with the Directorate of Education, principals, teachers, and TESOL trained teachers in order to gain their approval, trust, and acceptance to participate in my research, which reflects my status as outsider researcher.

Accordingly, rather than differentiating the researcher role as insider or outsider, I consider myself to be neither an insider nor outsider in the context of my PhD research. I quote what Breen (2007) said to identify her role: "I argue that the insider/outsider dichotomy is simplistic, and that neither term adequately captured the role I occupied throughout the research" (p. 165).

To illustrate, I acknowledge here (and also in Chapter7) that my own experience initially influenced my topic selection and my decision to conduct research focused on teacher training programs, English language curriculum, and ELT in Iraq. However, after receiving ethical approval from Monash University, I went to Iraq to start conducting interviews with Iraqi English teachers. As I mentioned earlier in Section1.3, I was directed to obtain a letter of approval from the Directorate of Education. After that when I started the process by visiting schools, talking to principals about allowing me to interview the English language teachers, I was required to clarify my research aims, why I was conducting the research, and whom I was serving by investigating an educational case (which I also did when I obtained the formal approval from the Directorates of Education). At that time, I realized that it was more than just official approval; rather, it was educational, social, religious, and political approval. From that experience, I had to confront what sort of discourses surrounded these teachers, how they coped with them, and how they negotiated their identities as English teachers within this complicated process. Certainly, I was once part of the Iraqi educational system; but conducting interviews as an outsider is an entirely different matter. The difficulties highlighted the heavy weight of responsibility on the shoulders of Iraqi teachers, and how difficult it is to find harmony among all the pressures, limitations and prohibitions as well as to carry out the educational goal of teaching English, ‘the Western language’.

Both roles, as insider and outsider, created a role that I occupied which is that of an in-between or in-the-middle researcher. As Merriam et al. (2001) argue:

More recent discussions of insider/ outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated. In the real world of data collection, there is a good bit of slippage and fluidity between these two statuses (p. 405).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest that “we may be closer to the insider position or closer to the outsider position, but because our perspective is shaped by our position as a researcher, we cannot fully occupy one or the other of those positions” (p. 60). Thus, there is “the space in between” which ‘allows the position of both insider and outsider’ researcher within the research process (p. 60). This “partnership between an insider and an outsider would balance the advantages of both positions while minimising the disadvantages of each” (Breen, 2007, p.165-166). In accordance, I positioned myself as sliding about in the space between both the roles of insider and outsider. This in-the-middle role enabled me to gain the trust and closeness as well as the acceptance of participants. At the same time, this role enabled me to act as an outsider in order to further investigate the discourses surrounding the English language teaching and teachers’ identities in Iraq. Likewise, the in-between role enabled me to redirect and shift the focus of my research toward a heavier emphasis on the contexts and discourses that construct English language teaching in Iraq, and in relation to other teachers’ identities.

2.3 Being a teacher in Iraq

From outside, it is hard to understand what happens in the halls of education in Iraq, and difficult to comprehend the enormous amount of pressure on teachers.

In Iraq, the education sector has been and continues to be obedient to the policies of the dominant administrative forces. Where these once might have been Saddam's regime, these are now the prevailing Islamic parties or tribal groups, and different ministries such as the MoE. While in a society like Iraq the teacher is traditionally considered a holy person with high morals and important educational messages, at the same time, the teacher is regarded as responsible for the quality of education as well as the social, cultural, religious and political information received by the students. Hence, it can be said that the teacher, regardless of what ideas or views he or she holds, must be obedient to the social and political norms while dealing with all the variables including time constraints and the particular circumstances of their own employment.

Iraqi teachers have in common their Islamic faith (a very high percentage of the population), an understanding of the Arabic language, as well as a shared source of life (the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers for example), and the same lands and cities. However, despite what teachers have in common, Iraqi society consists of divided socio-cultural groups: civil, rural, tribal and sectarian, Arab, Kurd, Bedouin, Sunni, and Shia.

Overall, Iraqi society is a traditional society rooted in the past that sees education as a message and the teacher as a messenger. Since my childhood I have understood a teacher as a holy person who carries a message to be passed between generations. I have viewed teachers as moral and cultural models for everyone, not just students.

This view was universal, and it was reflected in what was said about teachers. I personally felt the extent of the importance placed on the teacher through

statements (of my father) like: ‘I could not smoke a cigarette in front of the teacher.’ ‘I could not walk in front of him.’ ‘It is impossible and disrespectful to sit next to the teacher.’ ‘I can remember that my teacher attended my marriage celebrations.’ And so on. I have so many memories of regarding teachers as sacred messengers. My father’s desire to see his son as a teacher was mixed with his past experiences with the English language as a language of the colonizers. He saw English as a potential source of strength, a kind of identification with the aggressor, and a language of war and colonization. He therefore told me stories about the teachers who came from the cities to the countryside to teach him and those in his community in the early 1950s. My father owed them a lot of respect and he considered them as messengers of civilization and education to community in the Iraqi countryside where rarely people could read or write even in Arabic. My father, who was a tribal leader, had hoped to see one of his sons as a teacher, especially an English language teacher (as teacher of the British language). He was saying ‘Zeki... if you learn the language of the enemy, you will be safe from their evil’.

On the other hand, my father created the feeling inside me that English language can be used as an insider tool to communicate with the outsiders. By referring to learning the English language as a tool to be safe, he indirectly taught me that “hey Zeki, English can be yours just like the Arabic, use it to understand the others and to communicate with them and to understand how they think”.

These stereotypes together with the stories and wishes of my father created my internalised image of the English language. In my imagination, my first image

about the English language was that it is the language of the outsiders, of the opposite, and of the different.

There was something inside me pushing me to experience and explore the English language. I still remember when one Friday night when I was in grade three while we were sitting in the living area watching a cowboy movie on TV, I told my elder brother that I wished I could understand what they were saying. The next day I came home from school to find that my father had bought me a dictionary and another book about how to learn English language in 30 days. They were the first two books I had in my whole life and I still have them until now. From that day, English started to grow up with me especially as I felt that my father wanted me to learn it. I was also looking to Mr. Ali, a relative who was an English language teacher, as a very educated man who knew something most of us do not know which was the English language. I was attracted to learn English more than Arabic. I had the feeling of that the English language teacher occupied a unique role in our society. I had a growing commitment to be a teacher of English which my father encouraged.

The above initial encounters with English language started my life journey as a teacher of English but within cultural conditions and images that labelled the English language as a language of the others. Thus, my initial encounters and images of Zeki the member of the Iraqi community as well as the later professional identity of Zeki the teacher is a product of the social and cultural determinates of where I was living as well as and whom I grew up among

Hence, there is heuristic value in foregrounding my autobiography as an analytical framework for my inquiry. In my thesis, it provides a framework for

engaging in dialogue with other Iraqi teachers who are likewise the product of the surrounding conditions that have prevailed in Iraq. Being a teacher in Iraq is more than just being confident, respectful, attending social activities or wearing a suit. Being a teacher in Iraq means that you are a model religiously, socially, and politically, as well as educationally. If we translate the term ‘Ministry of Education’ into Arabic, it consists of three words (وزارة التربية والتعليم). By linking each word to its individual meaning, we find that the word ‘Ministry’ means (وزارة), ‘education’ (تعليم), but the third word (التربية) is merged under the comprehensive meaning of education. In fact, the word itself implicitly refers to the process of growing up, behaving, being educated, and learning ethics and morals. Thus, education in Iraq does not refer only to the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction, but has a more comprehensive meaning. It refers to the process by which information, ideas, science, as well as attitudes, religious constants and social, national, cultural and political norm, which the educational system is based on, are transmitted and delivered to students. Accordingly, the Iraqi teacher is part of a wider comprehensive system representing all components, and the foundations of Iraqi society.

2.4 The story of my life at home in Iraq

I grew up in a city in southern Iraq with a predominantly Shia Muslim population. I am the second son of a family that has three sons. My father was a tribal dignitary, belonging to a family that was one of the feudal families owning large tracts of land in southern Iraq until the late 1960s. On winter nights, our cousins came to hear the stories my father told about his parents and

his grandparents. Some nights he would talk about their resistance to Ottoman rule, sometimes resistance to English rule, and sometimes conflicts and battles with other tribes to dominate a larger area of land. On other nights, the talk was about norms, values and religion. Arabic coffee and tea were served. The way of talking, his speaking, including his sitting and acting, were all based on culture and traditions (Since those days, I also follow the values and customs and distribute Arabic coffee and tea to guests, each according to their age and status).

The talk about politics was always present, about the Iraq-Iran war at the time, about who had died, who was lost or missing and who had been wounded by the war. Religion mixed with politics and the attitude to the war was a blend of religious, political and economic stances, as I listened to the sharp debates about the horrors of the war and their hatred of Saddam who was from the Sunni sect of Islam. The Shia have always been the main component of the southern Iraqi society, while at that time the Iraqi government represented the other main sect of Islam, the Sunni. Motivated by their sectarian allegiance and their hatred of Saddam, emotionally, my family were on the side of Iran against Saddam.

Under Saddam Hussein, my elder brother Mohammad was forced to join the army without his consent, as joining the army was compulsory service for everyone. If anyone evaded conscription and did not join the army, members of the security forces and the ruling party would break into their home and detain the women until he surrendered himself to the army.

In those days, my father would listen to the news of the Iran-Iraq war through the BBC radio. My mother used to interrupt his listening to the news by asking

him about 'Brigade 82' where my brother was serving and whether they had been attacked or not. Every morning my father went to the city police station to check the lists of 'martyrs' to see if my brother or one of my relatives was killed in the war.

My mother's family was opposed to the ruling regime of Saddam Hussein, while many of my father's relatives were either high-ranking officers in the army or ruling Ba'ath Party members. I still remember the day that my grandmother came, crying. She could not breathe with fear. She said that the security forces had stormed her house and smashed and confiscated the furniture as a kind of punishment because of their enmity towards the ruling regime. I went with my mother and we stood just around the corner of one of the houses near grandmother's and saw the security forces messing up the house and breaking and throwing furniture.

2.4.1 Childhood and the war

I first attended primary school when I was six years old. Almost every day I heard that a student was absent because their father was martyred in the war. The sound of gunfire in the air was a common everyday sign that the body of a martyr had arrived. The shooting was to attract attention. Behind the classroom walls, we could hear the voices of the mourners and the chants of condolences at the funeral of a martyr. Black clothing was the dominant dress of the general public, to reflect sorrow and solace. A black piece of cloth was on most of the walls, informing us of the death of a soldier on that day and in that battle.

Every morning, all the teachers and students had to chant the national anthem and raise the Iraqi flag. On Thursdays, the school principal raised the flag and shot three rounds from a machine gun into the air to instil the principles of sacrifice and fighting for nation, homeland and government. Slogans of the ruling Ba'ath Party, Arab nationalism (and invective against Britain, America and Israel) were repeated by teachers and students.

My mother used to tell us about her brothers' heroics in confronting the rule of Saddam Hussein and how close they were to the clerics in Najaf, which is the main sacred religious city of Shia Muslims in Iraq and in the world. Since childhood we would go to Najaf as a family to visit the shrine of Imam Ali (Peace is upon Him) and to visit the graves of the dead. In the city of Najaf clergy are everywhere, and police and security forces are too. My family, like other Shia Muslims, visited the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala to be blessed, and to 'inhale the air of Shia faith'. All this while Saddam was tightening the screws on everything that was Shia.

The Iran-Iraq war continued and people lost hope that the war would end. My father would always ask, but with sorrow and fear, 'Will the war remain until Zeki grows up and finishes his university studies and joins the army as Mohammed did?' The war was a nightmare that terrified Iraqis. I still remember in 1986 when my mother decided not to sleep so that she would not have nightmares about the war and the dangers for my brother Mohammed. A few months before the end of the war, we received no more news about my brother Mohammed. This prompted my father to go with a relative to the southern city of Basra, which was the scene of most of the fierce fighting. My father and the

relative arrived at the battalion supply lines of the battle and while they were asking for my brother Mohammed, a sniper shot that relative and left him dead.

In 1988 the war ended and people fired shots in the air to express their happiness. My brother Mohamed had survived and had completed the compulsory military service and started working as a teacher of history. And I had reached middle school.

On one morning in 1990, I woke up to hear my father saying that Saddam had invaded Kuwait and that Iraq had included Kuwait as a new province. Horror and fear dominated us all at the return of war.

Security forces were deployed in the streets to counter any potential reaction of Iraqis. The people of southern Iraq were the strongest opponents of the war, especially since the clerics of Najaf, which is the capital of the Shia faith, clearly declared the illegality of the occupation of Kuwait and the inadmissibility of praying in the occupied land of Kuwait. The war took place. Coalition forces destroyed the Iraqi army and the Iraqi state infrastructure. Tens of thousands of soldiers were killed at that time. As a result, the regime lost control and a revolution took place in all areas of central and southern Iraq.

Saddam and his government stood against the revolution and security forces launched more arrests, killing, and destruction. The cities of Najaf and Karbala had become targets for the Iraqi army strikes. The gap between the south of Iraq and the ruling authority had become larger and clearer especially after the storming of religious holy sites and the killing and arresting of Shia clerics.

A few months later, security had stabilized but signs of economic devastation had begun to emerge. Gradually, education started to fall to frightening levels. Many of the students were either working while studying or they had left school altogether to work, especially since most families had lost their father or eldest son during the war. The teachers' salaries were not enough for one week of necessities, and now the teachers were working in different fields such as construction and sheep herding in order to meet their families' financial needs.

In the 1970s, education had enjoyed a high status, especially with the beginning of rural migration to cities and the economic strength of the Iraqi Dinar. In the 1980s, education still had an important place, especially with the strong Iraqi currency. In addition, education and access to advanced stages of study meant avoiding joining the army until after the age of 23, which was an opportunity to avoid being part of the war compared to those who failed in their educational journey and had to serve in the army from the age of 18. The graduates of the Iraqi universities at that time were given the rank of an officer in the army.

But in the 1990s everything changed. The average salary of teachers was only \$3.00 a month, compared to \$180.00 a month in the 1970s and 1980s. The presence of teachers and students in the workplace (as construction workers, for example) had affected the status of teachers. Before 1990, students could not even sit in a popular cafe if they knew a teacher was there. Now all our thoughts had drifted away from the importance of education. The prevailing attitude was the question of what's the point of spending 16 years as a student to end up with a \$3.00 a month salary which was not a sufficient fund even for a day. Adding to that, teachers were targeted for arrest, or abuse and lack of

respect, by security forces or members of the ruling party. This was due to their religious or political views and stance.

With all of this, the teachers of English were in a difficult financial and social situation. However, English language teachers had the opportunity to work as private teachers, especially since English was one of the most difficult topics to study in Iraqi schools. Due to the schools' need for English language teachers, even in the army, the English teacher was permitted to serve for a shorter period of time (no more than 90 days) compared with the rest of the teachers who had to serve for one and a half years.

2.4.2 After high school

After I completed my high school studies, I had the option of being a teacher of physics or a teacher of English. In the end, my father successfully encouraged me to achieve his dream of seeing me as a teacher of the 'British language'. The College of Education in each University was called the Ba'ath Party College and the focus was on strengthening the power and views of the ruling regime. On every political occasion, the Faculty of Education was the first to hold demonstrations supporting the ruling party. If they expressed views different to this, many of the students were arrested, imprisoned or executed for their political and religious affiliations.

By the late 1990s, the state authority began to decline in its influence and power due to the economic siege and the intensity of the dispute with the West, which weakened the government and the army. In this climate, the strength of the

opposition and religious and tribal leaderships emerged as an alternative to the authority of the state.

2.4.3 Teaching

In 1999, I completed my university studies. I was happy to reach my aim and achieve my father's dream by graduating as a teacher of English. After graduating, I had to join the Iraqi army and served for about 60 days as a soldier. During that time, the soldiers used to call me Mr. Zeki. If they had an issue with one of sergeants, I would be their representative. One month after finishing the army service, I became a registered teacher. My father was proud and I heard him joking with my brother who is an engineer, saying, 'Hey Ahmed, you are designing and making things like cars... but Zeki is making people ... you have to say thank you to people like Zeki.' Dad made me happy and proud to be a teacher.

A few days after getting the official letter of employment as a teacher in one of the secondary schools in a rural area, someone came to our house to tell me that I had to attend an interview in the city security office. I was afraid of this call, and so was my family. The interview was a reminder of the importance of the state and the achievements of the Baath Party and the need to report any action that affects the security of the state, such as the use of satellite devices and listening to foreign news channels.

The morning I started my first day as a teacher, my father woke me up very early. 'Zeki, buy some chalk on your way... do not forget your teacher's black

bag.’ The school was in the countryside so I had to catch a mini bus to be there on time.

‘Who are you?’ the driver asked, ‘I know all my passengers.’

‘I am the new teacher of English,’ I replied.

‘Okay, I am not going to take any money from you,’ he declared.

I tried to pay him but he said, ‘It’s a shame to take money from you, Mr. Teacher’.

However, from my first day as a teacher I faced significant challenges. The first challenge was how to teach the English language in a tribal society that viewed everything foreign with suspicion. A second problem was how to create a balance between the teacher authority that I experienced when I was a student, and teaching in a rural area controlled by rules and the authority of the absolutely powerful Sheikh. Third, I had to create a balance between the content of the Sunni textbook we were using and the views of the Shia students, especially with the growing tendency towards Shiasm against the Sunni government. Fourth, I had to work out how to deal with female students. The school was mixed due to the small number of students. It was not possible to establish separate schools for males and females in a relatively small population in the countryside. Added to all this, the school itself was located within an area of high-ranking members of the government and was therefore the focus of security forces.

With all these challenges, the monthly salary at that time was increased to \$10.00 US which was not even enough to pay for transportation from my house

to the school. Then one day all teaching staff were called to go to the nearest branch of the Ba'ath Party. We were detained and insulted because of a complaint that we as teachers were not registered as members of the ruling Baath party. Therefore, we were given two choices: to quit our job as teachers, or to be members of the party. Reluctantly, we chose the second option.

Teaching went well enough that year, and then the next year I was able to move to work in the City. I was happy to work in the city of Shattra, as this would rid me of the pressure of the tribal authority and allow me a better opportunity to deliver my message as a teacher of English. However, there was an issue with the city's schools in regard to the religious curriculum. I had to deal carefully with this – not a word out of place – as any action or statement that might appear to conflict with religion, or support government perspectives, would get me into trouble.

2.4.4 Invasion

By the beginning of the new millennium, education was suffering from mismanagement and a lack of resources as the state was preoccupied with the conflict with the West. With the news of a military attack on Iraq, the year 2003 marked the beginning of a new and critical era in the modern history of Iraq that began with the US invasion, where on March 2003 US troops invaded the south of Iraq.

In those days teachers were in a very bad financial situation. The government then paid two months salaries to all teachers. All of us school teachers went to

one of the state banks to get paid but we found the bank officials in a state of suspicion, and in fear of being stormed or attacked. During the process of releasing the payments, the bank manager said that there was a mistake in the money order and it had to be corrected before releasing any money. Correcting the mistake had to be done by the Directorate of Education, which was in another city – the city of Nassiryah, forty-five kilometres away.

We decided to forget about the salaries and go home to be well prepared for the coming black days. But one of the teachers said he had no money to buy food for his children and that the markets had been closed because of the US attack. His words affected me a lot and thus I told the teachers that I would go to the Directorate of Education and correct the mistake. It was one of the most dangerous moments in my life. I asked the teachers to wait for me in the bank until I came back. If I did not come before the sun set, then they would need to inform my father of what had happened.

I could not find any car to take me to Nassiryah city and one of the taxi drivers told me that the American helicopters were attacking every car or person on the road. Then I found a group of Iraqi soldiers who had run away from one of the army bases. They said that they were waiting for their friend who was going to run away as well and he had organized a car to pick them up. I stayed with them until he came and picked us up. When I reached the Directorate of Education in Nassiryah, I found one officer who was about to leave the building. I told him why I was there.

‘Are you crazy?’ he said. ‘To come now just for correcting the money order?’

But he corrected the problem; then it was left to me to deal with the next problem, which was how to get back to my city Shattrah. I was lucky. I found a lift with a Bedouin who had a truck full of date palms that he intended to use for his animals as part of his preparations for the coming hard days.

Returning to the bank at 2.00 pm, I found all the teachers hiding inside the bank building. They feared US bombing could start in our city at any time. All of that was just for \$20.00 – two months' salary for each teacher.

Soon after this the ruling regime collapsed and all the state institutions were destroyed. It was a hard time for everyone as murder, revenge and destruction spread. Schools were destroyed and student records were burnt because of looting and bombing, and many teachers were killed because of their membership with the Baath Party.

Restructuring education was almost impossible. However, after nearly two months, teachers began to return to school under the Coalition Provisional Authority in the absence of an Iraqi central government. The security and social situation were still in a state of decentralization. Tribal, religious, and armed groups had emerged; all of them trying to impose their control in the cities of the south, with the spread of weapons and military equipment in the hands of everyone. As teachers, we had to try to restore education under all these circumstances and among all groups. We had to start a new phase of dealing with whoever extended their control and power in the city.

That period was one of the most difficult stages experienced by Iraqi teachers. The educational authority had been transformed from supervising and regulating one system controlled by centralized decision-making, to a period of transition

governed by several bodies and several forces that had no connection with education.

The US civilian governor was working to manage the country's affairs in a transitional period. Tribal groups and Islamic parties were imposing their authority. During that period, there was no actual authority to follow up regarding the process of teaching, to protect the teaching staff, or to ensure the way schools operated. An example of this is that at the end of 2003 and after the return to schools there were final examinations as at the end of each academic year. My school was attacked and teachers were threatened by a tribal group, just because of the failure of a student in the final exam. The absence of the state and the control of tribal customs had left the education system without protection. Therefore, the teachers themselves, including myself, resorted to their tribal authorities in order to be provided with protection.

The beginning of 2004 was another phase of transition. Shia religious parties dominated the decision-making. The visits of the Islamic parties members to the school on a regular basis occurred with the intention of directing the teachers to follow the ideological vision of these parties. The students themselves were involved in those Islamic parties, and teachers had to deal with them carefully.

One day, the Ministry of Education delivered school bags, books and stationery for the students. The teachers' responsibility was to distribute these bags to students during the teaching session.

The next day, one of the Islamic parties ordered the return and destruction of these bags because of a US-Iraqi cooperation slogan on the outside of the bag. Unlike in the previous era of Saddam Hussein's rule, teachers were now obliged

to instil the Islamic slogans that had been banned during Saddam's rule. Even in my English lessons I would start the lesson with a religious lecture if there was a religious occasion at the time.

During this time, before the 2005 elections, which resulted in the installation of a new democratic Iraqi government, the media was talking about an American educational invasion. Generally, the American invasion created a negative view of English language teaching in Iraq.

Until my last day as a teacher of English in Iraq, which was 24/5/2008, education in general and ELT in particular were impacted directly by the major changes in the country.

The election of 2005 introduced new faces with Western ideas, but under the cover of Islam. The MoE was allocated to the Shia Islamist parties with the presence of a US adviser. But the real problem was that the MoE was operated and managed in three different directions. The Minister was an Islamist with new ideas, but he was not specialized in education. As for the US adviser, he was the supervisor of the process to open Iraq to the West in the field of education. The General Managers were decision-makers and were the remnants of the previous regime with old ideas.

This situation continued until I left Iraq in 2008. Disputes for power between Islamic (Sunni or Shia) political parties directly reflected on educational processes. Terrorism and the sectarian conflict overshadowed education and the training and functioning of teaching staff. Many competent Iraqi specialists in the field of education left Iraq due to the consequences of sectarian or political killings.

Today curriculum and textbooks have changed from what they were under Saddam regime. Teachers are struggling to find harmony in their work between the pressure of Islamic concepts on the one hand, and cultural openness desired by the state on the other hand. In addition, Arab values, tribal and Iraqi customs, the culture of the country, the ethics of Iraqi society and the status of the Arabic language, are still all present in the classroom, and teachers have to deal with them very carefully.

Although an important figure in the educational process, the Iraqi teacher remains absent in the decision-making processes. Changing curriculums, textbooks or teaching methods occur in isolation from the teacher's opinion, regardless of the teacher's own abilities. The preparation, training, and rehabilitation of the Iraqi teacher remain neglected.

Teacher preparation in the Education Colleges is completely different from the reality of teaching. Even when a new method of teaching was adopted (for example Communicative Language Teaching or CLT), the MoE and the decision-makers did not take into consideration the role of the teacher in applying this method, even though the teacher must be seen as the main factor in the success or failure of curriculum change.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my own story as an Iraqi teacher. Within this, I have highlighted the influential stages in my life that shaped me. By highlighting the construction, negotiation or construction of my own identity

and the experience that were involved in the formation of myself, Zeki (the Iraqi person, teacher, or researcher), I establish the importance of identity as a conceptual base for my research, which I will develop further in Chapter 5.

The next chapter explores the literature on English and English language teaching in Iraq.

Chapter 3: Setting the context

3.1 Overview

This chapter describes the context of Iraq and identifies some themes which are significant for my study.

First, I give an overview of Iraq which highlights the history, and the current demographic, cultural and religious composition of Iraq as Rizvi, et al. (2007) emphasize: “to see beyond Iraq’s glorious past, at least culturally, historically, and the current situation to make an analysis on the direction of Iraq, especially in the area of education” (p. 2).

Second, I take a closer look at the linguistic affiliation of Iraq, which pays particular attention to the role and status of the Arabic language in the composition of Iraqi society. Since the Arabic language signifies moral, religious, and cultural status (Anderson, 2005; Suleiman, 2013), it must be taken into account as a powerful factor in the construction of Iraqi teachers’ identities and the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL).

Third, I outline the structure, functions, the developmental stages, and other features of the Iraqi education including English language teacher education.

3.2 Profile of Iraq

The ancient history of Iraq contributed to humanity and the construction of early civilization as well as the original creation of the concept of the city,

the first code of laws, and the first written language. Iraq is the Mesopotamia of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, whose banks produced the oldest civilizations of humanity. It is the cradle of civilization and the region whose land gave rise to some of the world's earliest major civilizations (Sumerians, Akkadians, Assyrians, and Babylonians). It is the land of Noah and Ibrahim (or Abraham).

Iraq has played a unique role in the evolution of human civilization, with the one of oldest known communities of human settlement being on the banks of the Twin Rivers – the Euphrates and the Tigris. The great cities of Uruk, Ur (see Fig. 1 below), Akkad, Ashur, Babylon, Baghdad and Kufa have been ‘the major centres of culture and power’ for much of Iraq’s history’ (Ghareeb & Dougherty, 2004). The ancient Sumerians of Iraq “produced a whole cascade of first literacy, numeracy, monumental building, organized religion, organized warfare and state” (Maisels, 1993, p. 1).



Figure 1: Ziggurat of Ur. [Image source: <https://www.spiritualsun.com/spiritual-sites/the-great-ziggurat-of-ur-aligns-to-summer-solstice-sunrise>]

Ancient Iraqis created the first laws of humanity on the Obelisk of Hammurabi (see Fig. 2 below) and perhaps wrote the first words in the history of mankind and built up the first advanced irrigation systems.



Figure 2: The Hammurabi Obelisk. [Image source: <https://www.history.com/news/8-things-you-may-not-know-about-hammurabis-code>]

Later Kufa (south of Baghdad) was the second capital of the Islamic state during the Succession of Imam Ali. During the Abbasid Empire era, when Islamic civilization had flourished, “Baghdad became a world centre for knowledge, culture, and creativity attracting thinkers, writers and scientists from everywhere” (Alwan, 2004, p. 11).

Contemporary Iraq has an extremely diverse ethno-religious history with three major groups – Shia (Muslims), Sunnis (Muslims) and Kurds (majority are Muslims) as well as Christians, Mandaean, and Yazidis (Salloum, 2013). This rich cultural diversity is dominated by Islam. Islam is the state religion and the

majority of Iraqis are Muslims. Generally, the Muslims are split to two groups or sects (Sunni and Shia). Shia represents the minority in the Islamic world but they are the majority in Iraq (see Fig. 3 below). Iraq represents the heartland of Shia Muslims, where ‘millions of pilgrims visit the Imam Hussein’s mosque in Karbala’ city each year (Hayes, 2007, p. 64).

Arabic language is the state official and the first language for most Iraqis (although Kurdish is the official language in Kurdistan in northern Iraq) and is also representative of the holy language of the holy Quran. The traditions and social justice of Iraq are inspired by Islamic law and the Arab origin of the majority of Iraqis. However, characteristic Iraqi customs and local cultural perspectives emerge from the framework and scope of Islam and the Arab culture that prevail in most Middle Eastern countries (Salloum, 2013).

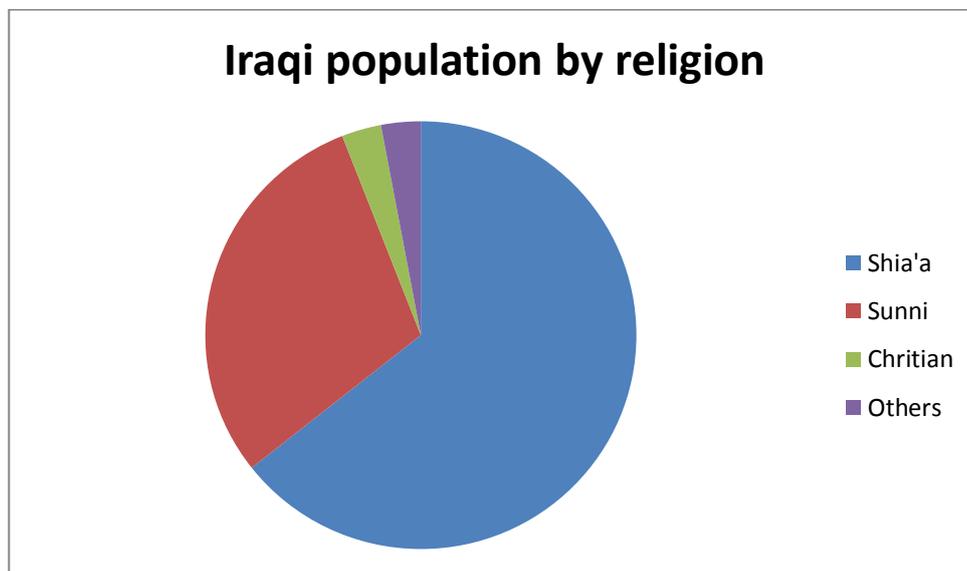


Figure: 3 Iraqi population by religion . Note: Muslim (official) 95-98% (Shia 64-69%, Sunni 29-34%), Christian 1% (includes Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Assyrian Church of the East), other 1-4% (Figures are based on CIA Factbook, retrieved July 19, 2018 from: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html>)



Figure 4: The shrine of Imam Hussein, which is visited by millions of Muslim Shia annually.[Image source: researcher]

Tribes and tribal belonging have an influential role in Iraq. According to Hassan (2007), “Iraq is home to approximately 150 tribes that are composed of about 2,000 smaller clans, with varying sizes and influence” in which “Seventy-five percent of the total Iraqi population are members of a tribe or have kinship to one” (p.1). Tribal affiliation and tribal norms are important factors in the lives of Iraqis. Yaphe (2000) claims that “Iraqi’s people have long been defined by their *nasabiya* [tribal belonging], their loyalties to tribes, clan and family” (p. 51). The Sheikh who is the head of a tribe is traditionally responsible for protecting his people from harm. Sheikhs also act as mediators and judges

during tribal conflicts, settle disputes, resolve property claims, and enforce the tribal laws. In more modern times, Tribes and tribal authorities play an important role during the Ottoman rule, the British mandate, the Saddam Hussein regime, and the US occupation (Hassan, 2007).



Figure5: Mudhif (the house of reeds) has a tribal and cultural symbolism that plays a large role in social, political and cultural life in the southern society of Iraq. It is the place where southern Iraqis used to gather for cultural occasions, tribal discussion making, and to solve tribal issues. [Image source: researcher, during the researcher's tribal gathering]

3.3 The holy discourse of the Arabic language

Arabic “as the medium of scripture, worship, theological, and juristic discourse” plays an enormously important role in the Arab Islamic societies (Ibrahim & Martin, 2006, p. 609). Shah (2010) states that “the Arabic language, which is the mother tongue of over 250 million people across the Middle East and North

Africa, serves not only as a powerful symbol of Arab national identity, but it is also the sacrosanct language of the scriptural sources of Islam” (p. 3).

While Arab societies are highly diversified and consist of heterogeneous systems of social differentiation based on various ethnic, linguistic, religious, sectarian, tribal, regional, and national identities’ (Al-Krenawi & Graham, 2000), the Arabs also have “congruence between social and communal cleavages, ethnics, religious, tribal, and regional communities” (Barakat, 1993, p. 3). Because in all these societies, the Arabic language is the representation of their Arabian origin. It also represents to Arab societies the holy language of the Holy Qur’an, and their Islamic religion (Ahmed, 2010).

Suleiman (2003) refers to the dominance of Arabic in the ideological formulations of Arab national identity, noting that:

The formulation of Arab nationalism, whether embryonic or fully fledged in character, [is] invariably built around the potential and capacity of Arabic in its standard form to act as a linchpin of identity of all those who share it as their common language (p. 224).

In its social capacity, Arabic acts as a representative of Arab national identity and as “a social agent” that facilitates and creates a “feeling of interpersonal intimacy” among Arabic speakers (ibid, p. 134).

Eisele (2002) states that prior to Islam, the Arabic language united Arabs as one “single culture” and later, after the appearance of Islam, Arabic represented a religious cause and thus united them “linguistically as Islam unites them doctrinally” (p. 7). Since the advent of Islam, the Arabic language has been associated with Islamic religion, Islamic culture, and Muslim identities as a

common trait of all Muslims around the world. Lewis and Churchill (2008) mention that:

Arabic remains of central importance to Muslims everywhere, whatever their native language. And in all the multiple languages of the Muslim world, whatever their origins, there is a vast vocabulary of loan-words derived from Arabic (p.138).

In other words, Arabic cannot be separated from Islam. It is therefore considered as a central and universal language for Muslims' faith. Turner (1997) acknowledges that "whether spoken or written, the Arabic language is the second fundamental bond that, together with Islam's faith, has held the world's Muslim community together for fourteen centuries" (p. 15). The holy status of the Arabic language in the hearts of Muslims is due to two facts. Firstly, the prophet Mohammed, who appeared in the Arabian Peninsula, called for and guided the Islamic message through his Arabic tongue and his Arab followers. Secondly, the Arabic language is the language of the holy Qur'an and the Islamic Da'wah (the Islamic call to prayer).

Therefore, a central question for this study is that how the history of Iraq, including the close ties between Arabic and Islam mediates and shapes the professional practice of English teachers in Iraq. Also, how the Iraqi English language teachers situate themselves within the interface between Arabic (as a language of religion and representative of their nationality) and English as a language of "others"? What challenges has been experienced by English language teachers throughout teaching the English language within the context of the Islamic foundations and Arab nationalism as well as the holy religious and national status of the Arabic language? How might the foreign English

language shape and reshape Iraqi teachers' identities within this context that considers the Arabic language as the powerful, holy representative of faith and culture?

3.4 The profile of education in Iraq

The MoE is responsible for implementing educational policy, planning and monitoring, curriculum design and development, supervising the religious and moral aspects of education, managing schools and teachers, and developing assessments and examination standards. The General Directorate of Education (which represents the MoE in the provinces and the major cities) is in charge of delivering educational services, teacher training, school financial support, and cooperating with education committees. The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for the higher education system including supervising and monitoring the private and public universities, colleges, and institutions.

Today the Iraqi school education consists of several levels. With extremely rare exceptions, all schools are girls-only schools or boys-only schools. Pre-school education lasts for two years for children aged 4-5 years. Primary education, which is compulsory for children aged 6-11 years, lasts for six years. Secondary education for the age group of 12-18 years comprises two stages: the intermediate stage and the preparatory stage. The intermediate stage, which lasts for three years, leads to a certificate of intermediate studies (Third Form Baccalaureate). According to Alwan (2004), "the intermediate school week is divided into 34 class periods covering sixteen subjects. Students must pass a

“set of comprehensive national exams to go on to Preparatory School” (p. 16).

The preparatory stage, which also lasts for three years too, leads to the preparatory education certificate (Sixth Form Baccalaureate) (Alwan, 2004)

Since the fall of the Ottoman Empire (1918-1920), Iraqi education has been influenced by political and economic changes. First it was affected by the establishment of the British colonial mandate in 1920, then by the establishment by the British of the Iraqi kingdom in 1921, the discovery of oil in 1927, independence in 1932, the war with Iran (1980-1988), the first Gulf War (1990-1991), the embargo (from 1990), the end of the Saddam Hussein era, the U.S. occupation in 2003, and since then the new political and educational policies. In spite of its brilliant history of great people and civilizations, the black gold (oil) of Iraq and its important role in the Arab world, Iraq became a land of death, war, with a weak economy, and international isolation, especially after the Gulf War 1991.

Oil has played an important role in the economy, politics, and social life of many countries; it has had particular importance in the Middle East as the first and the most valuable source of wealth and development.

The Middle East, especially the Gulf countries and Iraq, has since experienced a massive transformation from weak and faltering economies to emergence as modern and central elements of the worldwide economic and political systems (see Al-Moneef, 2006). Fox et al. (2006) state that “in less than one life time, the Gulf transformed from one of the disengaged parts of the world to a strategic fracture point of globalization in a regional context where political goals of many local and world players collide with oil as a prize” (p. 5).

Iraq established its first modern education system in 1921, which can be seen as the first step toward a modern comprehensive education system. This first modern system was limited to a few government schools together with some foreign and private missionary schools (Abbas, 2012). However, the period after the British colonialism of 1921 witnessed remarkable developments in the educational and societal spheres, clearly evidenced in the expansion of education and the dramatic increase in numbers of schools and pupils. For example, in 1920-1921, Iraq had only 88 public primary schools and 3 secondary schools. By 1931-1932 this had risen to 316 primary and 19 secondary schools, growing further to 878 primary and 71 secondary schools in 1944-1945 (Bashkin, 2008)

The discovery of oil in 1927, and later the nationalization of oil in 1972, largely led to the growing regional role of Iraq as one of the most important decision makers in the Middle East. The discovery of oil was also reflected significantly in the development of Iraqi education (and hence the role of English language teaching). During this time, in order to shift from a rural/agricultural society to an industrial, civilized society, Iraq developed a new emphasis on the spread of education, which was assisted by the commencement of scholarship programs, which sent students to Europe and America. Because of the transformation and the growth of Iraq's economy, by 1970 Iraq had reached a high level of educational achievement. Up to the early 1980s, the education system in Iraq was high-performing, considered as "one of the best in the Middle East and highly praised throughout in both access and quality of education" (Abbas, 2012. p. 224).

However, after the establishment of the republic in 1958, oil impacted the social, educational and political life of Iraqis. As a result, the Middle East region in general, with Iraq and the Gulf in particular, “suddenly became a significant new focus of interest” to the most powerful nations, and became a site of conflict of these major Western countries (Khalidi, 2004, p. 81). Iraq attracted the attention of Western governments and policy makers because of “its massive oil reserves, its strategic location, its growing influence with the Gulf States and its potential for Arab leadership” (Dawisha, 1980, p. 153). The West and most obviously the United States were “intimately engaged in the politics and economics of the region, for reasons ranging from their dependence on petroleum resources, to religious affinities, to the desire to reconstruct Middle Eastern states in a liberal democratic image” (Gerner & Schwedler, 2008, p. 2).

The year 1980 saw the Iraq–Iran war, which overshadowed the educational, political, and social progress of the country; and exhausted the budget, people, and the state institutions. Merrouche (2006) argues that:

War may affect education through several channels: school destructions, reduced physical access to schools, and reduction of school inputs. Hence, war may have an impact on both the quality and quantity of education (p. 2)

The eight years of war resulted in a lack of participation in the education system as well as affecting the education infrastructure and diminishing government financial support. The Iraqi government imposed compulsory military service on university graduates. Schools, like all other state institutions, had shortages of staff, including teachers and administrators, which affected the whole educational process. The UNESCO report of 2011 mentions that “the amount

spent on the education of each student dropped from US \$620 in 1989 to just US \$47 in 2002” (UNESCO, 2011, p.22). Also, the students' fear of failing and joining the army affected their concentration, and thus affected the quality of graduate students, since the only purpose was to pass a grade level and transfer to another course to avoid being part of the war machine (Alwan, 2004).

The first Gulf War in 1991 lasted for 31 days during which schools and infrastructure were destroyed. Beyond the tragedy of war, an embargo was imposed on Iraq, which subjected Iraq to the oil-for-food program that had been established by the United Nations in 1995 (Dougherty& Ghareeb, 2013). During that time, the education sector was neglected and weakened, students left school to work, and teachers' salaries were reduced. Thus, teaching became the weakest, worst, and most undesirable profession (Alwan, 2004). The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq in 2003 reported that a “reduction in teacher salaries from 500-1000 per month in 1990 to 5 -10 dollars” “has resulted in an increased turnover of teachers looking for better paid jobs elsewhere” (p. 2). Teaching staff passed through harsh times, especially during the embargo, which affected the scientific and cultural levels of the teachers and their performance and devotion toward the educational process, at a time when Iraq desperately needed to rebuild more than attending to the reconstruction of physical infrastructure.

As a result, two decades of wars have affected the economy and “have decimated the educational infrastructure in Iraq” (Rizvi, et al., 2007, p. 11).

Alwan (2004) states that “major wars, disastrous military adventures, and irrational policies have resulted in a steady decline in all basic human services

with education being the most affected” (p. 8). Mackey makes a comparison between the pre-Saddam era (1970-1979) and the Saddam era, which summarizes the great decline in economic and educational reality in Iraq:

I stepped into Iraq in 1998 to find the country a ghost of the Iraq of the late 1970. The Iraqis have been devastated by two wars.... Seven years of sanctions had reduced members of the vaunted middle class created by the oil boom to paupers whose only guaranteed food supplies come from rations distributed under rules imposed by the United Nations. In comparison to 1970 the streets were deserted.... Across the city, the shelves of stores that had once bulged with imported goods from the United States, Europe and Asia were almost empty. The educational system that had promised to educate every child and to train the finest doctors, engineers, and scholars was in shambles.... But more than anything; Iraq has become a prison in which everyone lived in fear of its warden —Saddam Hussein (Mackey, 2002 as cited in Rizvi, et al., 2007, p.5).

These difficult times experienced by Iraq resulted in a deteriorating education system suffering from multiple issues. The reliance on textbooks, replacing well trained teachers by less qualified teachers, and second rate and uninspiring curriculum were major factors that affected Iraqi education during the Saddam Hussein era. The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq in 2003 reported that the Iraqi ‘curriculum and textbooks have not been revised for about two decades, and teaching methodologies are not updated’ (p. 2). Issa and Jamil (2010), who refer to the Iraqi situation as “a serious and painful orientation”, mention that an isolated teaching force and weak supervision also affected education in Iraq (p. 364).

The year 2003 witnessed the most critical period in the modern history of Iraq. Coalition forces dominated by the US took over the country and ended the Saddam Hussein era under the pretence of seeking out nuclear weapons. While attempts followed by US forces to create a new democratic system of government in Iraq, the nation struggled with underdevelopment, a lack of stability, and U.S. occupation, which led to sectarian war, sectarian killings, an absence of security, and the spread of kidnappings for reasons ranging from religious sectarianism to political affiliation. This affected Iraqi society immensely, including those involved in the educational process. According to a UNESCO report in 2007, 280 academics had been killed since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, 296 ancillary education staff were killed in 2005 alone, and 180 teachers were killed between February and November 2006. O'Malley (2007) acknowledges that:

In Iraq where armed groups have conflicting aims, academics may be targeted because they are seen as collaborators with Saddam Hussein's regime, or by Baathists for the opposite reason; or because the university is located in a Shia or a Sunni area; or because some armed groups are intent on liquidating the intellectual leadership of the country in preparation for imposing a theocracy (p. 2).

At the same time, in 2003 Iraq witnessed the formation of a new government, which sought to recover the reality of the country including education. "Education was seen as a key factor in the complete reconstruction of Iraq by many policy makers" (Rizvi, et al, 2007, p. 32); therefore, "one of the major tasks in the re-building of Iraq is education reform" (Alwan 2004, p. 8). Alwan (2004), who was a former Minister of Education in Iraq, acknowledged in 2004

that the development and modernization of Iraqi education was a “formidable task and will require both political will and a sustainable commitment at the highest level of the national government and its partners in the global community” (p. 43). He also acknowledged that:

The problems facing the education system range from inefficient management, corruption, and severely deteriorating physical infrastructure, to those related to inadequate access and inequalities in education, low quality, weak preparation and training of teachers, a highly politicised, outdated and distorted curriculum, and ineffective instructional methods (pp. 9-10).

The transition to democracy after 2003, as well as the political changes, required a reform of the Iraqi educational system based on a new educational philosophy and goals. Government policy initiated this much-needed reform, and the process of changes began which is still taking place. The new Iraqi education policy aims to provide a high-quality education system that is able to respond effectively to aspirations for a well-educated, modern, cohesive, and democratic society. Hence the new education system in Iraq after 2003 is guided by the following major policy directions:

1. Reaching universal access to quality education; eliminating drop-outs and ensuring free access to basic education irrespective of ethnic origin or socioeconomic status; promoting access to life-long learning.
2. Eliminating disparities between girls and boys, regional and rural/urban disparities, ethnic and socio-economic differences.
3. Upgrading quality to compete at the international level and increasing relevance to local needs, labour market, and sustainable development.

4. Depoliticising education and ensuring the independence of education; promoting human rights, freedom of thought and expression, tolerance, and national unity.
5. Participation: Strengthening community involvement in planning, executing, and evaluating the education system; achieving closer coordination with higher education and other relevant sectors; encouraging the contribution of the private sector to quality education.
6. Changing to evidence-based planning, performance-driven evaluation, and decentralised management; overcoming corruption (Alwan, 2004, p. 42-43).

Restoring critical infrastructure and re-vitalizing the education sector is now a top priority for Iraqis and must be at the heart of the reconstruction effort in the new Iraq. The Iraqi education sector has several challenges and heavy legacies in the renewal of the education system, including changing pedagogy and updating the textbooks. Training and rehabilitation of teachers has emerged as one of the pressing issues of particular concern to the education sector; as Alwan (2004) states: basic training and preparation of teachers is weak. For example, “only 5% of primary school teachers have university degrees’ and their ‘skills in communication and information technology are seriously limited” (p. 40).

3.5 English language education in Iraq

Al-Akraa (2013) explains that in Iraq, English language learning/ teaching starts in primary education. During that, students learn English orally with the emphases placed on memorizing, and learning the alphabet. In the fifth and sixth grades of primary education, students make real contact with the foreign language with more written practices and more practical learning. In intermediate and secondary school education, students learn more advanced English and practise the four skills, which represents real contact with English for communication. Thus, the selection of the secondary school education as a context of this study came from: firstly, the fact that secondary education represents the first communicative contact with the English language, and secondly, it is the context in which I participated as a teacher and with which I was familiar.

English is part of the modernizing process and serves as a tool to institute a new, more open, more developed educational system. Hence the status of English language is an area of interest to all Iraqi educators and policy makers and is integral to achieving the basic goal of equipping students with sufficient knowledge to meet the demands of global education. As part of this endeavour it is necessary to improve the quality of English language teaching and to develop students' communicative fluency. At present, English is a compulsory subject in all the school levels in the Iraqi education system. It is a core subject that is taught alongside other subjects such as science, maths and Arabic. Up to 2007, English was only taught from Year 5 in the primary level. In 2007, this was changed and English started to be taught from the third year in the primary

level as part of the new educational strategy to increase the English language level in the Iraqi schools (Abbas, 2012). In 2014, English language started to be taught from grade one in the primary schools. The number of weekly English sessions is five and each session lasts 45 minutes.

Since the early stages of education in Iraq, teachers have been regarded as important figures in the advancement of Iraq. King Faisal I (who was the King of Iraq from 1921-1933) said that teachers are “men of science who helped create the next generation of Iraqi businessmen, lawyers, and engineers” (Bashkin, 2008, p. 230).

In Iraq, English teachers are typically non-native English speakers. The teachers hired by the MoE have a Bachelor’s degree in English literature or English education. Since the Iraqi MoE provides the curriculum, English teachers have no control over the materials they use or the teaching approach they take. They depend on the textbook and syllabus that they have been given for guidance. Furthermore, they do not have the opportunity to choose additional resources in teaching English because their syllabi and lesson plans are limited by the set Ministry of Education schedule (Abdul-Kareem, 2009; Mahmood, 2016).

Colleges of Education/ Departments of English Language across the country provide a four-year course for students to qualify to teach English in the Iraqi intermediate and secondary schools, graduating with Bachelor degrees in Arts/Education. Initially and after considering the total scores of the secondary education (year 12) especially in the English language subject, prospective English teachers have to go through interviews, assessment, and foreign

language skills tests that examine their motivation, skills, ethical values and interests.

The MoE is also responsible for training the in-service teachers through the General Directorate of Pre-service and In-service Training and Educational Development (GDPITED), Department of Training and Educational Development, and the Preparation and Training Departments in General Directorates of Education in the Governorates (20 Departments: 6 in Baghdad & 14 in the Governorates) (Mahmood, 2016). As a result of the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Iraq and that of the United Kingdom”, the Institute of Educational Training and Development was established for the first time on May 27, 1971 as a department of the Iraqi MoE in order to organize in-service training programs for teachers and other educational staff (Al-Juboury, 2006, p. 568). It was successfully able to issue a quarterly journal as a well as to obtain scholarships from the British Council for training the trainers in the United Kingdom (Al-Juboury, 2006). Also, the MoE undertook the task of organizing further training courses, training the trainers, and setting up the goals of training. During 1989, this institute organized 242 training programs for a total of 7265 trainees (active teachers and educational administrators). During the 1990s, “all activities of this institute appear to have ground to a halt following the sanctions and ensuing resource constraints” (UNESCO Report of 2003, p. 44).

Generally, education in Iraq suffered during the 1980s due to war with Iran, the isolation of Iraq resulting from the embargo and the economic sanctions in the 1990s, and the lack of resources and the politicization of the education system

which led to steady decay of the education system, with the most marked effects in teacher training and the quality of teachers (Alwan, 2004; UNESCO reports of 2003, 2010-2014).

Atiya (1987) conducted a study on 220 English language primary school teachers in Baghdad in Iraq. The study aimed to evaluate the in-service training of English primary school teachers in Iraq. It was mainly intended to diagnose the issues and areas of inadequacies in that teacher training and to shed light on the reasons behind these inadequacies. The study included 220 English primary school teachers in Baghdad. The questionnaire concluded that theoretical knowledge and the practice in the classroom had deteriorated. In addition, the study found that the teacher training was still very basic and traditional. Further, the study recommended systematic planning and evaluation of teacher training courses in order to achieve a better outcome.

Since 2003, the MoE has been investing in improving the quality of education and teaching and seems anxious to improve English language teaching. English language now is seen as one of the most essential elements driving Iraqi education and future development. To support its many initiatives to develop the education system, the MoE has worked on improving the quality of teaching and in-service teacher education: this involves assessing ongoing teacher training, and designing a quality assurance program for teacher training.

Accordingly, various steps and strategies have been adopted in order to reinvent Iraqi education. In 2003, teachers were re-oriented through teachers' training programs as part of the RISE project (Revitalization of Iraqi Schools and Stabilization of Education) (Alwan, 2004). It was initiated by the United States

Agency for International Development (USAID) as part of the massive reconstruction program for Iraq after 2003. The RISE program aimed to promote rapid school enrolment and sustain retention in the school system, and thus contribute to democracy, equality, stability, economic growth and the improved well-being of Iraqi children and families.

The main aim of RISE was:

To change the methods of teaching and learning in secondary schools in Iraq by adopting modern methodology in conveying items of the syllabi, establishing new values in teaching methodology primarily based on students, and preparing them for expected changes in teaching methodology in the classroom (RISE final report, March 2004, p. 2).

The RISE program conducted a rapid initial assessment program of Iraqi schools and then moved to set up demonstration programs in selected schools in both urban and rural areas. The demonstration programs included life skills modules covering such topics as tolerance, conflict reduction and resolution, trauma reduction, nutrition and basic health skills. Other demonstration programs included child-centred education, active learning, training teachers on using participatory techniques and peer learning. Teacher training programs were conducted in collaboration with different organizations such as Creative Associates International, which is an American organization, for “teacher training on modern methods and strategies of teaching” (Rizvi, et al., 2007, p. 26). When the MoE initiated the education reform, the plan was “to train 700 trainers of teachers, supervisors and administrators through an intensive one-week training in instructional methods, classroom practices”, who were then

expected to train the rest of the teaching forces (p. 48). The training was originally held from September 2003 to the end of January 2004 (Alwan, 2004).

In 2006 the Iraqi MoE, UNESCO Iraq office, and other organizations initiated the Training of Trainers in Teacher Education for a Sustained Quality Education project. The project started in July 2006, and ended in December 2010. It was implemented by the UNESCO Iraq Office and funded by the European Union (EU) through the United Nations Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDGITF). The project aimed to “develop a teacher training network for Iraq; create a critical mass of highly qualified teacher trainers; establish modern and updated curriculum for colleges of science and education; and formulate a national strategy for teacher education” (Training of Trainers in Teacher Education for a Sustained Quality Education report, 2011, p. 3). The project partnered with:

- Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHESR) Baghdad-Erbil / Ministry of Education (MoE) Baghdad-Erbil;
- Colleges of Education and Science in 4 targeted universities: University of Salah Al Din, University of Baghdad, University of Anbar, and University of Basra;
- Six International Universities: University of Alberta (Canada), University College Dublin (Ireland), University of Foggia (Italy), University of Buckingham (England), Bangor University (Wales) and Cairo University (Egypt) (Matthew, 2011, p. 3-4).

In the following years, the MoE has continued to organize training courses. Training Courses held by GDPITED/ Department of Training and Educational Development, and the Preparation and Training Departments in General Directorates of Education in the Governorates trained 45,816 primary teachers and 808 secondary teachers of all subjects including the English language teachers in the 2014 academic year 2014 (Mahmood, 2016)

However, Mahmood (2016) conducted a study to evaluate the English language teacher training courses in Iraq. He selected a representative sample of 49 EFL secondary school teachers who had been enrolled in one or more training courses. The questionnaire aimed to evaluate the training courses from the perspective of trainees. The study concluded that “there is a need for improving the current training process, this means that the existing training courses need a systematic review regarding the aim, course content, training package, time, planning, and the qualified trainers” (p. 49). Also, the study found that “there is a deficiency in dealing with adequate skills to teach various activities in the textbook” (p.49). In addition, the study revealed that these training courses did not recognize the problems the teachers face in the real teaching situations. Finally, the study emphasizes the “need for diversity in the techniques of assessment which contribute to the development of these courses, and there must be a follow-up to the teachers after the completion of the training courses” (p.50).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the context of the study, with some historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic details about Iraq. I show that the Iraqi society consists of values, customs and traditions rooted in the Arabic origin and the Islamic faith. The chapter also included an overview of education in Iraq which reflects the extent to which teacher education has been impacted by educational policy as well as the many changes in the country whether before or after 2003.

Chapter 4: English and English language teaching in Iraq

4.1 Overview

In this chapter, I explore in greater detail the discourses associated with the English and English language teaching in Iraq. In the first part of the chapter, I look at the historical factors (e.g., British colonialism and the U.S. invasion), religious and cultural views and perspectives, and ideologies (e.g., the ‘clash of powers’ or ‘clash of civilizations’) that have accompanied the recent presence and extension of English in the Middle East and Muslim world in general and Iraq in particular. Section 4.3 sheds light on the initial contact with the English language in Iraq as well as the English language teaching curriculum development until 2003. Section 4.4 takes a closer look at the post-war 2003 curriculum development with particular attention to the adoption of CLT as a teaching method. Within this section, I undertake review of some literature on the topic of adopting CLT in a non-Western setting and context.

4.2 Iraq and Islam; English and the West

As I described in Chapter 3, Iraq and the Iraqi education are religiously, socially, and culturally framed by Islam and dominated by Islamic norms and foundations. However, foreign language teaching is a social and cultural activity where the transmission of certain features and characteristics of the foreign

culture is an essential part in the process of language teaching (Brown, 2000; Kramersch, 1998; McKay, 2003). Hence language teachers are promoters and importers of culture, so that in the Iraqi context, the teaching of English as a foreign language is accompanied by a different Western culture which is problematic, due to the intersection of current views of English with prior stereotypes toward the colonial history of English-speaking countries, and with the supposed conflict between Islam and the West.

In other words, English language teaching and learning in Iraq does not go beyond the scope of the various views about the English language, which has been associated with the British colonial history and the U.S. invasion in 2003, with openness and development, and with the penetration of the concept of a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1993; Mohd- Asraf, 2005). These associations have helped shape the popular convictions about the presence, of the English language in Iraq.

Globally, English has been seen as the language that connects people, providing access to economic, educational, and immigration opportunities, and as a twentieth century learning tool (Broughton et al., 1980; Crystal, 1997; McKay, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). On the other hand, English has also been seen as an “inheritance of the British Empire” and a result of the “hegemonic status of the United States” (Edge, p. 702), a language of imperialism and colonialism (Pennycook 1998; Phillipson, 1992), a “carrier of Judeo-Christian cultural values, and that of Western civilization”, which has been used and is being taught as a “missionary language” (Mohd -Asraf, 2005, p.104, 116), a “killer language for those who do not have access to it”, and finally as “a tool against

Muslims” (Karmani & Pennycook, 2005, p. 165- 166). English has been seen to play a significant role during “the shift from an age of American Republic to an age of overt American Empire”, as “part of the US project for a new century” (Edge 2003, p.701-702), and as “America’s soft power” (Holborrow, 2006, p. 2), which has been used as a tool to attempt to defeat communism in Afghanistan and terrorism in South Asia, to reform the Islamic curriculum of Pakistan (Karmani & Pennycook, 2005), and to achieve the American goals and wishes in Iraq (Edge, 2003; Holborrow, 2006)

Rahman (2005) claims that Muslims respond to English in three different ways: firstly, with rejection and resistance, based on religion and values especially, as they worry about “alien values brought with English” which thus “threaten their worldview” (p. 122); secondly, with acceptance and assimilation, which represents the “modernist or secularist reaction to English” in which they see English as a “critical part of modern identity” (p. 123); and thirdly, with pragmatic utilization, which is based on the study of English and means “to have access to the knowledge, and hence the power, of the West” (p. 123).

A supposed conflict has been highlighted and discussed by various authors as a conflict between Arab and the West, Islam and Christianity, Islam and the West, and Islam and the English language. It is seen a conflict between different religious attitudes, ideologies, and cultures that are related to different religions, civilizations, and global powers (Edge, 2003; Harris, 1991; Huntington, 1993, 1997; Karmani & Pennycook, 2005; Mohd-Asraf, 2005).

The famous report of the Imperial Conference in 1907 can be seen as the cornerstone in the formation of the concept of the clash of civilizations between

the West and the Arab nations. The conference convened in London as the Colonial Conference of 1907 and the Chairman was British Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. It outlined the Western ideology towards the Arab-Muslim world at that time as well as identifying a set of goals that the imperialist forces then tried to achieve on the ground, especially after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. In the report, Imperialist Britain called for forming a higher committee of seven European countries. The report submitted in 1907 to British Prime Minister Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman emphasized that the Arab countries and the Muslim-Arab people living in the Ottoman Empire presented a very real threat to European countries, and it recommended the following actions:

1. To promote disintegration, division, and separation in the region.
2. To establish artificial political entities that would be under the authority of the imperialist countries.
3. To fight any kind of unity—whether intellectual, religious or historical—and taking practical measures to divide the region’s inhabitants (As cited in Bar-On & Adwan, p. 322)

A few years later, after World War I and the Peace Treaty of Versailles in 1919, mandates were established on the territories of the defeated Ottoman Empire in the Middle East. Iraq was included as part of these mandates and placed under the British tutelage, as one of the victorious Allies. The British in 1920 aimed to establish a monarchy, a parliament based on a “Western-style constitution” as well as a “government that would protect British interests” (Yaphe, 2004, p. 33).

The people of Iraq, a country where religion plays a key role in social and political life, rejected British tutelage for two main reasons. Firstly, the Allied victory was considered a victory over the Islamic Ottoman Empire, which represented the first Islamic state in modern history (Nordbruch & Ryad, 2014). Secondly, British tutelage was seen as “European imperial rule by another name” (Tripp, 2002, p. 40) especially as it came just a few years after the Imperial Conference report. As a result, the social and religious reaction was demonstrated by a leading Shia cleric – Ayatollah Al- Shirazi – who issued a legal opinion (*fatwa*) protesting against the British in Baghdad, which was followed by another *fatwa* declaring that “one who is a Muslim has no right to elect and choose a non-Muslim to rule over Muslims” and that service in the British administration was unlawful (Yaphe, 2004, p. 27). The popular and religious rejection of the British Mandate continued until the establishment of the Iraqi Kingdom in 1925 and then to the end of the Mandate in 1932.

The invasion of Iraq in 2003 awakened a buried history, as well as stereotypes against the Western colonization and imperialism. Corm (2007) states that:

The recent invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies has not only revived the trauma of the occupation of Arab land by the European colonial powers; it has also revived other, older historical traumas such as the Crusader invasions of the Arab East or the expulsion of the Arabs from Spain (Al Andalus) and Southern Europe (p. 212).

Likewise, Nader (2012) sees the war of 2003 as “part of a story of holy wars, originating in the Crusades” (p. 11). She argues that the events of the first Gulf War in 1991, the 9/11 attacks and the war of 2003, have created “a flood of

stereotypes” for both the Arabs and the West (p. 11). During that time, there were religious, social, cultural and linguistic debates around the reality of the US occupation.

The existing concerns about the US presence in Iraq beyond 2003 were exacerbated when Bremer (the American civilian administrator of Iraq after 2003) stated that “we dominate the scene and we will continue to impose our will on this country” (as cited in Edge, 2003, p. 703). Edge (2003) analyses these words of Bremer and acknowledges that:

One might logically conclude that the intended Iraqi administration will not only oblige Western oil interests, it will also evolve a ruling cadre whose command of English will be exceptional in the Arab world (p. 703).

The influence of prior stereotypes toward the colonial history of English-speaking countries, as well as other cultural concerns, all worked together to influence initiatives towards English language teaching and learning in Iraq. Added to these factors is that, in the Iraqi context, the teaching of English as a Western foreign language is also impacted by the sanctity of the Arabic language, as I explained in Chapter 3.

This current era is seen by Mohd-Asraf (2005) as representing a clash of global powers. He argues that English as a global language is of such international status, that it cannot be seen as merely a way of communication that enables people to access various opportunities. Rather, its power and the effects that are linked to the strength of its users must be recognized.

More than being just a language of communication, English, by virtue of its influence, has the capacity to empower, just as it has the

capacity to divide ... In the same way, Islam is more than just a religion. Indeed, it is a way of life, with its own worldview; a way of looking at the world that is different – on some fundamental issues – from that of the Western world (pp.103-104).

Many current Western writers have also asserted there is a clash between Islam and English language or a clash of religions and cultures. Harris (1991) mentions that there is a conflict between Islam, with two-thirds of the world's vital energy reserves, and the English language as “the language of the most powerful nation today” (p. 743). Harris suggests the conflict is between Islam and the power of the English language in powerful nations that intend to control the wealth and power source of the Middle East.

English is not just a language, any more than Islam is just a religion. The names English and Islam, whatever else they may be, are names of two very big battalions when it comes to the current international power struggle for control of the Middle East (Harris, 1991, p. 90)

Huntington's ‘clash of civilisations’ maintains there is an essential religious and cultural conflict between Islam and the West. Huntington (1993) states that religion is a key factor in the formation of civilizations; and thus, “the major civilizations in human history have been closely identified with the world's great religions” (p. 42). Central to his view, Huntington sees the clash of civilizations as a clash ‘between peoples of different religions’ (p. 253). He argues that the clash of civilizations between Islam and Christianity “flow from the nature of the two religions and the civilizations based on them” (p, 210). Furthermore, he argues that the clash of civilizations after the Cold War era “will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic, rather, the conflict will be cultural”

(p. 22). It is a conflict and clash of cultures that has ‘come to blows’ through peoples’ belief in the superiority of their culture.

Huntington (1993) acknowledges that:

The underlying problem of the West is not Islamic fundamentalism. It is Islam, different civilizations whose people are convinced of the superiority of their culture and are obsessed with the inferiority of their power. The problem for Islam is not the CIA or the U.S. Department of Defence. It is the West, different civilizations whose people are convinced of the universality of their culture and believe that their superior, if declining, power imposes on them the obligation to extend that culture throughout the world. These are the basic ingredients that fuel conflict between Islam and the West (pp. 217- 218).

Thus, the religious desires, religious beliefs, and the desire to expand one religion at the expense of another have all been key factors in fuelling the conflict between Islam and the West. As Yeoman (2002) mentions, the West has used the ‘Stealth Crusade’ and Christian missionaries as tools to wipe out Islam.

He states that:

“Inside one Southern university, Christian missionaries are being trained to go undercover in the Muslim world and win converts for Jesus. Their stated goal: to wipe out Islam” (Yeoman, 2002).

On the other hand, Muslim groups of Jihadists and the extremist political voices also believe in the ongoing conflict between Islam and the West. Ahmadinejad (Iran’s President) in 2005 stated that there was a “historic war between the oppressor (the West) and the world of Islam” (Ahmadinejad, 2005). Accordingly, religion and religious concepts have been instrumentalised in this context of the supposed conflict between Christianity and the Islam.

However, Said (1997) states that writers like Huntington construct a “highly exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility” against Islam and the Islamic world (p. xi). Said also criticizes the Western sense of superiority and how Western thinking tries to draw a false picture of an imaginary Middle East, and how the West tends to view Arab Muslims as terrorists and connects Islam to violence and backwardness, often caricaturing them. He acknowledges that:

It is only a slight overstatement to say that Muslims and Arabs are essentially covered, discussed and apprehended either as oil suppliers or potential terrorists. Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Muslim life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Islamic world. What we have instead is a limited series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world (p. 28)

Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism* (1978), discusses the historical, cultural, and political perceptions of the East that are held by the West, and examines how they developed within the British and French colonial era, during British and European domination in the Middle East. He argues that the West has created a dichotomy between the actuality of the East and the Occident's view of the Orient in which the East or “Orient” is seen through the lens of prejudice and racism that are created by the West. In this way the people of the East are represented as backward, uncivilized, and unaware of their own history and culture.

Generally, *Orientalism* is defined as the biased perspective through which the Westerners view languages, lifestyles, art, cultures, values and attitudes of the

East. Said defines three dimensions to Orientalism: First, Orientalism as an academic discipline, including anyone who writes and teaches about the orient: He wrote: “The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions” (p. 2). Said points out the errors in the ways of these early Orientalists. As well as in many of the earlier studies with regard to understanding the Muslims or Orientals. These errors also occurred after World War I when the study of the Orient shifted from Europe to the United States. Said argues that even with increasing globalization and awareness, such bias is currently s found in the people of the developed countries in which they regard the Muslims as terrorists and Arabs as cruel and violet people.

Second, Orientalism as a set of thoughts, concepts, and ideas: Said regarded Orientalism as “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the occident” (p. 2). He argues that the early European scholars divided the world into: the East and the West or the Occident and the Orient or the civilized and the uncivilized.

Said writes: “The Oriental is Irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, “different”; thus, the European is rational, virtuous, mature, “normal” (1978, p40). Hence, The Orient was viewed not for itself and its own cultures and societies; but as a Western perspective that drew a boundary and formed a binary between the West and the East.

Third, Orientalism as a practical action done over the Orient politically, ideologically, militarily and scientifically: Said regarded this kind of Orientalism as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having

authority over the Orient” (p. 3). He questions the claim that the Orient was essentially inferior to the European and thus required domination.

Said in his critique on Orientalism also introduced the concept of imaginative geography to refer to the perception of a space created by intellectuals through the use of certain imagery, texts, and discourses. In turn, these perceived spaces are used to utilize the control or subordinate of one nation on the other. Imagined geographies can be seen as a form of social construction on a par with Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. Within this imagined community, Anderson (1983) argues that people think of themselves as part of a particular group or nation. In his seminal text “Imagined Communities” (1983), Anderson explores the links between links between nationalism and language.

Anderson argues that the nation as a cultural artefact was created at the end of the eighteenth century in Western Europe which was “not only the dawn of nationalism but the dusk of religious modes of thought” and the notion transplanted across the world when people became able to imagine themselves part of a community defined by language/ print (p. 51). Hence, nations and nation-ness are a socially constructed communities imagined by those who regard themselves as belonging to that particular group, community, or nation. Language and the media play a crucial role in strengthen this sense of nationalism among the imagined community members. In a contemporary context, this concept of imagined communities and belonging to a particular nationality remains highly relevant to studies such as mine, elucidating how the experiences of his interviewees as well as my own experiences, have been

mediated by larger social and cultural contexts, how personal histories and situations are embedded in larger histories and situations, contexts within contexts.

In the context of my study, these ideas help to explain the way the West as a nation differentiates/ identifies the nations and cultures of the Orient as the Other within the frame of ‘the different, the extremist, and as cruel or violent. At the same time, the people of Middle East and Muslims differentiate/ identify the West and Westerns as the Others and the colonizers and the data shows the contradictory positions that result for English teachers. Said (1997) also discusses the incomplete and outdated image of Islam in the Western media and especially in the USA. He stresses that this Western image of Islam has been created through political interests and that, “in many instances Islam has licensed not only patent inaccuracy but also expressions of unrestrained ethnocentrism, cultural and even racial hatred, deep yet paradoxically free-floating hostility” (p.2).

The same critical view of the Western media has been expressed by Pintak (2006) and Abdulla and Abou Oaf (2011). For Abdulla and Abou Oaf (2011) the Western media “has created an association between terrorism and Islam in the eyes of the public” (p. 741). Likewise, Jackson (2010) argues that “Muslims and Islam are regularly and commonly portrayed in mainstream media in negative, stereotypical ways, especially since 9/11” (p. 4). She demonstrates that the mainstream media represents a negative message about Islam as well as reinforcing the association of Islam with terrorism. Overall, the messages about Islam and Muslims in the US media “hardly scratch the surface when it comes

to the diversity of the community, worldwide: in the Middle East, in the United States, and in other Western and Eastern countries” (Jackson, 2010, p. 21).

Media attitudes and historical stereotypes have influenced Western thinking in relation to Islamic principles and people, especially those of the Middle East (Gerges, 2003; Winegar, 2008; Yusof et al., 2013). Yusof et al. (2013) state that “the international media plays a vital role in creating a relationship between Islam and terrorism”, which “leads to the formation of labels on Islam and terrorism” (p. 104). This in turn creates alienated relations between the Arab-Islamic and the Western worlds, which from an Arab viewpoint negatively affects their perspective on anything Western such as English language, English language teaching and culture. This needs to be kept in mind in the following account.

4.3 English language and ELT in Iraq

4.3.1 The spread of English in Iraq

First of all, it is necessary to clarify some of the terminology around the status of the English language. According to McArthur (2001), the classification of native-speaking English countries is designated as ENL or “English as a Native Language” (such as in UK, USA, and Australia). Where English is a second language such as in India, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the Philippines it is designated as ESL or ‘English as a Second Language’, and finally EFL is the designation for English as a foreign language such as in Iraq, China, Russia, and Brazil, where it is just one of the foreign languages taught, not the primary one.

Kachru (1992) refers to three concentric circles when describing the above. First there is the Inner Circle (ENL), then the Outer Circle (ESL), and then the outermost Expanded Circle (EFL). Conventionally, Iraq is included in the Expanded Circle (EFL) where ‘there is no local model of English since the language does not have official status and, in Kachru's (1992) terms, has not become institutionalized with locally developed standards of use’ (McKay, 2002, p. 10). Thus, in Iraq, English is labelled as a foreign language as there is an “absence of the communicative functions of the language within the Iraqi context and the lack of official recognition in running the tasks of the governmental establishments” (Abbas, 2012, p. 222).

In spite of its location in the Expanding Circle, the international and global spread of English and ELT has never excluded Iraq, neither in the past nor in the present. The global interest in learning English and the large number of individuals who learn and use English, regardless of the purposes or reasons behind their learning, have meant that English has gained a hegemonic position in Iraq as a language of global communication.

Overall, the status and spread of English has gone through two stages in the context of Iraq. First, in the 20th century, English became more prevalent, popular and prominent as a result of British colonialism. Then a second stage came after 2003, when the status of English language changed remarkably, “mainly in the educational sector, through an official decree issued by the Iraqi educational authorities to teach English in the first year primary stage and to adopt an international model for the curricula for teaching English at the pre-university educational stages” (Ahmed & Hasoon, 2017, p. 32).

4.3.2 The first stage: 1920-2003

The wide spread of English in the Iraqi curriculum can be traced back to the 1920s, when different parts of the region came under the British Mandate and Christian missionaries played a key role in founding the basis for English language teaching in Iraq (Abbas, 2012). Within that era, according to Ahmed (1989), “English was, in the first place, introduced into the urban schools as an obligatory subject only to serve the objectives of the British local authorities” (p. 17). Under British colonialism, Iraqi education experienced some important developments. Initially, under the early British years of the British administration after 1920 (the British Mandate), English was briefly taught as a second language from the first year of elementary level. But later (after the independence of the Iraqi Kingdom in 1932), the status of English and English language teaching changed and “it was decided to teach it from the fifth primary year and its status was changed from a second language into a foreign language” (Al- Chalabi: 1976, as cited in Abdul-Kareem, 2009, p. 4).

In this early era, “the syllabus was based on the Grammar Translation method” (Abdul-Kareem, 2009, p. 4). Students practised reading written texts, learning vocabulary, and were taught prescriptive grammar rules. Speaking and listening were seen as less important. In 1955, the English language teaching syllabus was changed again and followed by “three series of courses’ composed and designed in the UK, which were ‘vocabulary-centred and manifest[ed] a clear bias towards the Direct Method” (Abdul-Kareem, 2009, p. 4). In the Direct Method, English was supposed to be taught through English, with no

translation. Students learnt sequences of grammatical phrases by listening and repetition, grammar rules were avoided and replaced by phrases, and vocabulary was learnt either incidentally or as part of the phrases being taught. The first series was *The Oxford English Course* by Oliphant. The second series was *The Oxford English Course for the Middle East* by Faucett. These first two series, which were basically designed for ESL contexts, were used until the middle of the 1950s. The last series, *The Oxford English Course for Iraq* that was used until the early 1970s, was written by Hornby, Miller and Selim Hakim, an Iraqi expert, and was designed for Iraqi students with the EFL approach (Altufaili, 2016). Generally, these three series were criticized for not taking Iraqi cultural, religious, social, and political aspects into consideration (Altufaili, 2016).

In the years 1970 -1972, the Iraqi Ministry of Education formed committees and curriculum authorities to evaluate, revise, and modify English language teaching; and introducing the first Iraqi designed series of textbooks for teaching English (Abdul-Kareem, 2009; Al-Hamash, 1973). A new Iraqi series named 'The New English Course for Iraq' was introduced in 1973 and this adopted the Grammar Translation Method of teaching (Abdul-Kareem, 2009). The series included "8 language books for pupils, 8 teacher's guides, 3 handwriting manuals and 3 literary readers for the preparatory stages" (Al-Hamash, 1980, cited in Abdul-Kareem, 2009, p. 7). The series used British English (Abdul- Kareem, 2009). Until 2007, these textbooks continued to be used, except for the reading passages, which had been amended to reflect the political and national orientation of the ruling party. Textbook content focused on Iraqi history, Islamic values and faith, and Arab traditions.

In 2001, the Iraqi MoE formed a committee of eight Iraqi specialists in ELT curriculum to design a new series of English textbooks called Rafidain English Course for Iraq (Abdul-Kareem, 2009) which were designed to follow the communicative approach. Book 1 of this series was put in use in the academic year 2002 – 2003 (Abdul-Kareem, 2009). However, in the early stage of adopting this new series of textbooks, there were a lot of difficulties arising from the economic sanctions, lack of required teacher training, and lack of materials and explanation aids (Abdul-Kareem, 2009). As a result, the teachers continued to use the previous teaching approach in order to teach the textbook although it had been originally designed to adopt the communicative approach.

4.3.3 After 2003

The second growth of English use in Iraq was stimulated by the US occupation in 2003. From this time onwards, the Iraqi education and the status of English were influenced by the following factors. The first factor was the government's introduction of strategies to create an open country and new educational policies that worked toward the educational, economic and social developments that the country required (Alwan, 2004). According to Ahmed and Hasoon (2017),

The status of EFL has been remarkably changed, mainly in the educational sector, through an official decree issued by the Iraqi educational authorities to teach English from the first-year primary stage. Secondly to adopt an international model for the curriculum for teaching English at the pre-university educational stages (p. 32).

The second influence consisted of the religious, political, and cultural factors in which the state sectors, including education, are founded as acknowledged in

The World Data on Education, 2010/2011: “The education system in Iraq is based on values, and principles derived from the religious, human, and national characteristics of society” (p. 1).

As explained above, up to 2007 the most widely used approach to teaching English in Iraq was the Grammar Translation Approach in which the emphasis was given to the teaching of grammar rules, and where writing was the focus of every activity and every exam. All textbook units had vocabulary lists and students had to memorize as much vocabulary as possible as a daily task. Teaching English was conducted in the Arabic language and translation was used by English language teachers. In many cases vocabulary items were given in both Arabic and English in order to simplify the meaning of the words. Accordingly, the aim of teaching English was to enable students to produce a good grammatical sentence regardless of meaning.

Iraqi classrooms traditionally see the teacher as the centre of the teaching system, as the person in charge who has to control the lesson and act as the master of the classroom. The classroom is, basically, run according to teacher-centred authority, and learners are passive and silent recipients of the language input from the teacher without negotiation of ideas or concepts (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). The unofficial common understanding is that if teachers use innovative methods of teaching – such as what are commonly called ‘student-centred’ methods, then the teacher will be giving up their authority and control.

In 2007, in regard to English, a new National English Curriculum was designed and introduced in 2007 through which English is introduced in Grade 3 of primary schooling. The new curriculum sought to divert the teaching priorities

towards the needs and personal development of student as Abbas (2012) indicates: "Iraq as a culture of preserving high respect for authority and knowledge is now undergoing a shift of paradigm towards emphasizing students' needs" (p. 225). The new national English curriculum acknowledges that:

The main task for the new English curriculum is to shift from overemphasizing the transmission mode of teaching and learning based on grammar and vocabulary to the development of students' overall ability in language use. The provision of English should attach great importance to activating students' interests in learning, relating the course content to the students' life experiences and cognitive stages of development, promoting learning through their active involvement in the process of experiencing, practising, participating in activities, cooperating with each other and communicating with the language-learning through doing. The overall objective of the course is to develop students' comprehensive language competence by making learning a process during which they form positive attitudes, develop thinking skills, improve cross-cultural awareness and develop autonomous learning strategies so as to gradually become independent learners (English National Curriculum, cited in Abbas, 2012, p. 225).

In 2008, the MoE introduced the new Iraq Opportunities series textbooks (series of 9 textbooks) for all Iraqi schools with English introduced from grade 3 to set the groundwork for successful future English language learning. The Iraq Opportunities series was "co-produced by York Press and Pearson Education Ltd in the United Kingdom and the Educational Research Center in Lebanon" (Al-Akraa, 2013, p.5). Associated with such modernizing strategies and the new National English Curriculum, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was

adopted in order to guide the students “towards the adequate mastery of English” (Alwan, 2004, p. 14). From 2008, the new series of English language textbooks adopted American English instead of the British English (Altufaili, 2016).

In 2014, the MoE introduced a new series of textbooks called ‘English for Iraq’. The new series (of 12 textbooks), which was published by Garnet Publishing Ltd, is currently in use and has continued to adopt the communicative approach (Altufaili, 2016). English is now introduced in grade 1 in primary schools.

Likewise, educational institutions have headed towards attracting Western trained Iraqi teachers (such as the Australian-based TESOL qualified participants in this present study) or sending teachers abroad on scholarships for the advancement of their educational reality and to learn skills to enable them to reform English language curriculum. The Higher Committee for Education Development in Iraq acknowledges that:

To help Iraq regain his position among the nations of the world, on 2009/01/09, his Excellency Prime Minister Noori AL-Malki launched the educational Initiative in Iraq of sending Iraqi students to pursue their graduate or undergraduate studies at the world’s best accredited universities

(http://www.hcediraq.org/HCED_english_website/aboutus.html).

Thus, the worldwide demand for good English communication has created an enormous need for good quality English language teaching and teachers in the new Iraq. However, the adoption of CLT, the wide use of English language, and relying on the expertise of foreign trained teachers have become issues of

increasing contention in the Iraqi education system, issues that are explored further in the following sections.

4.4 The introduction of CLT

Stem in 1983 famously wrote that language teaching has a “long, fascinating, but rather tortuous history” during which language educators have tried to “solve the problems of language teaching by focusing attention almost exclusively on teaching methods” (p. 452). Much debate has taken place around methods of language teaching and learning, to try to find more effective ways of teaching foreign or second languages. These various attempts reflect the “changing winds and shifting sands of language teaching” (Marckwardt, 1972, p. 5).

Since its initial popularity in Europe in the early 1970s, CLT has been introduced as the “new” way or “innovation” in English language teaching (Kral, 2004, as cited in Al-Mawla & Al-Azzawi, 2011, p. 7). CLT can be understood as a “set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom” (Richards, 2006, p. 2).

This initial introduction of CLT in Europe occurred at a time when the increasing number of immigrants and foreign workers led the Council of Europe to develop a “syllabus for learners based on notional-functional concepts of language use” (Savignon, 2008, p. 1). The Council of Europe aimed to develop

guidelines of language teaching in order to firstly promote communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), which is taken in this case to refer to the “ability of classroom language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning” (Savignon, 1971, as cited in Savignon, 2008, p. 2); and secondly, to promote intercultural dimensions in language teaching and learning, aiming thereby to increase the learner’s ability to understand people of different social identities (Byram et al., 2002).

According to Richards (2006), the aim at first was to introduce a “teaching approach that was compatible with early conceptions of communicative competence” (p.45). In practice, this meant providing a syllabus that was concerned with language features and functions rather than grammatical forms. Later, the focus shifted to ‘the procedures for identifying learner’s communicative needs’ and the “kinds of classroom activities that could be used to implement a communicative approach, such as group work, task work, and information-gap activities” (p. 45). Along the way, CLT has attracted considerable attention and raised much debate among second or foreign language researchers to become “the most researched approach to second and foreign language teaching in the history of language teaching” (Spada, 2006, p. 271).

For many researchers in the 1980s and 1990s, CLT “highlights the fundamentally communicative properties of language”, and the CLT classroom was “increasingly characterized by authenticity, real-world simulation, and meaningful tasks” (Brown, 2001, p. 42). The primary goal of CLT was to provide “lifelong language learning’ through ‘drawing out whatever intrinsically

sparks learners to reach their fullest potential” (Brown, 1994, p. 77). It emphasized the development of “linguistic fluency and not just the linguistic accuracy” which has “consumed” previous language teaching approaches (Brown, 1994, p. 77).

CLT focuses not only on language structure, but also on the functions and purposes that a language serves in different communicative settings. Littlewood (1981) points out that “one of the characteristics of communicative language teaching is that the functional aspects are as important as the structural ones” (p. 1). The focus is on meaning rather than grammar, which is still taught, but less systematically and where errors are recognized as a natural part of the learning process. It therefore changes the traditional lesson format, which depended on the teacher’s preparations of different items of grammar followed by practice, towards the use of linguistic knowledge accurately in a range of social situations through role play, working in pairs, and group work activities, which focus on the learners’ authentic needs to communicate (Richards, 2006). Importantly, in this method, students must have personal contact with the language, practice it themselves, and be given the chance to make mistakes (Savignon, 2002; Richards, 2006). Brown (1994) states that:

We are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture. And our classroom practices seek to draw on whatever intrinsically sparks learners to reach their fullest potential (p. 77).

The communicative classroom teacher is seen as a facilitator of the classroom learning process and a monitor of students’ participation in classroom activities rather than a corrector of grammatical errors (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 2006). CLT aims to promote communicative competence through the use of the

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collaborative creation of genuine interaction inside the classroom “under the guidance, but not control, of the teacher” (Brown, 2007, p. 47). This refers to the teacher allowing for student input. The teacher is supposed to be the instigator, the facilitator and the guide. Thus, in CLT the teacher no longer dominates every verbal aspect and every creative thought and response in the classroom, but instead creates a learning environment that reaches into each student and draws on their learning, knowledge and creativity. The language teacher should act as an independent participant within the learning-teaching group to facilitate, rather than instruct, the communicative process among all learners, and between the participants and the various activities and texts (Richards, 2006). According to this theory, the teacher’s responsibility is to recognize the distinctive qualities in the students and to help each student develop these qualities which allow him/her to act as an organizer of resources, as a resource themselves, and as a guide within the classroom procedures and activities. Their control can be seen as ‘hidden’; as of course they should know exactly in what direction they want each lesson to go, and they have particular student outcomes they are working towards in each lesson.

Howatt (1984) distinguishes between a “weak” version of CLT, which stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider program of language teaching (p. 279). A “strong” version of CLT, claims that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself

(p. 279). Likewise, Littlewood (2013) conceptualizes the two versions of CLT: a weak version that refers to “the communicative perspective on language” in which the primary focus is on learning the language functions not the language structures (p.3). The strong version refers to the “communicative perspective on learning” which the focuses on how our natural capacities acquire language through communication without explicit instruction (p. 3).

4.4.1 EFL in different contexts

Much ELT literature of the 1980s and 1990s suggests that ‘a country without CLT is somehow backward’ and that “CLT is not only modern, but is in fact the only way to learn a language properly” (Bax, 2003, p. 279). Bax contends that although “CLT has served the language teaching profession well for many years”, CLT has tended to take priority over another “key aspect of language teaching – namely the context in which it takes place” (p. 278) and “in which the teacher is operating” (p. 281). He argues that the priority in any teacher training needs to be given to contextual factors; putting the “consideration of the context first and only then consider[ing] the teaching approach” (p. 283).

Despite the contemporary dominance of CLT, more recently important issues have been raised about language teacher training, teaching materials and classroom activities, and whether CLT addresses the needs and goals of teaching in every EFL situation or context (e.g., Bax, 2003; Phan, 2008). This seems especially important in non-European contexts where there are different salencies related to the cultural perspectives and “the capability of the non-native teachers in terms of language fluency and competence in communicative

methodology” (Bahumaid, 2012, p. 446). Holliday (1997) argues that “any methodology in English language education should be appropriate to the social context within which it is to be used” (p.1). McKay (2002) mentions that given the great diversity of users of EIL (English as an International Language), it is imperative we examine what goals and approaches in English language teaching (ELT) are appropriate for these various kinds of EIL users. Tudor (1996b) states that:

Every teaching situation involves the interaction between a given teaching method, the students, and the wider socio-cultural context of learning ... Teaching method therefore needs to be chosen not only on the basis of what seems theoretically plausible, but also in the light of the experience, personality, and expectations of the students involved (p. 276)

Phan (2008), in her discussion about CLT in the Asian context, argues that “CLT principles conflict with Asian settings” (p. 91). This is due to a conflict between their cultural view of learning and that of CLT. She explains that “when CLT is applied in reality, its pedagogical values have conflicted with a number of cultural and professional values embedded in the practice of teaching and learning in Asia” (p. 91). This point refers to the teacher-student relationship and the central position of the teacher. She agrees with Holliday (1994) and Ellis (1996) in that “the equal teacher– student CLT principle challenges the hierarchical teacher–student relationships and the necessity to show respect to teachers in many countries, and consequently faces resistance and unwelcome attitudes in those countries” (Phan, p. 92). The conflict between CLT and Asian settings can also be seen in contexts where traditionally for students “success is more important” in different assessment

goals, than to be capable in speaking or writing, ‘to gain what the society expects’ (p. 91). Moreover, CLT can be seen as “challenging to teachers who are not confident in speaking English and as adding more work to already overloaded teachers” (p. 91).

Bahumaid (2012), through a critical evaluation of the impact of CLT on the Arab Gulf public school system, acknowledges that the need remains to provide a critical assessment of the merits and demerits of CLT in the Middle Eastern EFL situation. First of all, communicative language teachers are “expected to be highly proficient in the foreign language, well versed in the foreign culture, and adequately competent in communicative teaching techniques” (Bahumaid, p. 447). But, the majority of Arab teachers of English in the Gulf region lack these abilities (p. 447). Bahumaid also argues that commercially published materials are “too demanding” and “culturally inappropriate” for Arab EFL learners and “contain authentic texts which many EFL learners find difficult to cope with” (p. 447). Furthermore, Bahumaid mentions the lack of “an intensive training that focuses on communicative teaching methodology using the latest instructional technologies” (p. 446).

A study conducted in Iraq by Al-Mawla and Al-Azzawi in 2011, of the new Iraqi Opportunities textbook concluded that although in some contexts CLT has been shown as “one of the most successful methods in providing confident learners who are able to make themselves effectively understood in the shortest possible time”, Iraqi English language teachers encounter many difficulties in implementing CLT in their classes (p. 8). Al-Mawla and Al-Azzawi (2011) acknowledge that:

80% of the teachers declare their deficiency in spoken English and it can be considered as a major obstacle constraining their applying CLT in their classrooms. We think that one of the main reasons for the teachers' deficiency in spoken English can be attributed to the traditional ways of learning English and that they have few opportunities to practice English as they were students of English. 45% lack knowledge about the appropriate use of language in context as they teach something different from what they had studied. So, 60% of the teachers do not know how to teach communicatively. Few opportunities for teachers to get training in CLT since 70% of the participant teachers do not have training course before teaching the Iraqi opportunities textbooks (p. 21)

Difficulties in implementing CLT were also associated with a lack of resources and funding; insufficient training courses for teachers; inadequate classroom size and duration; the mismatch between the curriculum and assessment; and the lack of cultural appropriateness of the teaching content.

Abbas (2012) recently conducted a study based on interviews and questionnaires with curriculum developers, Iraqi educators, and English supervisors and summarized the major problems relating to Iraqi English language education since the introduction of the Iraq Opportunities curriculum in 2007. She argues that the curriculum development and planning process have resulted from "political circumstance - changes at the administrative level as well as political interference at the planning process level", which generally confounded the planning process and resulted in lack of communication among those administrations (p. 229). The curriculum content and the teaching manual do not clearly elaborate curriculum goals or philosophies of learning or teaching. The textbook was imported from other educational contexts, and thus

did not fulfil the planned curriculum objectives and philosophies. Moreover, she argues that Iraqi English language teachers encounter many difficulties in implementing the curriculum due to the design of curriculum goals and objectives especially with the lack of professional training.

Further, Abbas (2012) states that the curriculum list of objectives and details about what to teach and how to teach which should be considered along with the communicative approach, have reinforced “traditional practices of ELT” (p.231). Those objectives “promote grammar translation, drill practice and memorizing of knowledge rather than learners’ self-construction of knowledge” (p.231-232). As result, the curriculum represents traditional practices, “only in modern terms” (p. 232) and the teachers are confused.

In my previous study (Al Attaby, 2011) of a small group of Australian TESOL trained Iraqi ELT teachers’ perspectives in relation to English language teaching and the adoption of CLT in the Iraqi educational system, the teachers believed that their previous teaching approach and their role as language teachers did not address their students’ need to learn and communicate in the English language. Although the study indicated that Iraqi teachers agreed with the focus on communicative and interactive exercises and agreed with providing students with a real-life collaborative learning environment, the participants referred to the cultural difficulties that resulted from the use of communicative activities. The findings showed that Iraqi teachers believed in the benefits of adopting CLT as a teaching approach, but they highlighted the dilemmas around the teacher’s role and position.

Another issue raised in Al Attaby (2011) was female teacher participation during the communicative activities. The women interviewed mentioned that the perceived more equal teacher-student relations typical of CLT, challenged the educational and social settings of Iraqi schools where the female teacher role is surrounded by social and cultural limitations especially when it comes to interacting and participating in classroom activities with male students. Further, the study indicated that there are many issues regarding resources, lesson timing, buildings, and a number of student issues that need to be addressed in order to establish successful communicative language learning and teaching in Iraq.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter firstly explored the specific discourses associated with the English language and with the relationships between the (Islamic) Middle East and the Western which have shaped the Iraqi curriculum and the ways in which English and ELT take place in Iraq. Iraq and Iraqi education are religiously, socially, and culturally based on Islam and dominated by Islamic foundations. In the Iraqi context, the teaching of English as a foreign language is accompanied by the intersection of prior stereotypes toward the colonial history of English-speaking countries, and the supposed conflict between Islam and the West. In other words, English language teaching and learning in Iraq is embedded within various views about the English language which have stemmed from, firstly, the history of British colonial history; secondly, the clash of civilizations, religions, languages and cultures; and thirdly the U.S. invasion of 2003.

Secondly, the chapter outlined the initial spread of the English language and English language teaching in Iraq. Within that, curriculum, syllabus, textbooks, and methods of teaching up to 2007 were described.

Thirdly, the chapter examined the literature concerning the adoption of CLT in the non-Western EFL teaching context. Finally, the chapter explored the post 2003 Iraqi ELT curriculum, which has witnessed a shift in the English language landscape as well as major changes in the English language curriculum, especially in 2007 with the introduction of a new English language curriculum and the tentative adoption of CLT as a teaching method.

Chapter 5: Global English and English Language

Teaching

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, I explore the literature associated with global English and ELT. The point here is to make stronger links between the discussion of the wider issues with regard to the multi-faced English language and globalisation and my own personal experiences that is reported in chapter 2. Likewise, the chapter explores the literature on how debates about English as a language of colonization and imperialism, as well as present discourses of globalisation might be registered in my own experiences and the experiences of his interviewees as a teachers, Iraqis, and Muslims in the Middle East. The chapter then moves to survey the literature about Western based TESOL programs. This section outlines the ideological and methodological nature of these programs, the criticisms that have been raised in relation to the practicum and resources of the TESOL programs and the degree of attention given to the foreign context to which such teachers belong and to which they will return and practice within.

5.2 English and English language teaching

5.2.1 English as an international language

Surely the time is not far distant, when all the human race, united in strong brotherhood by unity of religion and of thought, will add to

these encircling bonds the unity of speech, and that speech will be English (Brackebusch, 1868, p. 6)

English should become the universal language (Sandstedt, 1920, p. 93)

English will be the most respectable language in the world and the most universally read and spoken in the next century, if not before the close of this one (Adams 1973, cited in Kachru, 1992, p. 2)

The phenomenon of a global language has been noted by a variety of investigators, and that language is currently English (as foreshadowed in the quotes above). McKay (2002) argues that an international or global language is not only a widely spoken or widely written language such as Mandarin and Arabic, but must also be seen as the language of “wider communication” between people of different races or nationalities (p. 5). Likewise, Crystal (1997) assumes that “a language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country” (p. 2). Crystal (1997) argues that “there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English” (p.139). Crystal (2003) estimates that English has “1,500 million speakers from all sources – approximately 750 million first and second-language speakers, and an equivalent number of speakers of English as a foreign language” (p. 69).

A discussion of the term ‘international language’ often shifts directly to the dominance of English as a world language. Mohd-Asraf (2005) argues that “there is hardly any country today that does not use English in one way or another or that is not affected by its spread” (p.103). The role played by English as an international language has been analyzed through different conceptual

models. Different terms have been applied such as English as an International Language (EIL) (Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Gnutzmann, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2001), English as a Global Language (Crystal, 1997, 2003; Gnutzmann, 1999a), English as a World Language (Mair, 2003), and English as a medium of intercultural communication (Meierkord, 1996) (all cited in Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 210).

A typical explanation for the status of English as a world language focuses on two main factors, which are British colonialism and the present position of the United States as a world economic power (Crystal 1997). Crystal argues that ‘without a strong power-base, whether political, military or economic, no language can make progress as an international medium of communication’ (1997, p. 5). In this view, the international status of English is related to “one chief reason, which is the power of its people, especially their political and military power” (Crystal, 2003, p. 9). Ferguson (2005; 2006) mentions three reasons why English has achieved the status of being an (or the) international language: the influence of the British Empire, the economic power of the US, and the influence of secondary speakers.

McKenzie (2010) argues that the initial spread of English was a result of the European colonization of Asia and Africa during the growth of the British Empire. During that colonization, the English language was associated with government power and opportunity for advancement. In many cases, even after independence, English was retained as an official language, “which perhaps suggests its continued status in these areas” as a language of opportunities (p. 1). After the Second World War (WW2), ‘the global spread of English appears

to be continuing unabated', largely as a result of "the strengthening" role of the United States as a powerful nation (p. 1). At present, English represents the "linguistic consequences" of globalization and "the increasing level of financial interdependence between different cultures and areas of the world" (p. 1)

The seemingly relentless process of globalization, the global interest in learning English and the large number of individuals who learn and use English, regardless of the purpose behind their learning, gives English its dominant position in world communication as well as in the global economy and in international policy (Graddol, 2006; Phan, 2008).

Harmer (2007) argues that by the end of the twentieth century, English was being used for wider communication and was considered as a lingua franca (a language that is adopted as a common language between speakers whose native languages are different). English increasingly has become an "official language, a medium of instruction, a second or a working language, around the world" (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007, p.7). Communicating in English has assumed an important status in providing access to economic, educational, and immigration opportunities (Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002). Swales (1987) estimated three decades ago that "more than 50% of the millions of academic papers published each year [were]... written in English, and the percentage was growing year by year" (cited in Nunan, 2003, p. 590). Crystal (1997) estimated that 85% of international organizations were using English as one of their official or working languages.

5.2.2 The colonial origins of English as the global language

Phillipson (1992) acknowledges the 'Core-Periphery' relation/connection between the English-speaking countries and the foreign/second language speaking countries. He argues that the global status of English is a result of a conscious plan by the "Centre" or "Core" (English speaking countries) to promote the Centre in the 'Periphery' (the rest of the World), which works as a "tool" that helps the Centre to communicate with the Periphery (pp.17, 242). Phillipson (1992) refers to the global dominance of English as a linguistic imperialism, by which he means that "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstruction of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages" (p. 47). He defines the 'structural' as material properties; while the 'cultural' has ideological properties, which are used to create an unequal power relationship between English and other languages. Thus, the spread of the English language plays an important role in the expansion of the Centre among the other countries with its cultural, economic, and political effects and influences. Phillipson's model has been summarized and reviewed by Bisong (1995):

The linguistic relation between the centre and periphery has been and continues to be one of dominant and dominated languages. English, the author maintains, was originally imposed on a number of countries in the periphery and has, through deliberate contrivance, successfully displaced, or replaced some of the indigenous languages of these countries. The dominance of English has also resulted in the imposition of the Anglo-Saxon Judeo-

Christian culture that goes with it so that indigenous cultures have been undervalued and marginalised (Bisong, 1995, p. 123).

In contrast, Kachru (1992) argues that “English has been used as a language of colonialism, but non-native users must now dissociate English from the colonial past and not treat it as a colonizer's linguistic tool” (p. 67) and non-native users “must avoid regarding English as an evil influence which necessarily leads to Westernization” (p.67). Kachru concludes that “we may at last have a universal language as an offshoot of the colonial period” (p. 68). This view of Kachru’s (1992) that English could be appropriated as a universal language regardless of its roots as a tool of colonialism, has been rejected by Pennycook (1998), who argues “for the importance of understanding English in its colonial context” (p. 18). Pennycook (1998) suggests that “it is colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English” (p. 19). In accordance, “colonialism should not be seen merely as a historical period but rather, should be understood in terms of its legacies to European thought and culture” (p. 18).

Phan (2008) draws a distinction between the positive and negative role of English as a global language. Phan states that on the one hand English can be seen as a “protest against global exploitation and inequality” in providing a cultural understanding between people from different societies, not just the “powerful nations” (p. 72). On the other hand, it can be seen as tool for imperialism where “the powerless are pawns on a chessboard” of the imperialist game (p. 72).

5.2.3 Teaching English as a foreign language (EFL)

The issue of the pathways which English has taken to gain its supremacy as a global language may be debatable, but its current position of power is not. Certainly, the wide use of English language among different societies and individuals, the international recognition and vitality of English as an international language, and the centrality of English as a global language are all factors which promote the importance and expansion of English language teaching. The importance of teaching English cannot be overstated in an increasingly interconnected world and during the globalization era.

Just as the expansion of the English language has been the object of various points of view, the rise of ELT is not isolated from those discussions but has been debated widely. The importance of ELT is derived from the strength of English as an international language, which is “the common means of communication” and considered to be “the only available tool for twentieth century learning” (Broughton et al, 1980, pp. 2 & 3).

The global demand for learning English as the language of business, education, science, and technological progress, especially in the non-English speaking countries, has led to the emergence of the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) industry so that “today in classrooms around the world, young and adults are involved in the study of English” (McKay, 2002, p. 1). In addition, many EFL students study English in English speaking countries. The British Council Review of The Global Market for English Language Courses in 2006 noted that “the international student market is now a significant global industry, worth

more than \$35 billion a year in export income for the major English-speaking destination countries alone” (p. 63). Generally, according to the same report, the key destination markets for English language training have been the UK, Ireland, the US, Canada, Australia, Malta and New Zealand. The values of the English language market in these destinations, for example, in Australia, was “AUD \$932 million” in 2004 and in New Zealand was “NZD \$400 million” in 2004 (p.7). The Asian region (Japan, China and South Korea) represents the top source of students.

The term EFL means specifically that English is being taught to people in foreign – that is, not Anglophone – countries. It divides speakers of English into ‘English’ or ‘foreign’, which implies that EFL as an enterprise belongs to the Anglophones, not the ‘foreign’.

Canagarajah (1999) describes this Western involvement in the ELT enterprise as occurring through many channels. These channels include providing financial support, books, experiences, teacher training and materials, and also conducting EFL teaching enterprises in non-core English communities. Significantly, he suggests that many of the methodologies and practices of EFL have been “built on the educational philosophies and pedagogical traditions, which can be traced back to the colonial mission of spreading enlightenment values for civilizing purposes” (p. 12). Accordingly, in spite of the fact that teaching English is of global interest, most EFL assumptions, ideas, and concepts represent and stem from Western ideologies. Canagarajah argues that this has resulted firstly in an unequal power relation between the Centre and the Periphery in terms of methods or materials. Secondly, it has led to the sense of acceptance within

Periphery contexts that everything that comes from the Centre is “effective, efficient, and authoritative for their purposes” (ibid, p. 135).

5.2.4 The dominance of English

In his book *Linguistic imperialism*, Phillipson (1992) suggests that “the spread of the English language has not been left to chance”, but rather, English language teaching and its associated pedagogy have played a key role in this expansion (p. 6). He regards ELT as “an international activity with political, economic, military, and cultural implications and ramifications” to promote the interests of Britain and the USA (p. 8). Within the linguistic relation between the “dominant” Centre (the core English speaking countries) and the “dominated” periphery (the rest of the English-speaking world), the tenets of ELT have cultural, linguistic and economic consequences promoting the hold of the Centre over the Periphery (p. 3). In professional English language teaching circles, ‘English tends to be regarded as an “incontrovertible boon” and has been marketed and introduced as “the language of development, modernity, and scientific and technological advance” (pp. 9 - 11).

English language teaching, is therefore linked to a political context (e.g.: McKenzie, 2010; Pennycook, 1998; Phan, 2008; Phillipson, 1992, etc.). Pennycook (1998) points out the ways in which colonial ideologies were reflected in language education policies and pedagogies. He argues that because “ELT was a crucial part of the colonial enterprise, and English has been a major language in which colonial has been written” (p. 9), “ELT is a product of colonialism’ and therefore theories and practices of ELT have been produced by

colonisers and ‘still carry the traces of those colonial histories’ (p.19). Pennycook quotes the famous Macaulay’s Minute (1835) and its effects on Indian education. The Minute states that “we must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern ... a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” throughout the promotion of English language education in India (as cited in Bailey, 1991, p.138). Pennycook argues that historically in Iraq this same Minute aimed to provide an “English-educated elite and a vernacular-educated population better able to participate in a colonial economy” (1994 p. 82). Accordingly, the colonial ideology focused on the expansion of the English language through the creation of an educational system, which eventually benefitted the colonisers and helped build the colonial economy.

According to Phan (2008), the new version of the spread of the English language is not through the old teaching and learning of English as a colonizer’s language that serves the interests and objectives of colonialism, but rather, through persuading speakers of other languages about the superiority and the importance of English and, therefore, the importance of teaching and learning English as a language of opportunities. In this view, the Centre provides English language with a new face that reveals the importance and benefits of learning English rather than seeing it as a tool of colonialism or imperialism.

5.3 ELT in the Middle East

Considering that English was once but one language among others, it has come a long way to now stand in a category of its own as the ‘world language’, having an important, even necessary position in many educational systems around the world, with the Arab world being no exception (Hopkyns, 2015). Zughoul (2003) mentions that, “despite the hegemonic and imperialistic nature of English, it is still badly needed in the Arab world for the purposes of communicating with the world, education, acquisition of technology and development at large” (p. 2)

English is viewed by many across the Arab world as a key language for modernization and engagement with the international and advanced Western community. Consequently, the unique status of English as the global language has been impressed upon Arab societies, with their governments and educational authorities having accepted the urgent need to promote English language education. Al-Khatib (2000) comments:

With the increase in the use of English as a lingua franca, most Arab governments began to recognize its importance by introducing the teaching of English into the school curriculum. At present, in most Arab countries, all students who finish the public secondary school education must have had at least eight years of instruction in English as a school subject. It is also worth noting that formal training was and is still compulsory in most elementary, preparatory, and secondary Arab private schooling. So ... the widespread use of English as a second language, the subject of language teaching in general, and teaching of English as a foreign or second language in

particular, has become the focus of attention of most Arab researchers (Al-Khatib, 2000, p. 122).

To increase the use of English language and fluency among Arab users, Rababah (2003) suggests Arab educational systems need to have well-trained teachers who can teach English in a more communicative way that enables Arab students to communicate more effectively using English.

Furthermore, the Middle East political situation and the presence of the US and other multinational troops in the region have reinforced the strength of English language. Zughoul (2003) argues that, “the English language is getting entrenched in the Arab land especially after the Second Gulf War” (p. 18). Zughoul refers to the case of English in countries such as Kuwait and Jordan, where the pace of English language learning and use has accelerated following the political and military changes in the Middle East after the Second Gulf War.

English is occupying more and more room in language use. It is taking more and more territory from the native language. Right after the Second Gulf War, the Kuwaiti government took a decision to start the teaching of English in Kuwaiti public schools in the First Grade at the age of 6-7. This step was followed in a hush hush manner in other Arab Gulf States [where the] same step was taken by the Jordanian Ministry of Education (Zughoul, 2003, pp. 19-20)

An interesting aspect of all of this is that English had now started to be seen as a medium that Arab Muslims could work with to “preach their religion to English speakers” (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996, p. 460), which is seen as a “communal obligation” by Muslim scholars (Mohd-Asraf, 2005, p. 116). Moreover, the popular quote, ‘*Whoever learns the language of a people is safe from their evil*’,

which is attributed to the Prophet Mohammad, implies that from an Islamic view the objective of learning foreign languages is a legitimate one.

Added to this is the increasing use of English language in Arab media channels such as Al-Jazeera and other Arab satellite TV networks in order to spread the Arab and Islamic cultures to speakers of other languages (Karmani & Pennycook, 2005). However, learning and using English in this part of the world is remained complicated and problematic due to many factors, particularly cultural concerns, which is discussed in the next section.

5.4 The cultural dimensions of ELT

5.4.1 The relationship between language and culture

The intimate relationship between language and culture has been the subject of much study in both applied linguistics and sociolinguistics (Brown, 2000; Byram et al., 2002; Jiang, 2000; Seliger, 1988; Sharifian, 2015). There is seen to be a very close relationship between the two, with the argument that the use of language in any situation is related to social and cultural values, and that language serves as a carrier of cultural perspectives and provides its users with new cultural norms (Brown, 1994; Gao, 2006; Kramsch, 1998; McKay, 2003; Tomalin, 2008; Wang, 2008).

In working as a “representational system” and one of the “media” that people use to represent and exchange their thoughts and feelings (Hall, 1997a, p. 1), language as a system of communication and social exchanges plays an important role in the social lives and cultural norms of all societies (Seliger,

1988). Since language reflects social reality and culture is an integral part of social reality, language is a reflection of culture. Brown (1994) agrees that “language is part of culture and culture is part of language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture” (p. 165). Kramsch (1998) points out that “when language is used in contexts of communication, it is bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways” (p. 3).

5.4.2 Language and culture in the classroom

If language teaching is culture teaching, then in one form or another, culture is taught in the language classroom. Byram and Grundy (2003) argue that “culture in language teaching and learning is usually defined pragmatically as [the] culture associated with a language being learnt” (p. 1). Gao (2006) adds that “the interdependence of language learning and cultural learning is so evident that one can conclude that language learning is culture learning and consequently, language teaching is cultural teaching” (p. 59). Hedge (2000) claims that “one of the most established goals in ELT is the ability to communicate effectively in English” (p. 44); undertaking such communication is a cultural activity.

In the context of foreign language teaching and learning, Yin (2009) classifies culture into two categories. The first category is “formal culture” which represents the geographic, historical, political, religious, educational, and economic aspects of civilization. The second category is the “deeper culture” which includes behaviour, lifestyle, values, thoughts, social customs and norms

(p. 76). Yin favours the second category as the place for increasing cultural knowledge, through intercultural communication and competence in the foreign language. Taqi (2008) in her study of ‘The cultural learning needs for Iraqi students of English’ recommends that “it is important to teach the culture of the language because this will enrich the learners’ imaginations about people that use this language and their way of living” (p. 3). She also claims that “if we teach language without culture, people will build their knowledge on their stereotypes and they may perform the information they have about English language in the context of their own culture” (p. 23).

In their guidelines for developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching, Byram et al. (2002) argue that “it has been widely recognised in this language teaching profession that learners need not just knowledge and skill in the grammar of a language but also the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate ways” (p. 7).

Byram et al. (2002) state that interaction by language is not a matter of information exchange; rather it is a reflection of who we are and what specific social and cultural group we belong to. In the context of interaction, our social identities, which are related to culture, are unavoidably part of that interaction. Thus, communicative competence in language learning or teaching refers to “knowledge of what is the appropriate language” as well as the knowledge of the forms of language (p. 9). In this sense, language teaching has an intercultural dimension that aims to increase the learner’s ability to “engage with complexity and mutable identities” with other speakers (p. 9). Byram et al. state that:

Thus, developing the intercultural dimension in language teaching involves recognising that the aims are: to give learners intercultural competence as well as linguistic competence; to prepare them for interaction with people of other cultures; to enable them to understand and accept people from other cultures as individuals with other distinctive perspectives, values and behaviours; and to help them to see that such interaction is an enriching experience (Byram et al, 2002, p.10).

Kim (2003) illustrates that language learning is a process of cultural transmission where learners are able to acquire new cultural perspectives and thinking alongside their acquisition of the features of a language. Kim acknowledges that:

Language is not a static process. It is the primary instrument in the expression, transmission, and adaptation of culture. Language is used to maintain one's own culture and to acquire a new culture and new knowledge. The learning of a second or foreign language enables one to view life through another cultural lens (p. 64).

The components of this intercultural dimension are the knowledge of skills, perspectives, values, behaviours, culture and cultural practices which are embedded in and integrated with that specific language (Kim, 2003). And it is the teachers of that target language such as the participants in this research project who play a crucial role in enabling the learner to draw conclusions about the target language, and thus the target culture associated with it.

Tomalin (2008) considers the teaching of culture as a fifth skill in addition to listening, speaking, reading and writing. By teaching culture, a student will learn techniques, values and way of thinking and the specifications of a certain culture. Teaching a foreign language without introducing the cultural norms of

that language will mean merely survival and routine transactions (Byram, 1989).

Politzer (1959) acknowledges that:

As language teachers, we must be interested in the study of culture not because we necessarily want to teach the culture of the other country, but because we have to teach it. If we teach language without teaching culture at the same time, the culture in which it operates, we are teaching meaningless symbols or symbols to which the student attaches the wrong meaning (cited in Brooks, 1986, p. 123)

In light of the above, foreign language teaching must be regarded also as foreign culture teaching. This occurs through introducing sets of beliefs, values, and cultural norms of the target language. Thus, foreign language teaching and learning is a complex process that affects the learner's cultural and social knowledge, and can create new social norms due to learning new cultural values and perspectives. In this respect, language teaching can be seen as a cultural exchange, which is accompanied by a negotiation of cultural norms, as Kramsch (1993) argues; "In the foreign language class, culture is created and enacted through the dialogue between teacher and students" (p.47). This needs to be a thoughtful and explicitly encouraged dialogue.

Thus, the foreign language classroom is fundamentally a cultural exchange site that operates on the interaction process of different values and cultural perspectives. Therefore, foreign language teaching is a social and cultural activity where teachers are promoters and exporters of culture. It is an activity where the transmission of culture is an essential part of the process of language teaching. Nevertheless, as Kramsch shows, this can be a critical process, where

learners consciously explore and evaluate who they want to be in language and how they want to use it.

This means that “foreign language teachers are foreign culture teachers” (Wang, 2008, p. 4). Duff and Uchida (1997) agree that, “whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are very much involved in the transmission of culture” (p. 476). Hence, “the classroom can be understood as the site of various forms of dialogical interaction” (Stables, 2003, p. 1), where “language teachers cannot avoid conveying impressions of another culture whether they realise it or not” (Rivers, 1981, p. 315).

5.5 Western based programs for training English teachers

5.5.1 The market for TESOL programs

The dramatic change in the extent of English language teaching worldwide has been reflected in an increasing global demand for qualified and competent English language teachers. These language teachers need to be properly prepared for their tasks of delivering the English language skills and competencies needed for ELT. Although globally most EFL teachers are trained in local higher education facilities, TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) and similar teaching programs are also offered to non-native teachers of English through NABA (North America, Britain, and Australia) universities (Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, 2014; Phan, 2008).

With English being regarded as the international language of business, and with the increase in international testing systems, online publications, education, and

cross-cultural communication, qualified teaching professionals are in great demand worldwide. These demands are reflected in the demand for teacher training programs in the West (NABA) countries such as TESOL courses in which “a substantial number are international students, most of whom will in due course return to their own countries to teach” (Liu, 1998, p.3). Chowdhury and Phan (2014) state that “there is an increasing demand for English and, therefore, a greater need for inspiring teachers to go abroad to receive TESOL degrees in the West” (p. 14). As a result, TESOL programs have grown into “a successful global industry” and become a valuable constituent of the international education industry in the leading destinations (NABA) (Walker, 2001, p. 187).

Such TESOL programs in the West generally offer a relatively hegemonic selection of key concepts which are hegemonic regarding curriculum, theory and practice, learning assessments, specific ‘student centred’ pedagogies (such as CLT) and socio-cultural matters of learning English for non-native speakers, across the NABA countries (Faine, 2008).

On the one hand, Western TESOL courses offer theoretical and practical training about curriculum design, students’ learning assessments and teaching methodologies. On the other hand, TESOL programs have been criticized for the failure in not creating learning or training environments that deal with the different social, pedagogical or cultural contexts of different nations. Although the Western TESOL programs are supposedly designed to equip English language teachers globally, they have been criticized for not understanding “the needs of international TESOL Students” (Liu, 1998, p.4). Some Western

TESOL programs “focus” on ESL (English as a second language) teaching in Western public schools and colleges (Carrier, 2003, p. 243) and “neglect” (Chowdhury & Phan 2008, p. 307) “the needs of many non-native TESOL teachers who will be returning to their home countries to teach English as a foreign language (EFL)” (Carrier 2003, p. 243).

Liu (1998) criticizes the NABA TESOL training programs for giving “little consideration to the millions of ESOL students international TESOL students will work with after they graduate” as well as for the failure to train international TESOL students to distinguish between teaching practice in NABA and other contexts of different ‘socio-economic conditions, educational ideologies and systems, and other factors that help define teaching conventions’ (p.4). Liu (1998) argues that such training, which ignores the “cultural differences, and encourages students to adopt ideas and practices that are valued in NABA”, may not be very useful and often create “a gap between what they learn in the NABA context and what they face in their home context” (p.3).

Other Western TESOL programs focus on preparing native speaker teachers to teach adults in private language schools in global contexts. However, transferring “methodologies developed for predominantly private Western language teaching contexts”, such as CLT, to a non-Western context is problematic (Bax, 1998, p. 232). These teaching methodologies may not be suitable for application in non-Western contexts (Faine, 2008; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; Holliday, 1994). Liu (1998) argues that the NABA TESOL teacher education “promotes ‘new’ NABA methodologies, particularly those entitled ‘communicative’, while condemning tried and tested ‘traditional’ methods still

popular in many other parts of the world” where these international students come from (p. 4). Canagarajah (1993) and Pennycook (1989) refer to the issues the TESOL trained students face in modifying their gained ideas and methods with those still followed in their home professional context. This issue relates to my research participants (the 10 Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers) who need to modify their knowledge, methods, and ideas when they return to Iraq, where there are different educational guidelines as well different discourses associated with their teaching practices.

Liu (1999) agrees that Western based TESOL courses pay little attention to the students in EFL contexts where international TESOL graduate teachers will teach. There is a failure to acknowledge the differentiation between language teaching methodologies of the NABA and those of other contexts with different socioeconomic conditions, educational ideologies and systems, and other factors related to teaching conventions where traditional teaching methods are still in use. This neglect, as seen by Braine (2013), may stem from an “urge to make NNS (Non-Native Speakers of English) TESOL students learn and practice back home the new teaching methodologies developed in NABA” (p. 199). Such TESOL programs ignore cultural differences and encourage students to adopt ideas and practices that are valued in NABA but “may not be very useful in their home environment” (p. 199).

Sung (2007) reported a study of Whittle (2003), which investigated how well TESOL programs in North America and Korea prepared teachers to teach in an EFL setting. The study supported the view that the TESOL programs in North America do not offer courses that explicitly prepare the non-native teachers to

teach in their foreign home context. Likewise, the study concluded that these programs predominantly “relied on theories and instructional activities originating from ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts without considering contextual differences such as sociocultural, curricular, and instructional factors” (pp. 173-174).

Similarly, Llorca (2005) argues that the high percentage of international TESOL students reinforces “the need for more attention to be paid to NNS (non-native speaker) teacher trainees and to their needs as future EFL teachers, as opposed to standard ESL teacher education” (p. 140). Llorca claims that the Western TESOL programs need to adequately prepare students for the task of teaching in EFL settings by providing EFL related aspects as well as a practicum that suits EFL settings rather than ESL ones. Similarly, Liu (1998) advocates that NABA TESOL teacher educators “abandon ideological and methodological dogmatism and work with international TESOL students to adapt and develop methods and techniques that will work for them” (p. 6).

Pennycook (1998) argues that “some of the central ideologies of current English language teaching have their origins in the cultural constructions of colonialism, and the colonial construction of Self and the Other [and that the consequences of this for] TESOL remain in many domains of ELT” (p. 22). Furthermore, the TESOL programs themselves serve “the centrality of English language teaching to the colonial project” (Pennycook 1998 p.20), so that the “slave boy” learns the “master’s language” (Lin et al., 2001 cited in Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, p.307) or “the powerful nations” (Phan, 2008, p. 72) in which the teachers are

positioned as the “Other who has to work hard and adjust to meet the requirements set by the Self” (Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, p. 307).

There is a false belief that the ‘Centre’ promotes certain models of development to the Third World (Phillipson, 2010). In fact, Phillipson claims, the imperialist role of the powerful Centre creates an international structure that produces poverty and destitution as well as ensuring the West of its supplies of raw materials. Likewise, Phillipson criticizes the widely held assumption that the experts on foreign language learning are supposed to be found in “the heartland of countries ... namely the United States and the United Kingdom” (p. 40). This assumption “is central in TESOL and ELT, and works hand in glove with the myth that the foreign policy of the US and the UK is altruistic” (p. 40). As seen by Phillipson, it represents an ideology of linguistic imperialism which enhances the dependence of non-native speakers on native speakers of English as well as strengthening the domination of the Centre over the Periphery.

Phillipson (1992), Pennycook (1996), and Toh (2003) argue that the transfer of teaching expertise and Western trained teachers from English-speaking countries to other countries is highly problematic in terms of culture and pedagogy. Accordingly, the case of Western TESOL trained teachers raises questions regarding their identity formation, what role these teachers play, and what perspectives they hold. Singh & Richards (2006) argue that “learning to teach is a struggle not only around methods and content knowledge, but essentially, about who one is as a teacher” (p. 3). Thus, “becoming a member of a new community of practice is not just about learning new content but also about acquiring new practices, values, and ways of thinking, which enable

particular identities to be realized” (p. 10). In this respect, learning in a Western environment or site may be problematic for teachers (such as the case with my research participants) as they become involved in cultural and educational communities of practice that may differ from their own contexts.

5.4.2 The two dimensions of TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language)

Phan (2008) discusses EFL in relation to two different dimensions. Firstly, she regards EFL as an industry with insufficient content choice because it promotes educational pedagogies and materials of the Self (the English-speaking countries) rather than the Other (the non-native speaking countries of English). In this view, the Other has to be dependent on what has been produced and offered by the Self. Secondly, she regards EFL as a product that has been used by the Self to promote the colonial language and culture, and therefore it disregards the values, traditions, culture as well as language of the Other. Thus, EFL acts as a “colonising force” that disregards the Periphery values and cultures through transferring EFL activities that are ‘culturally inappropriate to periphery contexts” and which “conflict with a number of cultural and professional values embedded in the practice of teaching and learning” (Phan, 2008, pp. 87, 91).

In the case of TESOL trained teachers, Phan (2008) suggests that Western culture can be transferred through scholars and Western trained teachers:

When scholars from Periphery countries are offered scholarships to do their research in the Centre, they are guided and influenced by

the Centre and what their research aims at is to benefit the Centre. Also, these scholars are the ones who will bring Western values, ways of thought and the results of their research to their countries (p. 73).

This view supports that: first, the spread of English and EFL through these Western trained teachers serves the goals of the Centre. Second, a change in these teachers' professional identities, perspectives, and values occurs during their time of study in the West.

Phan (2008) explored the identity formation of Australian-trained Vietnamese teachers by looking at their experiences as TESOL students in Australia and as teachers of English in Vietnam. She examined Western trained Vietnamese teachers in Australia and acknowledges that those teachers wanted to be seen as a teacher of English rather than a “servant of English” (p. 134). This means they wanted to be able to speak and teach English with a high level of competency that would enable them to teach their Vietnamese students without being obliged to be an English person and alter their identity.

A ‘hybrid’ identity is created while studying in the West that does not exclude their Vietnamese identity and that is marked by a strong sense of Vietnamese national belonging. These Vietnamese Western-trained teachers claimed to be as “open-minded” as Western teachers without affecting their traditional teachers’ role as a moral guide and as a part of Vietnamese society (p. 153). In this light, these Western trained Vietnamese teachers are not acting as “ambassadors” of Western imperialism in their home countries, but as highly qualified teachers who can develop their teaching and educational processes in their home country (Phan, 2008, p. 2).

Phan points out that the participants constructed their identities through an understanding of the differences between their images about Self (the Vietnamese teachers), and the Others (Australians postgraduate students). In their identity formation, these teachers regarded the image of Self as a reflection of their Vietnamese origin; and thus, they tried to distinguish themselves through the use of 'us' or 'we', which refers to the national and cultural views of belonging. They tended to keep a certain distance between themselves and others in the TESOL classroom and thus created a differentiation border by the notion of 'us' and 'them'. Phan acknowledges:

The notions of 'us' and 'them' were often brought into their negotiation, for example 'we Vietnamese students' and 'they Australians'. The notions of 'us' and 'them' are not necessarily created by the way the questions were asked, nor are they a product of a deliberate positioning of self in relation to others. Rather, they are in part functions of the tasks the participants were undertaking in Vietnam and Australia (Phan, 2008, p. 32).

Thus, these Vietnamese TESOL students aimed to draw a distinct line between their classroom participation and that of other Australian students by linking the way they act into their Vietnamese values and thus their origins and traditions. Although in the construction of their identity these teachers "showed a degree of mixing and adjusting", they still embodied a certain image about how a Vietnamese teacher, in this case as a TESOL student, acts within, not outside, the Vietnamese frame of values (Phan, 2008, p. 32). Their identities were shaped and reshaped through experiencing a new set of values despite the impact of their past experiences, image of self, and the representation of nationality and origin. Within that, "their identities are subject to reconstruction

but along the lines of existing values embedded in them” (p. 32). Above all, the Vietnamese students’ attitudes were clearly demonstrated in the way they regarded their experiences, participation, and what values they held or gained; and thus, the “national cultural identity and place-based identity appeared dominant in the participants’ processes of identity formation” (p. 32).

Llieva (2010) investigated the constructions of the professional identities of 20 non-native English-speaking teachers (NNESTs) from China who participated in a Master of Education (MEd) program in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language (TES/FL) in a Canadian university. The study aimed to examine the impact of TESOL programs on NNESTs’ construction of teaching identities. She underlines that these NNESTs’ initial investment in the TESOL program departed from the “West is best” and thus the superiority of the West on how to teach English (p. 365).

She found that many of the student teachers seem to have found a new relationship with their professional contexts. This was done through a re-imagination process of their professional identity by viewing the TESOL program as a discourse of constructing and re-constructing teachers’ identity and imagination about the teaching profession. The TESOL program’s theoretical perspectives opened up new discourses and offered new identity options for these NNESTs. In developing professional identities through the negotiation of program discourses, students in this study seemed to link ‘being a teacher’ with ‘doing teaching’; and thus, their professional identities and agencies were tied closely to possible future pedagogical practices. In terms of their agency, NNESTs developed a sense of power in new relationships in

contrast with their views about themselves as agents prior to entering the TESOL program. Moreover, students started to perceive the role of teachers as professionals as well as agents of change with regard to values and practices in education, which in turn reflects what they were presented with through the TESOL program.

However, such a TESOL program does not answer the question of “Where do these teachers go from here?” (p. 363). Llieva’s (2010) study is in agreement with Liu (1998) in claiming that such TESOL trained teachers return to their home professional teaching context to face issues of how to modify their methods and techniques of teaching, and issues in regard to how to employ their newly acquired professional ideas in their home professional context. Thus, Llieva’s study raised the importance of “providing curriculum and pedagogy across coursework that engages meaningfully with international students’ prior discourses and which are specifically geared toward allowing such students to actively negotiate their needs/ interests/local contexts in their academic work” (p. 363). Above all, the study concludes that, rather than viewing TESOL as a hegemonic discourse that requires negotiating the NNESTs’ identities in order to accommodate ‘Centre’ discourses in local practices of the NNESTs home contexts, the TESOL curriculum of the BANA institutions should work as a discourse of negotiation of NNESTs’ identities so they can acquire knowledge and negotiate identities in ways that “make sense in their local contexts” (p. 364).

Chowdhury and Phan (2008) conducted a study of the perceptions of Bangladeshi (TESOL) teachers, including Western-trained ones, in relation to

the politics of the Western TESOL industry. On the one hand, these teachers mentioned the need and importance of “having access to Western TESOL and English” (p. 514). On the other hand, their “concern about the politics and power underlying their TESOL training supports the arguments about English and TESOL being used as commodities, spreading Western values through aid programmes, neglecting the needs of developing countries, and carrying on colonial missions in new forms” (p. 514).

Chowdhury and Phan (2008) mention that these teachers aim to “serve themselves and their students” rather than ‘serving Western goals or the politicisation of TESOL’ (p. 514). Their study also revealed that these teachers felt they needed to join ‘adaptation courses’ on their return to their home country in order to “help them clarify and readjust their professional goals and identify students’ and their own expectations in a local context, which is also changing while these teachers are overseas” (p. 315).

TESOL programs can be regarded as a space where teachers negotiate their identities and agency in regard to *who they are* and *how to teach*. However, the TESOL setting does not provide adequate insight into how these teachers negotiate their identities and roles in terms of *where they teach*. My own study (Al Attaby, 2011) explored the effects experienced by Iraqi teachers studying TESOL in Australian universities on their identities as language teachers and on their cultural and educational perspectives. Al Attaby (2011) concluded that these Western-trained TESOL teachers realised that English language is a carrier of Western culture that conflicts with Iraqi culture, traditions and Islamic views. Also, these teachers believed that the “Western classroom as a site for

change has influenced their identity in relation to how they evaluate their previous teaching approach” (p. 61). Through being in a Western context, these teachers’ professional identities were renegotiated and their ideas about ELT and teaching approaches were influenced to the extent of them wanting to reform the Iraqi teaching system. However, being Western trained teachers did not affect their “feeling of belonging to their Iraqi Islamic society”, but enabled them to better “identify the needs and limitations of teaching English to their students” (p. 67).

5.6 Conclusion

English is a global or international language of wider communication between people of different nationalities or backgrounds. It is the language of international businesses, technology, global economy, international policy, and education around the world, and is regarded as the language of advancement and opportunities. However, this global status does not mean that the English language growth was left to chance; rather, English language expanded due to a number of different factors such as colonialism, imperialism, the powerful native speakers, and the ELT enterprise.

This status of English as an international language has promoted the importance of English language teaching. However, its perceived importance is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the expansion of English language teaching produces the global demand for English language learning in almost every country around the world. On the other hand, ELT as a global industry and

market, imports its assumptions, power, and methodologies from the West, which in turn serves the English language expansion in the non-Western context. ELT acts as a tool to persuade the non-native speakers of English of the superiority of the West and Western thinking and thus the importance of English language as a tool of advancement.

The literature in this chapter reveals that language teaching is cultural teaching. The embedded and integrated ideas, views, and norms of the target language are transferred within the language teaching classroom where the language teacher plays a crucial role in this transformation process.

TESOL programs in Australia were originally designed to equip NABA native speaking teachers with knowledge, theories, and practices primarily for the ESL context. TESOL curriculum often neglects EFL teachers' needs for teaching English in a foreign language context. At the same time, these same teachers are equipped with pedagogies that may not fit the local context of these teachers when they return home to ideologies, perspectives and socio-cultural settings that differ from those of NABA. The relationship between TESOL and trainee teachers cannot merely be seen as involving different sets of knowledge in relation to different teaching practices; it is a matter of a hegemonic discourse with teachers being inducted in a 'superior' Western set of knowledge about teaching, rather than creating agency to employ such educational knowledge in their local context.

Chapter 6: Teachers, language, and identity

6.1 Overview

In order to interpret my findings and discuss the data, I need to provide a conceptual framework for my research, and I need to explain how I understand the key theoretical constructions that I will use.

As I explained in my own story in Chapter 2, the way I understand who I am and what experiences have shaped my identity as the whole Zeki (the Iraqi person and the Iraqi teacher) as well as my role in the socio-cultural community in Iraq, have formulated the framework of this study and this has led me to acknowledge the key concept of identity.

Questions about identity and its potential impact on education have gained an increasing importance in educational research (Gee, 1994, 2000; Olsen, 2008; Wenger, 2000). Identity is seen as an important analytical tool for understanding education within its social context. Teacher identity has become the focus of recent theoretical and empirical investigation in the field of education (e.g. Miller, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, et al., 2005; White & Ding, 2009).

Responding to these concerns, this chapter explains the theoretical framework of Social Constructivism, which underpins my exploration of how Iraqi teachers construct their identities. I understand identity as constructed through discourses available to individuals (teachers) as agentive beings who produce, resist, and construct new identities through the social, linguistic, educational and cultural

resources available to them in their social contexts. Teachers' identities are, constructed and negotiated through the combination of their personal beliefs, personal experience, professional experience, social practice and social interaction, the professional landscape, and external discourses within their community of practice (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Cooper & Olson, 1996; Mockler, 2011; Wenger, 1998).

I adopt Gee's (1996) definition of discourse as "ways of being in the world or forms of life" (p. 127). I refer to discourse as a way of understanding the social, cultural, and religious experiences which construct these Iraqi English teachers' identities', and which shape how they act, and participate in particular communities of practice. Gee's formulation of the 'capital D' Discourse allows me to "capture the ways in which people [teachers including myself] enact and recognize socially and historically significant identities" of who they are and what community they belong to (Gee, 2015, p. 420).

With this regard, in Chapter Two, I used my narrative to provide an insight to explore what discourses surround myself (as Zeki the Iraqi Muslim English language teacher) as a prompt for further reflection on the socio-historical determinants of identity. I explored myself (as Zeki the teacher) by myself (Zeki the researcher) in order to determine how I (as Zeki the teacher and Zeki the researcher) have created, formed, and reformed my identity within my professional community of practice as a teacher, and as a member of the wider Iraqi community, and as a globally formed researcher.

In particular, I focussed in my story on the way language mediated my own identity as a user and teacher of English. Likewise, I shed more lights on how

my identity as the whole Zeki (person or a teacher) was created and constructed within the social and cultural or even religious conditions that accompanied with the status of English as a language of the Others. In recognizing these discourses surrounding myself as well as the other my participants, and the experiences associated with them, I seek to understand the ways Iraqi teachers construct their identities as teachers within other sub- identities and how they negotiate these identities within the frame of being, belonging, and becoming members of that Iraqi English teacher community of practice especially within the culturally specific contexts of educational settings in Iraq post-2003.

I acknowledge that the literature reviewed here and the perspectives on identity that are discussed are largely Anglo based, which as the data reflects, might be different in the context my research participants belong to. However, there are very few scholarly studies regarding teachers' professional identity in the Middle East and specifically Iraq. It is my hope that this study will provide some novel insights here.

Through this framework, I seek to interpret (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) the identity construction of Iraqi teachers. The chapter explains the theoretical tools that I employ to understand the participants' interpretations of their life settings, the contexts in which they live and work, and how they engage with the concept of teaching English as a foreign language (Crotty, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mertens, 2010).

6.2 The concept of identity

Over time, the term ‘identity’ has been used in many disciplines including psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and linguistics. The Oxford Online Dictionary (2017) defines identity as ‘The fact of being who or what a person or thing is’. ‘Identity here refers to the set of meanings that define who a person is when he or she has a particular role within a group or society which identifies them as a unique person. It means the understanding of who I am, who we are, and how the surrounding world perceives us.

Research on identity seeks to explain the meanings people attach to their identities, how these identities are constructed, and how they impact on the person they belong to. Despite this vastly increased and broad-ranging interest in identity and identities across a broad spectrum of disciplines (social, educational, political, linguistic), the concept itself remains complex.

Danielewicz (2001) views identity as “our understanding of who we are and who we think other people are” (p. 10). Kim (2003) agrees that identity is the individuals’ concept of the self, as well as “the individuals’ interpretation of the social definition of the self” within an inner group or larger society (p. 66). MacLure (1993) defines identity as “a resource that people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large” (p. 311). Hence, in this study, identity is the set of meanings attached to a social context where individuals or collectives align themselves with a particular category, and where they are defined by others according to variables such as ethnicity, religion, language, culture, shared beliefs, and/or practice.

In line with social constructivist ontology, Persson (2010) writes that identity “does not simply exist, but is instead continually formed and reformed, created and shaped by the discourse of the individual and those around them” (p. 43). Some contemporary writers stress that identity is constructed (Phan, 2008; Thornborrow, 2004), dynamic (Norton, 2006; Phan, 2008) and changeable according to our social interaction or the language that we use (Miller, 2004; Norton, 1995; Olsen, 2008; Yoshizawa, 2010).

A common understanding in current social, cultural, and educational studies is that identities as are not fixed, contradictory and constantly changing across time and place is (e.g. Hall, 1996b; Jenkins, 2008; Joseph, 2004; Miller, 2004; Norton 1997, 2000; Phan 2008), following the key British cultural theorist Stuart Hall, who writes:

Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicisation, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (1996b, p. 3).

From a cultural perspective, Hall (1990) views identity in reference to the relationship between the individual and particular collectives who share the same worldview. He argues that identity is not as transparent or straightforward as we may think, so that it is “never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, the representation” (p. 222). He also argues there are two different ways of thinking about cultural identity:

“The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’ which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (1990, p. 223).

Within the terms of this definition, which is the traditional model, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes that provide us with stable, unchanging, and continuous frames of reference and meaning. This suggests unified and stable aspects to cultural identity as it appeared in my data.

The second model of cultural identity (which Hall favours) acknowledges a related but different view of cultural identity where there is no stability.

This second position recognises that, as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather – since history has intervened – ‘what we have become’ (1990, p. 225).

From this point of view, identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’ in which cultural identities are the “unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture” (Hall, 1990, p.226). In other words, identity is not fixed or static, but an ever-changing concept that is “constructed, multiple, hybrid and dynamic” (Phan 2008, p. 157). Thus, in the case of my research participants, their identities are sites of change and reconstruction through negotiation, depending on the discourses surrounding them.

Jenkins (2008), from a social anthropology perspective, views identity with reference to the relationship of the individuals with the larger social world that

they are a part of. He sees identity as “knowing who we are, knowing who others are, then knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are” (p. 5). In Jenkins’ view, social identity is the individual’s interpretation of the social definition of the self, within his/her inner group and the larger society, as well as the individual’s concept of the self. This is a complex social process of “being and becoming” that is “never settled” (p. 17). Jenkins draws attention to the idea that identity needs to be seen as “the ways in which individuals and collectives are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectives” (p. 18). During this process, both individual and collective identities should not be seen as different or separate, but instead need to be seen as connected.

Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) also agree with the social constructivist perspective that sees identity as constructed “through discourses available to individuals at a particular point of time and place” (p. 14) where individuals are ‘agentive beings’ who resist or produce new identities throughout the social and linguistic resources available to them. An individual’s identity is established within the perception of self as derived from thoughtful reflection on communicative interaction between the individual and others within social contexts. Likewise, Norton (1997, 2000, 2006, 2008) uses the term identity to “refer to how people understand their relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future” (1977, p. 410). Rather than as a fixed category, Norton views identity as a multiple site of struggle and constant negotiation that is dynamic, contradictory, and constantly changing across time and place. In this study, such a sense of struggle emerged in the case of my research participants

through the constant negotiation and renegotiation of their identities within the shifting contexts of Iraq and the Iraqi education system, as well as their studies in Australia.

6.3 Teacher identity

Increasingly, recent research in education has focused upon the formation and mediation of teachers' identities (Danielewicz, 2001; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Miller, 2009; Mockler, 2011; Pavlenko, 2003; Tsui, 2007; Varghese, et al., 2005; White & Ding, 2009). Particular attention is focused on teachers' identity as a way to gain insight into how teachers perceive their professional capabilities, their professional orientation and their attitude towards the teaching profession and cultural differences (Al Attaby, 2011; Chong et al, 2011; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; Phan, 2008; Olsen, 2008). Olsen (2008) acknowledges that:

Teacher identity is a useful research frame because it treats teachers as whole persons in and across social contexts who continually reconstruct their views of themselves in relation to others, workplace characteristics, professional purposes, and cultures of teaching. It is also a pedagogical tool that can be used by teacher educators and professional development specialists to make visible various holistic, situated framings of teacher development in practice (p. 5)

Teacher identity and related theory are often discussed in the context of sociology and pedagogy, typically to explore the interpretations and meaning of being a teacher as well as to investigate the challenges of being a teacher. What

light does the understanding of teacher identity shed on the question: ‘Who am I?’, ‘What do I have to do?’ and, ‘How do I teach?’ MacLure (1993) states that “while identity is a site of permanent struggle for everyone, teachers may be undergoing a particularly acute crisis of identity” (p. 311).

The term teacher identity is used to ‘refer to the way that teachers, both individually and collectively, view and understand themselves as teachers’ (Mockler, 2011, p. 519). Sachs (2005) points out that a teacher’s identity “stands at the core of the teaching profession’ as well as providing ‘a framework for teachers to construct their own ideas of how to be, how to act and how to understand their work and their place in society” (p. 15). A teacher’s identity is an extension of the various ways in which the theoretical framework of being a teacher intersects with understanding teachers, teaching, and teacher development (Olsen, 2008).

In this context, teachers’ identities represent the “sociocultural and sociopolitical landscape of the classroom and in teachers’ professional development” (Tsui, 2007, p. 657). In other words, it is the teacher’s identity which, alongside the identities of the students, is most influential in creating and shaping the classroom environment and every aspect of the learning process. Crookes (2003) goes one step further in stating that “all teachers ... are involved in implementing or resisting national educational policy, and are contributing, in a small way, to the reproduction of society or to changes in society” (p. 94). What Crookes is saying is that not only are teachers’ identities relevant in shaping education at a classroom level, but that the influence of teachers expands into society as a whole.

Different frameworks have been proposed to conceptualise teachers' identity, which is "hard to articulate, easily misunderstood, and open to interpretation" (Olsen, 2008, p.4). Much has been written about the various dimensions of teacher identity. These dimensions include personal beliefs (Pajares, 1992), emotions (Fried, 2011), teacher training and learning (Phan, 2008; Varghese et al., 2005), as well as the dynamic nature of teacher development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Graham and Phelps (2003) argue that "in the formation of their identity, the teachers answer to the question of who they are, is constantly being shaped by what they perceive their work to be" (cited in Hellsten & Prytula, 2011, p. 553), as their identities are substantially constructed in the experience gained through participations and engagements (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Hence, a teacher's identity is understood as being "multifaceted, multi-dimensional and multilayered" (Cooper & Olson, 1996, p. 82), "and dynamic" (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009, p. 178) and a "continuing site of struggle" (Maguire, 2008, p. 45). Chong et al. (2011) add that "becoming a professional involves both external realizations and personal conceptualizations"; therefore, a teacher's identity "is not unitary but consists of sub-identities that result from how teachers made sense of themselves as teachers as they develop professionally" (p. 51).

Yazan (2018) argues that when teachers teach or learn to teach, and integrate with their wider community of practice, they construct an understanding about what priorities they need to consider in their teaching, what kind of teachers

they need to be, and what expectations are placed on them by their community of practice.

Varghese et al. (2005) view the teachers as social beings who acquire knowledge and new experience and, thus identity, through the ever-changing educational contexts that they are a part of. They also state that this acquisition of knowledge is an individual, psychological, and social matter that is related to the teacher's self-image. The formation, negotiation, and growth of teacher identity is "a fundamentally social process taking place in institutional settings such as teacher education programs and schools" (p. 39). Thus, a teacher's identity is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as the individual develops over time and through interaction with others through the development of the Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) in the shifting teaching contexts.

Beijaard et al. (2004) identify four features of teachers' ongoing lifelong process of identity formation and construction:

1. It is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation that will never stop and will not only answer the question of who is the teacher, but will also answer the question of who does the teacher want to become.
2. A teacher's identity includes personal and contextual preferences and a teacher acts according to the personal and professional values and characteristics attached to them.
3. Sub-identities are harmonized, not conflicted, and well balanced and related to teachers 'contexts and relationships'.

4. The fourth feature is agency, which refers to the activity of teachers during their professional identity development as professional identity is not something teachers have, but something they use in order to make sense of themselves.

The argument of Beijaard et al. (2004) is based on the view that teacher development never stops and can be best seen as a process of lifelong learning. In this process, a teacher's identity formation is not only an answer to the question, 'Who am I at this moment?' but also an answer to the question, 'Who do I want to become?' Within this process of formation, a teacher's identity is a combination of adopted professional characteristics (including knowledge and attitudes) as well as the internal values they attach to them. At the same time, the teacher's identity consists of other sub-identities that relate to teachers' different contexts, which harmonize more or less together alongside with the teacher's own agency to achieve the internal goal of being a teacher. Beijaard et al. (2004) suggest the need for an explicit conceptual understanding of 'teacher', an understanding which will include a teacher's personal practical knowledge as well as the role of the professional contexts.

6.3.1 Personal and professional aspects of identity

In discussing the dimensions of teachers' identities, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) point out that we have to take into account the inextricable link between the personal and professional selves of a teacher in order to make sense of their identity. Therefore, placing an emphasis on a combination of personal and professional aspects of identity is important in order to develop an

understanding of identity in teachers, especially since a “teacher’s identity is shaped and reshaped in interaction with others in a professional context” (p. 178). Thus, identity cannot be viewed just in relation to the personal dimension of the teacher’s self, but needs to be viewed “also with respect to the profession itself: a professional (in this case, teacher) identity” (p. 179).

Within their identity formation, teachers develop “an understanding of the self and a notion of that self within an outside context, such as a classroom or a school, necessitating an examination of the self in relation to others” (p. 178). In addition, Beauchamp and Thomas assert that within this intricate relation of the personal and professional selves of a teacher, we need to consider other factors such as “emotion as a part of the self and identity, the narrative and discourse aspects of the self and the shaping of identity, the role of reflection in understanding the self and identity, and the connection between identity and agency” (p. 180).

Mockler (2011) agrees that “teacher professional identity [is] formed and re-formed constantly over the course of a career and mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional and political dimensions of teachers lives” (p. 518). In his discussion of teachers’ work and professional practice, Mockler states that:

[a] teachers’ work, encompassing the decisions they make on both a short and long term basis about approaches to such things as curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment (to name a few), is framed by and constituted through their understanding and positioning of themselves as a product of their professional identity (Mockler, 2011, p. 517).

Mockler suggests that a teacher's identity is 'constituted across and out of the three key domains of their personal experience, professional context, and the external political environment within and through which significant aspects of their work is constituted' (p. 520). According to Mockler:

1. The first domain of personal experience comprises aspects of a teacher's personal life, - such as social class, family context, race, interests, hobbies and gender – that exist outside of the professional field of education.

2. The second domain of teachers' professional contexts is their experience within a particular education context, which includes their professional learning, development, participation, involvement as well as school and system contexts that they have worked within.

3. The third domain of the external political environment represents the discourses, attitudes, political ideology, and government policy surrounding the educational context and understanding (Mockler, 2011, p 520-521).

Cooper and Olson (1996) also refer to the different social relations that affect a teacher's identity so that this identity is formed and reformed, negotiated and constructed, by the social spheres they are a part of, such as the school context, educational programs and communities of practice. Likewise, Kim (2011) argues that a teacher's identity formation is "dependent on social, cultural, and political contexts multiple, and changeable over time and space and it is constructed and negotiated primarily through language and discourse" (p. 55). Miller (2009) views a teacher's identity as "relational, negotiated, constructed,

enacted, transforming and transitional” (p. 174). Furthermore, Day and Kington (2008) claim that identity itself is a composite consisting of interactions between personal, professional, and situational factors’ and thus, a teacher’s identity is a combination of these three dimensions. Day and Kington (2008) also acknowledge that:

The professional dimension reflects social and policy expectations of what a good teacher is and the educational ideals of the teacher ... The situated dimension is located in a specific school and context and is affected by local conditions (i.e. pupil behaviour, level of disadvantage, leadership, support and feedback ...). The personal dimension is located in life outside school and is linked to family and social roles (p. 11).

In this respect, teachers’ identities are constructed and negotiated through the effect or dominance of one or more of these dimensions.

The negotiated, constructed, and ambiguous status of teacher identity is “mediated” by their experiences as language teachers and the outsider community of practice including school and the educational setting as well as their insider personal values, beliefs, and convictions of what it means to be that type of teacher (Sachs, 2001, p.154). Sachs (2005) stresses that “teacher identity is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of that experience” (p. 15). Thus, the point to be made here is that Sachs views teacher identity as subject to change as a result of the growth of experience and the teacher’s sense or view of change, and in accordance with the contextual and individual factors and exigencies. This view is supported by the way that both groups of my research participants negotiated their identities in accordance with their experiences in

the context of Iraq or in their teacher training in Australia, as will be apparent in Chapters 8, 9, and 10.

6.3.2 A 'community of practice'

The negotiation and construction process of the teacher identity relates to the notion that practice within a particular context itself enables the notion of becoming (Wenger, 1998; 2000). Wenger's (1998) framework of identity pinpoints five dimensions that represent the dynamic nature of identity, and in particular professional identity formation, within 'community of practice' through which he underlines the socio-cultural aspects of the identity formation. These dimensions conceptualise identity as:

1. A set of "negotiated experiences where we define who we are by the ways we experience ourselves through participation as well as the way we and others reify [invent] our selves".
2. "Community membership where we define who we are by the familiar and the unfamiliar".
3. A "learning trajectory where we define who we are by where we have been and where are going".
4. A "nexus of multi membership where we define who we are by the ways we reconcile our various forms of identity into one identity".
5. "A relation between the local and the global where we define who we are by negotiating local ways of belonging to broader constellations and manifesting broader styles and discourses" (Cited in Sachs, 2001, p. 154.)

In Wenger's framework, at a certain time and place the appreciation of new experience and knowledge has a potential impact on the individual understanding of the self as a participant in that certain context named 'community of practice'. It refers to the groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and who learn how to do it better through ongoing interaction (such as the case with both groups of my research participants). Community of practice then is the context where social configuration and the construction and negotiation of identity take place.

Likewise, Wenger (1998) argues that individuals give meaning to their identities as members of a particular community of practice through three modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. Engagement means how the members of a particular community of practice actively negotiate meaning and meaning making. Imagination represents creating images of what their role in the community of practice means, which in turn involves the awareness of broader systems within the community. Alignment represents how members of the community of practice situate themselves in the wider structure of that target community, how they act in a way that contributes to the broader functioning of the community, and how they coordinate activities and resources to enable them to fit within broader structures of the community (Phan, 2008).

In this study, I extend Wenger's framework and three modes to capture the teachers' identities construction in term of *being, belonging, and becoming* to their English language teaching community of practice.

My research participants define themselves through their experiences within their community of practice as Iraqi teachers of English; applying the

community of practice guidelines to reflect a state of familiarity with other members of that particular community. Wenger suggests that this state of familiarity represents an ongoing struggle and negotiation within the teachers themselves to situate themselves within the community of practice borders which I refer to in Chapter 8 as the ‘culture of teaching’. By situating themselves within those guidelines; teachers reflect the state of belonging to that particular community of practice. Hence, their experiences and being members of the community of practice construct their identity as teachers and as members of the community of practice.

6.4 Language and identity

Recent scholars in the area of language and identity have suggested an expanded understanding of how language is linked to identity and the individual’s sense of self and of others (Byram, 2006; Gibson 2004; Joseph, 2004; Miller, 2004; Norton, 1995; 1997, 2000, 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004).

The language we use forms an important part of our sense of self and of our identity, which in turn creates a relationship between our identity as members of groups, ethnicities, nations and religions, as well as gender, to which we belong. Piller (2001) suggests that the “relationships between language and identity are complex in different contexts as language can function as a marker of national or ethnic identities, a form of symbolic capital and a means of social control” (cited in Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004, p. 2). Gibson (2004) argues that

“language, both code and content, is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity” (p. 1).

Through the use of language, we transmit our thoughts and beliefs and provide a representation of who we are to other speakers or listeners whom we interact with others through the language they use, which reflects their way of living, gender, education, and nationality. Gibson (2004) acknowledges that language plays a central feature of our identity, which enables us to identify speaker’s gender, educational level and race through interaction. In this respect, through the use of language, we can establish and symbolize our identities and enable other people to categorize us according to the language we speak. Byram (2006) states that “languages symbolize identities and are used to signal identities by those who speak them”, therefore “languages and varieties of language are ways of expressing and recognizing the many social identities people have” (pp. 5-6). Accordingly, there is a particularly strong link between language and belonging to a specific identity.

The centrality of identity to language and the intimate relation between the two raise the question of how individuals’ representations of self and others affect learning a second or foreign language. Many recent studies (e.g., McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller 2004; Norton 1995, 1997, 2000), have tried to understand the relationship between second language learning and identity construction, how it relates to a larger society, and how it might be affected by the language learning process, especially in the second language context.

In contrast, there has been less interest in foreign language learners' identity construction and negotiation in a foreign language context. However, scholars (Kinging, 2004; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Zacharias, 2010) acknowledge that learning a second or a foreign language is not merely a process of learning a set of linguistic features or a set of grammatical roles. Rather, language learners negotiate and construct identity and experience a new, different way of expressing themselves through the conflict of identities that occurs through learning and acquiring a target language. Language learning, thus, is not just a matter of code switching between two languages; rather, learners' views of the other and the world may be changed while learning a new language because "we represent and negotiate our identities and that of others through the speaking and hearing" (Miller 2004, p. 294).

Norton and Kamal (2003) conducted a case study of Afghan refugee children in Pakistan. In this study, students were given the opportunity of reimagining their community and their future opportunities in the time and place that they were living in. The study concluded that these students' investment in learning the English language was a positive experience because they saw English language, in their imagined communities, as the language of opportunities and technological progress, which could bring peace and "a position of strength rather than weakness" (p. 314).

With reference to studies conducted on foreign language learning and identity, Kinginger (2004) reports a detailed longitudinal study of the experiences of Alice, who studied French in the USA, and how Alice created an imagined community about France. Kinginger (2004) acknowledges that "Alice's journey

thus far has involved negotiation of many facets of her identity: social and linguistic, gender, and class identity ... over the course of her foreign language learning” (p. 240). Alice’s efforts toward French language competence are as much an investment in social identity, as are those of immigrant woman in Canada in Norton’s (2000) study.

Thus, language and identity have been linked in an integral relationship that recognizes language learners’ identities as sites of change that are negotiated and constructed in different times and places. It seems then, that acquiring and learning a set of linguistic features enables a learner to see and express him/herself in a new and different way as a user of a new language. Hence, language learners negotiate and construct their identities and their world views through the language that they learn. There is, then, considerable evidence to support the proposal that the identity process is implicated in foreign or second language learning. Some learners are then under the influence of two language systems whose values can be extremely different from each other. In learning their second language (especially if it is to be learned well) these language learners (who in this case are also teachers) are under the effect of new cultural perspectives that differ from their own cultural background, and most likely from their prior cultural identities.

This also implies that the language classroom is fundamentally a cultural exchange site that is based on the interaction process of different values and cultural or educational perspectives. Stables (2003) acknowledges that “the classroom can be understood as the site of various forms of dialogical interaction”, which “can impact positively or negatively on their [language

learners’] personal and social identities” (p. 1). As such, teachers such as in the case of the research participants of this present study are the main determinants of educational practices in their classrooms. They play an important role in the construction of their learners’ views and “their understandings of unfamiliar belief systems, values and practices; and their negotiations of new social relationships” (Hawkins & Norton, 2009, p. 32).

6.5 Language teacher identity

The intimate relation between identity and language (Joseph, 2004; Miller, 2004; Norton, 2006; Pavlenko & Blackledge 2004) invites researchers to provide a rich understanding of ‘how teachers are positioned’ in the language teaching professions (Chong et al., 2011, p. 51). Language teacher identity has gained prominence in research on language teaching and instruction in the last decade because of its significant impact on how teaching is played out in the classroom (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Olsen, 2008; Phan, 2008; Varghese, et al., 2005). Researching the ongoing process of interpretation and reinterpretation of language teachers’ identity and “how teachers made sense of themselves as teachers as they develop professionally, is useful in understanding how teachers are positioned” in the language teaching professions (Chong et al., 2011 p. 51)

The work of English language teachers is not straightforward. ELT is not “merely a cognitive or technical procedure but a complex, personal, social, often elusive, set of embedded processes and practices that concern the whole person” (Olsen, 2008. p, 5). It is not a set of professional procedures performed by

teachers. Rather, teaching is a process that is “evidently and inevitably uncertain” (Floden & Clark, 1988, p.1), “involves an interaction among the teacher, the students, and the content” (Marzano, 2007, p. 31) where “teacher identity seems to play a special role” (Singh & Richards, 2006, p. 7).

Thus, it is important to understand language teachers’ identities for the purpose of teaching development (Phan, 2008; Morgan, 2004; Varghese, et al., 2005). In fact, a focus on teachers’ identities is a critical component in language teaching, because it deepens and extends the understanding of who teachers are and what teaching is. Phan (2008) argues that “understanding what teachers want and how they perceive themselves and how they are often represented is crucial to the success of ELT teacher training courses and EIL pedagogy in global and local contexts” (p. 2).

Varghese, et al. (2005) argue that language teachers play a critical role in the constitution of classroom practices and their identities need to be seen as a crucial component in “determining how language teaching is played out” (p.22). Varghese et al. outline the recent theoretical understanding of the language teacher identity as “multiple, shifting, and in conflict; crucially related to social, cultural, and political context; and being constructed, maintained, and negotiated primarily through discourse” (p. 35). At the same time, they suggest that “we also need to understand how language teachers form their identities in communities, among others, in their teacher education programs, and beyond that, in their schools and classrooms” (p.39). Thus, language teachers’ identity formation and construction is a social process that takes place within the school

setting, teacher education, including training, and other discourses surrounding the language teacher.

Yazan (2018) argues that language teachers “play an important role in the ways language learners negotiate and construct their views and understandings of the target language and culture as well as the associated perspectives, beliefs, values, and practices” (p.3). Hence, in understanding the teacher identity, we make sense of how teachers act as teachers, and their role within their community (Yazan, 2018).

Teacher identity is obviously important, so there is a need to know more about language teachers in different and specific contexts: what they do, how they think, what they know, and how they learn. We need to understand more about how language teachers specifically perceive what they do, what they know about language teaching, and their views about their classroom practices. Also, “we need to have a clearer sense of who they are: the professional, cultural, political, and individual identities, which they claim or which are assigned to them” (Varghese et al., 2005, p. 22). In light of this identity construction complexity, my research aims to investigate the ways my research participants’ identities are constructed within the socio-cultural, educational, and institutional settings.

6.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the concept of identity is defined and an overview is given of how identity has been conceptualized. The literature in this chapter reveals that

identity is not fixed or static. Rather, it is constructed, multiple, hybrid and dynamic, continually formed and reformed, created and shaped by the discourse/s available to the individual and those around them; within this process, individuals are agentive beings who resist or produce new identities through the social, linguistic, and educational resources available to them.

Secondly, the concept of teacher's identity is explored. Teachers' identity is framed, constructed, and negotiated through the combination of all the personal beliefs, personal experience, professional characteristics, the social practice and social interaction, the professional landscape, and the external discourses surrounding them in their community of practice.

The intimate relation between language and identity is discussed in which language learning plays an important aspect in forming and constructing the learner's identity. Language learners negotiate and construct their identities and their world views through the language that they learn. Accordingly, language teachers need to be seen as a key determinant of the language learning process in the classroom.

Finally, language teacher identity is explored. Language teacher's identity construction is a process which takes place within the teachers' social and educational contexts and discourses surrounding them. It has highlighted the importance of understanding language teachers' identities by understanding who they think they are, what they do, how they think, what they know, as well as by researching the ongoing process of interpretation and how teachers make sense of themselves.

Chapter 7: Research methodology and design

7.1 Overview

This chapter explains the methodology I used to frame the study and also explains the details of the research design. Generally, the study has been designed to follow the five components of “a study question, its propositions, its unit(s) of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings” (Yin, 1994, p.20). A qualitative case study is useful to learn “more about a little known or poorly understood situation” (Cottrell & McKenzie, 2010, p. 10) and to answer the ‘how’, ‘why’, and ‘what’ questions (Yin, 2003). The study adopts two methods of data collection to gain rich, in-depth data and uses both thematic and narrative analysis to understand the data.

The study questions outlined in Chapter 1 are reiterated here:

1. What discourses are involved in the construction of Iraqi English language teachers’ identities?
2. What does the English language represent to these teachers?
3. How do these teachers perceive educational reform of English language teaching in Iraq?
4. How do these Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers of English perceive English, English language teaching and their identity as teachers?

A case study of ten current Iraqi teachers of English in Iraq and ten Iraqi Master of TESOL qualified teachers in Australia was carried out. The participants participated both in focus group discussions, and one-on-one semi-structured interviews, for the purpose of investigating and documenting their teaching experiences, educational aspirations, perceptions of English language in the Iraqi context, career expectations, and their experiences of utilising their academic achievements to improve and support Iraqi education. I also placed myself under the lens of investigation through a self-narrative including my experiences as an English language teacher in Iraqi secondary schools.

I collected data from both groups about their views on the international status of English language; the status and expansion of the English language in Iraq; the cultural, religious, and political dimensions of teaching English in Iraq; the educational and contextual bases and the foundations of the Iraqi educational system, as well as their perspectives about how they evaluated English language teaching progress both before and after 2003 including the adoption of communicative language teaching.

I explored how these two groups of teachers placed themselves as members of the Iraqi social, religious, and cultural community as well as members of the professional community of teaching the English language in Iraq. This offered insight into how both groups of teachers viewed the “tensions” between the educational requirements and the cultural, religious and political bases; between Western culture that might be transferred through teaching English, and the Arab-Islamic foundations of Iraq; and between their roles as teachers of ‘Western English’ and their role as ‘educational leaders’ which were assigned to

them by the community. Further, my study investigated these teachers' perceptions of English and of 'the West' beyond education issues surrounding English and the Middle East – as perpetuated in the media, in popular culture and in academic literature. The specific reasons for collecting data from the Australian TESOL trained teachers were, firstly, for exploring their specific perspectives about all of the above and, secondly, to find out what roles they might play in the process of improving Iraqi education and how (if) they intend to use the knowledge gained in TESOL programs in the context of teaching English in Iraq.

7.2 Qualitative research

In this study, a qualitative research methodology has been used in order to seek a deeper understanding of my participants' perspectives, values, opinions, behaviours, and social attitudes (Flick, 2006; Kervin et al., 2006) by exploring the nuances of experiences that are not available through quantification (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) acknowledge:

Qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them (p. 3).

Qualitative research methodology is a set of systematic and interpretive practices designed to find answers to questions that reflect social actions and social experiences that are created and sustained within naturalistic and social

contexts (Creswell, 2009; Kervin, et al., 2006; Merriam, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 1980; Savenye & Robinson, 2004).

Qualitative research has several hallmarks. It is conducted in a natural setting, without intentionally manipulating the environment. It typically involves highly detailed rich descriptions of human behaviours and opinions. The perspective is “that humans construct their own reality, and an understanding of what they do may be based on why they believe they do it” (Savenye & Robinson, 2004, p. 1046).

The adoption of qualitative methodology enables the researcher to ‘explore the meanings that people give to social phenomena as they occur in their natural settings’ (Kervin et al. ,2006, p. 37). Merriam (2009) states that “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world”. (p. 13). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 14).

Such methodology relies firstly on obtaining responses and answers to how participants interpret social phenomena and social experiences, and how they understand the world through their experiences and the discourses around them. Secondly, it is based on the understandings that the researcher brings to the analysis of these responses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, 2011; Gay & Airasian, 2012; Merriam, 1988). Maxwell (2013) enumerates five research purposes for which qualitative studies are particularly useful:

1. Understanding the meaning that participants in a study give to the events, situations and actions that they are involved with; and of the accounts they give of their lives and experiences;
2. Understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence this context has on their actions;
3. Identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, and generating new, grounded theories about them;
4. Understanding the process by which events and actions take place;
5. Developing causal explanations (pp. 30-31).

Accordingly, the selection of qualitative research methodology came from my intention to elicit educationally and culturally specific information through my participation in the life of my research participants; it certainly suited my aim to understand the values, opinions, behaviours, and social attitudes of Iraqi English language teachers (Flick, 2006; Kervin et al., 2006). Through qualitative research, I attempted to explore and understand a particular situation and elicited the meanings this group of participants gave to it. I endeavoured to explore the social world as seen from the participants' points of view, as Fossey et al. (2002) put it, so as "to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds" (p.717).

In educational research, qualitative methods provide valuable insights into complex social events, offering comprehensive data that contribute to understanding the cultural, social, and contextual aspects of a particular

educational setting (Eisner & Day, 2004; Kress, 2011; Maasz & Schloeglmann, 2006). Kervin et al. (2006) acknowledge that:

The strengths of qualitative approach have resulted in a shift toward this type of research in educational setting. In particular, educators have welcomed the rich and more varied insights into educational setting that qualitative research produces. The approach provides insight into the subtle nuances of educational contexts and allows for the exploration of the unexpected that cannot be accommodated in quantitative approaches (p. 37).

Lagemann (2000) argues that the qualitative research “had opened the doors to many new debates about the social significance of education’ and ‘helped foster a variety of new relationships between education research and practice” (p. 223).

7.3 A case study

Yin (2003) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin et al., 1991) to “reveal the multiplicity of factors which have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of study” (Yin, 1994, p. 82) through “a commitment to the overwhelming significance of localized experience” (Freebody, 2003, p. 81). Case studies are “designed to bring out the details from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data” (Tellis, 1997, p. 1) through detailed “in-depth

data collection involving a multiple source of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). This study affords the opportunity to highlight, through the narrated experiences of participants, the complexities of teaching English in Iraq, “where existing knowledge is limited” (Darke, et al., 1998, p. 275). Creswell (2002) refers further to a case study as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 485) to clarify “an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 496).

Case studies are “the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p.1). In this sense, this study provides detailed investigations of individuals or groups that enable the researcher to analyse the variables relevant to the subject under study (Polit & Hungler, 2004; Verma & Mallick, 1999).

Stake (2000) emphasizes that case studies are useful in the study of human experience because they make sense to readers and provide an understanding of the naturalistic world through these personal experiences. Hence, case studies are ideally suited to understand my research participants’ thoughts and perspectives in the area of teachers’ identity construction.

Yin (2003) is just one researcher who acknowledges that “the case study strategy allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events”, which in turn can provide more understanding of how the identities of the participants of this research have been constructed and shaped (p.1-2).

This research can be understood as consisting of two case studies (case study within a case study) of Iraqi English language teachers. The first case study adopted a more general focus on the characteristics, perspectives, and attitudes of Iraqi English language teachers (both groups). It explored the identity construction process of Iraqi English language teachers within the educational, cultural and religious community of practice of Iraq, to understand how they shaped and reshaped their identities in professional and cultural terms, within the educational, social, cultural, religious, and even political requirements of the 'new' Iraq.

The second case study was more specifically about the Australian TESOL trained Iraqi English language teachers and what role they might play in the improvement process of the Iraqi educational system in general and English language teaching in particular. Also, it explored their views and attitudes toward the educational requirements and the cultural, religious and political bases of teaching English in Iraq, as well as how they perceived their identities within the Western TESOL context in Australia. Although the aim of this study was not about evaluating the TESOL programs' content, this particular case has thrown more light on how the TESOL trained teachers felt about the educational knowledge they gained in the Western TESOL programs and applying it in their local non-native context of teaching English.

Stake's framework (2000) suggests that this is an instrumental case study, which he characterizes as aiming to provide "insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (p. 437). Firstly, it offers some form of generalization from the particular insight of Iraqi teachers' identity construction to a broader context of

teachers' identity construction. Secondly, findings from the particular insights of Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers may be applicable to a broader set of TESOL trainees. Thirdly, this research contributes to discussion of the appropriateness of the educational design and cultural contexts of BANA TESOL programs as generalized to teachers working in non-Western contexts.

Likewise, it is an exploratory case study (Yin, 2003), which explores situations in which the phenomenon being studied does not have clear outcomes, and thus, guides a researcher to develop ideas for future research. As a result, this study can provide a pathway and open the doors towards further exploring the social, cultural, and educational foundations of teaching English in Iraq as well as identity construction process of the Iraqi Muslim Middle Eastern teachers of English.

7.4 Narrative inquiry

In this study, I employed narrative analysis for the aim of exploring how individuals can make sense of their experiences within a particular context. Narrative analysis in qualitative research arises from an understanding of narrative as the “first and foremost a way of thinking about experience” in order to draw meaning from these experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477) through “a multi-dimensional exploration of experience involving temporality (past, present, and future), interaction (personal and social), and location (place)” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004, p. 576). Therefore, narrative is viewed both as “a research tool and as a learning tool for teachers to make sense of, and

lead, their own ongoing learning experiences” (Yazan, 2018, p. 5). This methodological stance is known as narrative inquiry which “requires going beyond the use of narrative as rhetorical structure, that is, simply telling stories, to an analytic examination of the underlying insights and assumptions that the story illustrates” (Bell, 2002, p. 208).

Through narrative inquiry, stories people tell about their experiences have become a focus of research in fields like psychology, sociology, education and linguistics and therefore it does not fit “within the boundaries of any single scholarly field” (Riessman & Speedy, 2007, p.427). In the field of education, narrative enquiry as a research methodology focuses on “looking at the ways in which teachers’ narratives shape and inform their practice” through “listening to the voice of teachers and hearing their stories” (Bell, 2002, p.208). Connelly and Clandinin (2000, 2004) also stress the importance of knowing oneself as an educator in order to get a deeper understanding of our own education practices and thus understand effective ways to teach.

In recent years, the field of language teaching has seen a growing interest in research that employs narrative enquiry together with a focus on teacher’s identity (Bell, 2002; Pavlenko, 2002, 2007; Norton, 2011; Riessman, 2008; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). As Pavlenko (2002) emphasises, “there is no doubt that recent developments that legitimize personal narratives are extremely important for the TESOL field, as they allow for both teachers’ and learners’ voices to be heard on a par with those of the researchers” (p. 213).

Narrative inquiry as a methodology has been adopted to explore language teaching and learning matters by attending to participants’ past experience.

Within the process of narrative-making, identities are constructed through the stories we create and tell about our lives and experiences (Norton & Early, 2011). However, it is more than a storytelling; rather, it is the study of experience-as-story and, in particular, how we shape our lives through our stories, how we tell these stories, and how we interpret our past experiences through the stories we tell (Norton & Early, 2011; Pavlenko, 2002; Riessman, 2008). Bell (2002) mentions that narrative enquiry enables the researcher to understand people's experience of their lives to get "the information that people do not consciously know themselves", and it also "illuminates the temporal notion of experience, recognizing that one's understanding of people and events changes" (p. 209). Through the engagement in the storytelling, people engage in the practice of identity construction and representation (Riessman, 2008).

Adopting narrative enquiry in this research also led me to understand my own life story and to reflect on and interpret what discourses and experiences shaped my identity as the whole Zeki (the Iraqi person and the Iraqi teacher) as well as my role in the socio-cultural community in Iraq, and my practice as a teacher within the educational context of Iraq. Through telling my personal story, I aimed to better capture the nuances and the complexities of being a teacher in the context of Iraq where the various events, experiences and discourses (whether, social, cultural or professional) shaped and constructed my multiple identities. In turn, this engagement has provided me with the space to make sense of myself and to construct who I am and how I "want to be known" (Riessman, 2008, p.7) through this study.

7.5 Participants

Based on the logic of qualitative research that is “concerned with in–depth understanding” and aims ‘to look at a “process” or “meaning” individuals attribute to their given social situation’ (Hesse- Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 45), I have used a judgmental (purposeful) sampling. It is “the most common sampling technique in qualitative inquiry” (Marshall, 1996, p. 522), which lies in “selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2000, p. 230). Houser (2011) acknowledges that it is a “characteristic of qualitative research in which the researcher identifies criteria for the type of information most likely to illuminate the research question, [and] actively seeks out these individuals” (Houser 2011, p. 424). Thus, although the sample of teachers involved in this research is not large, the strength of this research comes from the deep exploration of participants’ perspectives and beliefs.

The selection of my research participants was based on two criteria: firstly, all twenty participants needed to be English language teachers in Iraq who had been teachers both before and after 2003. This enabled me to explore their experiences and perspectives in regard to the Iraqi education in general and the English language teaching in particular both before and after 2003. Secondly, they belonged to the majority Shia Muslim sect from the southern part of Iraq, which means that they shared the same culture, religion, and language. Adding to that, they all needed to speak English fluently. This enabled me to investigate how these teachers shaped and reshaped and thus constructed their identities and roles within the professional community of teaching English as well as within

the larger social, cultural, and religious community of Iraq, which they were part of. Identifying the year of 2003 as a milestone came from its importance in the political and social landscape of Iraq; as it was the year of the US invasion of southern Iraq, so it was a year in which Iraq experienced major changes in its economy, education and foreign affairs, especially with the West.

The selection was limited to Shia Muslim teachers from the southern part of Iraq because of the deterioration of the security situation in the predominantly Sunni Muslim areas; and the difficulty of interviewing teachers from the Kurdish areas due to the need to obtain special permission to enter to Kurdistan as well as the tense political situation between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government. Adding to that, the Kurdistan region of Iraq is different in terms of cultural norms and language and even its educational foundations. Further, the researcher is familiar with the educational, social, cultural context of southern Iraq and this is an important factor in the trustworthiness of data interpretation.

The first group included ten Iraqi English language teachers who were currently teaching English in Iraqi intermediate and secondary schools (7 males and 3 female).

In 2008 & again in 2014 the Iraqi government initiated steps to attract Western trained and qualified teachers, doctors, and engineers who hold PhD or Masters degrees to return to Iraq and be part of the reform process, whether in education or other fields. The second group of participants therefore included ten Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers who had recently completed a Master of TESOL in Australian universities. These students had been either offered

scholarships and funded by the Ministry of Higher Education in the Iraqi government and the Higher Committee for Education Development Program (HCED), or had studied at their own expense. They comprised eight males and two female students. These teachers intend to return to Iraq and be part of its education system.

The non-balanced gender numbers between both groups can be attributed to the following factors: firstly, in terms of the Iraqi teachers in Iraq, it was hard to find female teachers who agreed to participate in my study, due to the social norms and traditions. Those female teachers who participated in the study attended the interviews with their husbands. During the focus group discussions, they were in a group by themselves with no other male participants present.

Secondly, in terms of the TESOL trained teachers, only two female teachers accepted to participate in my research. One of them attended the interview with her husband and the other one attended with her son. However, they agreed to participate in a focus group discussion with one other male teacher but with the attendance of their family members (husband /son).

All of the participants had graduated from Iraqi universities with a Bachelor of Arts/ Education degree in teaching English language. In this study all participants were assigned pseudonyms (or aliases). The ages of these participants were 31-46 years old with Rafid as the youngest and Kasim as the oldest. Their teaching experience in Iraq as language teachers ranged from 8 to 20 years, with the older teachers having more years of experience than the younger teachers. The different ages and years of teaching experience of these

teachers provided a range of points of view about English language teaching and teachers in Iraq.

The Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers were selected from 2 different universities. They were teachers of English in Iraq before the postgraduate study in Australia. Participants in Iraq were selected from different rural and urban schools in southern Iraq..

I recruited the first group of participants through a complicated process. First, I had to obtain approval from the Directorate of Education. I had to go through a long process to obtain approval from the Iraqi Directorate of Education. After I obtained that formal approval, I put an announcement letter on the Directorates of Education announcement boards seeking participants for my research project. At the same time, I started visiting schools seeking participants for my study. These visits involved speaking with the school principals first to clarify my research project and second to seek permission to conduct interviews with the school English language teachers. Before any permission could be granted, the principals had to speak with their teachers to see if they were willing to participate in my research. In spite of these difficulties and the refusals of many teachers, I finally found teachers who were happy to participate. Then, after I had obtained that approval it was explained to me by the principals that the participant teachers would be directed not to talk about politics or religion, nor to criticize policy and curriculum. Then I started visiting schools seeking volunteers to participate in my research project. I visited 31 intermediate and secondary schools. I had to seek permission from the schools' principals to speak with the English language teachers. Then, I had to find teachers who were

willing to participate in my study. After explaining the research topic, I provided the interested teachers with my contact details to notify me later if they were willing to go ahead with participation. Those teachers who were interested in the research contacted me by phone from 10 different schools.

I recruited the TESOL trained teachers, in Australia through announcements circulated to the Iraqi community in Southeast and North Melbourne, Victoria through the notice boards of a community hall and community mosque seeking participants for my study. Contact details of the researcher were provided for potential participants to obtain more information. Those teachers who were interested in the research contacted me by email or phone. I was contacted by 14 teachers seeking details about the research project. However, 10 of them participated in the study.

The interested participants were informed about the topic of the study and provided with the Explanatory Statements and the Consent Form (appendixes 2&3). Also, they were notified that the focus group discussions and the interviews would involve roughly one hour each and would be audio-taped. They were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary. No promotions (such as rewards or payments) were used or given to the participants to participate in this study.

Participation was entirely confidential and participants were assured they would not be identifiable. Participants had the right to review and approve interview transcripts before they were used in the research and could withdraw at any time. After they filled in the forms, participants were asked to choose a time for the individual interview. Participants who attended the interview were advised

that the interview would be audio-taped, but that no identifying information will be made publicly available at any time during the research project or in any publications arising from the research. Participants in the study were de-identified. Thus, the data has been attributed to participants by aliases. Although, the names are reasonably common in the Middle Eastern and Muslim world, they bear no resemblance to those of actual participants. Also, their postgraduate programs, States and cities, universities, schools where they teach (in the case of Iraqi English language teachers) and year of coming to Australia (in the case of the Australian participants) are not mentioned in relation to participant aliases, for reasons of confidentiality and anonymity.

The following tables summarise the participants.

Table 2: The Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers

| | Name | Gender | Age | Teaching Experience (years) | Teaching level |
|-----|----------|--------|-----|--------------------------------|------------------|
| 1. | Mohammad | Male | 32 | 8 | secondary school |
| 2. | Adnan | Male | 35 | 10 | secondary |
| 3. | Ahmed | Male | 35 | 9 | intermediate |
| 4. | Naseem | Male | 36 | 11 | secondary |
| 5. | Aliaa | Female | 36 | 13 | intermediate |
| 6. | Zain | Male | 35 | 11 | secondary |
| 7. | Hussein | Male | 34 | 9 | intermediate |
| 8. | Intithar | Female | 34 | 10 | secondary |
| 9. | Hassan | Male | 36 | 10 | secondary |
| 10. | Mansoor | Male | 38 | 14 | secondary |

Table 3: The Iraqi English language teachers who are currently teaching in

Iraq

| | | | | | |
|----|---------|--------|----|----|--------------|
| 1. | Samia | Female | 35 | 11 | intermediate |
| 2. | Abass | Male | 41 | 17 | secondary |
| 3. | Jamila | Female | 34 | 9 | intermediate |
| 4. | Ghaida | Female | 43 | 18 | secondary |
| 5. | Kasim | Male | 46 | 20 | secondary |
| 6. | Maitham | Male | 42 | 15 | secondary |
| 7. | Rafid | Male | 31 | 8 | intermediate |
| 8. | Razaq | Male | 45 | 19 | secondary |
| 9. | Saif | Male | 35 | 10 | intermediate |
| 10 | Ali | Male | 39 | 13 | secondary |

7.6 Methods of data collection

The techniques and tools that I adopted to gain data were related to my research questions, seeking to explore and identify the feelings, thoughts, and perspectives of participants. As Miles and Huberman (1994) argue, “qualitative data provide thick descriptions that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader” (p.10).

The study data was collected over two settings and each setting involved two stages. To protect the confidentiality of my participants in both Iraq and Australia and to prevent any possibilities of my participants being identifiable, I have decided not to reveal the specific time periods during which I collected the data.

The first setting was in Iraq with Iraqi English language teachers who currently teach English in Iraqi schools. The data in this phase was collected through three focus group discussions (three female teachers, three male teachers, four male teachers). The second stage was the semi-structured interviews. All the interviews and focus group discussions were held in the afternoons and after work hours as requested by the participants themselves. I conducted all interviews in Iraq in the school library.

A 10 to 14 day period was left between participating in the focus group discussions and the interviews to give the participants time to rethink what they had said during the focus group discussion. Also, I wanted to reduce the pressure on the participants (if there was any), especially considering that it was

the first time any of them had participated in research. In addition, the time lapse allowed me to read and identify the themes generated from the data and use them as a starting point for the semi-structured interviews.

In the second setting, in Melbourne, the focus group discussions were also the primary source of data collection and the semi-structured interviews a secondary one. The three focus group discussions consisted of two female teachers and one male teacher, three male teachers, and four male teachers. Again I left 10 to 14 days between participating in the focus group discussions and in the semi-structured interviews. I interviewed participants in the Iraqi community hall or participants' homes; and I gave the participants the option to finish the interview at any time they wanted to allow for flexibility and respect.

I used a combination of focus group with in-depth individual interviews to explore the opinions and experiences of the participant teachers. Morgan (1997) states that the "focus groups and individual interviews can be complementary techniques across a variety of different research designs" (p. 23). The focus groups were designed to allow participants to discuss the questions and share their opinions while the in-depth interviews offered a wealth of insight into the motivations, attitudes and feelings of these individuals. Thus, the combination of these two methods enhanced the trustworthiness of findings. In addition, "preliminary focus groups can provide a useful starting point for individual interviews that involve unfamiliar topics or informants" (Morgan, 1997, p. 22)

As methods of data collection, the focus group was used as a primary method and the in-depth interviews were the secondary method. The use of this strategy allowed me to first identify a range of experiences, attitudes, and perspectives,

and then, uncover rich, in-depth, and detailed data “on topics that were only broadly discussed in group interviews” (Morgan, 1997, p.23). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) acknowledge that “a more common design strategy uses focus group as a primary research method and follow-up in-depth interview with some or all of the focus group participants” (p. 211). Also, Morgan (1997) argues that “this strategy has the advantage of first identifying a range of experiences and perspectives, and then drawing from that pool to add more depth where needed” (p. 134). I used the focus group interviews to produce specific discussions about English as an international language, ELT in Iraq, and the cultural effects of English language learning on foreign language learners in relation to cultural identity and identity formation. The in-depth interviews were conducted to add more depth to explanations about the foundations of teaching English in Iraq. Also, the in-depth interviews discussed the discourses that surround teachers of English in Iraq and how Iraqi teachers negotiate these discourses and place themselves within them. Further, the in-depth interviews with the TESOL trained teachers added more depth to the understanding how the Iraqi TESOL qualified teachers drew a connection between their TESOL knowledge and the current situation and needs of their Iraqi educational setting.

The study adopted the use of open-ended questions. Charlesworth and Lind (2009) agree that “open-ended questions stimulate discussions and offer opportunities for thinking” (p.113). McDaniel and Gates (2001) argue that “they enable respondents to give their general reactions to questions” (p. 296) and “provide the researcher with a rich array of information” (p. 270). In this study, open-ended questions were designed to allow English teachers to speak

their minds and express their views and interpretations freely. Through the use of open-ended questions, the participant teachers were able to provide a variety of data, including feelings, attitudes and understandings. I attach an indicative list of the open-ended questions in Appendixes 4 & 5.

Yin (2011) mentions that open-ended interviews can offer rich and extensive data and enable case study participants to “construct reality and think about situations, not just provide the answers to the researcher’s specific questions” (p. 12). Johnson and Christensen (2012) argue that open-ended questions allow participants to respond in any way they like, and enable a researcher to access the natural world of participants. The adoption of the open-ended questions encouraged participants to engage in conversations, and respond in their own words; as David and Sutton (2011) state, they enable “the respondent to express their response in their own words and allow for the possibility of issues arising that the researcher had not previously considered” (p. 253) Despite the drawback mentioned by Brace (2004) that “analysing open-ended comments can be time consuming and difficult”, the open-ended questions provided more flexibility for my research participants to discuss their attitudes and beliefs freely (p. 53).

Albarracín et al. (2005) and Druckman (2005) argue that open-ended questions have higher reliability and validity than close-ended questions. Albarracín et al. (2005) attributed this advantage to the fact that “open ended questions do not present answer choices to participants, these sources of researcher-induced measurement error do not distort responses in principle”(p. 35). Thus, open-ended questions allowed participants to answer the research questions in their

own words rather than confining their answers to the list of choices offered by closed-ended questions (Reis & Judd, 2000). Accordingly, they allowed my research participants to provide explanations in their own way and thus provided a range of attitudes and perspectives.

I gave all the participants the choice of conducting the focus groups and interviews in Arabic or in English. However, they all chose to conduct the interviews in English language. I asked the participants in Iraq about their choice of conducting the interviews or the discussions in English and the answer was that they had no chance to practise the English language outside the classroom and thus they were keen and interested to speak only in English. Adding to that, by giving them the choice to use Arabic or English, I wanted them to reflect on my confidence in their abilities to speak English, which was evidenced in one of the focus group discussions when one of the participants said that 'See we can speak English'. The TESOL teachers in Australia also chose to use the English language because of their abilities to speak English fluently.

Although I gave the participants the choice to use either Arabic or English language, as a researcher I preferred the interviews to be conducted in English in order to avoid any misinterpretations (the Arabic language can carry/give ambiguous meanings for the same single verbal context). Secondly, I wanted to get insights into how the participants extract their experiences, thoughts, expectations and perceptions throughout the use of English language that they internally regard as the language of others.

It is sometimes argued (e.g., Kaar, 2009) that ‘as the interviewer plays a critical role in the interviewing process, the whole research is in danger of being biased due to misconduct of the interviewer’, and the ‘susceptibility of subjectivity’ that can result in inappropriate “interpretation” (p. 4). It must be conceded that it was extremely complex and taxing for me to create a balance between my previous role as teacher of English language in Iraq and as a student in Australian universities, and my current role as researcher. However, I tried to examine various points of view rather than superimposing my own impressions or perspectives. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) mention that the researcher has to draw a balance between his external view and the internal view of research participants and thus, avoid the misunderstanding of participants’ perspectives. Thus, although research dimensions and findings can be inferred from my own background knowledge, they align with what the participants have said in response to research questions indeed. I suggest that as I shared with participants the same cultural background, language, and similar teaching experiences as well as being a postgraduate student in Australia, I was able to avoid misunderstandings as I was familiar with participants’ points of view.

Moreover, I contend there was no unequal power relations between us as we were all teachers. In addition, participation was voluntary and no payment or reward was offered to these participants. However, there are also particular issues of representation and interpretation raised with insider researchers such as myself, which I discuss fully in Section 7.7.

7.6.1 The focus groups

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a research technique that collects data through an informal discussion among a group of selected individuals about a particular topic where “participants are encouraged to talk to each other instead of answering the moderators’ questions” (Liamputtong, 2011, p. 3.) This method involves the use of in-depth, group interviews in which participants are selected because they are a “purposive, although not necessarily representative, sampling of a specific population” (Lederman, 1990, p. 117). A focus group is a group interview of people who share similar characteristics or common interests. Morgan (1996) mentions that focus group ‘is a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher’ (p. 130). O’Toole and Beckett (2010) describe a focus group as where “a group of people interacts not only with the interviewee, but with each other, and there is a level of endemic prompting and probing that often provides rich and profound insights and observations from the interviewee” (p. 131). A principal advantage of focus groups is that they yield a large amount of information about research participants’ experiences and views, “rather than aggregating individual data in order to speculate about whether or why the interviewees differ” (Morgan, 1996, p. 139). Focus group discussion is considered to be naturalistic (Krueger and Casey, 2000) and enabled me to ask my research participants a series of open-ended questions “to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities” (Kitzinger, 1995, p. 299).

This kind of data collection method was very suitable to the present study which sought to explore how the Iraqi English language teachers constructed their identities within the surrounding discourses in the context of Iraq. The researcher- participants and participant-participant interaction provided the research with very rich information regarding the participants' roles and their identity construction process. Most importantly, the FGD technique offers the research participants a unique and "safe environment" to share their ideas, attitudes, as well as their experience

As the participants in this study shared similar cultural, ethnic, religious and professional backgrounds, this kind of discussion technique helped them share their views and perceptions with each other in a comfortable and safe environment. This comfort "weeds out false or extreme views" as the participants encourage each other to discuss topics in a very open and direct way (Flick, 2002, p. 169). Flick (2002) adds that the FGD technique provides a situation for discussion which is in a more natural environment than a specific interview situation, thus allowing the topic to be received and grasped more easily. The strength of focus groups lies not just in exploring what the participants can say or discuss, "but [also] in providing insights into the sources of complex behaviours and motivations' and 'the fact that the participants both query each other and explain themselves to each other" (Morgan, 1996, p. 139). In this respect, a focus group enabled me to observe the extent and nature of participants' agreements and disagreements, ideas and reflections. Hyde et al. (2005) refer to what distinguishes group interviews from one-to-one in-depth interviews:

Their capacity to capture the dynamics of group interaction and to exploit this in attempting to understand a topic. Thus, rather than simply responding to the interviewer's questions, 'natural' group interviews allow the researcher to experience, albeit in an artificial setting, the jokes, insults, innuendoes, responses, sensitivities and dynamics of the group, as group members interact with one another, which may offer new insights into the substantive topic under investigation (p. 2589).

Despite the advantages of using FGD in qualitative research, some researchers criticise this method. Ho (2006) for example explored the reliability and validity of the FGD as a qualitative research methodology. She argues that since it is "doubtful if all participants will be highly involved with the topic, not all the participants' viewpoints might be heard" (p. 3). She adds that the FGD "may be unnatural because discussions are controlled to a large extent by the facilitator which may cause the research not to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' opinions or experiences" (p. 3). As participants shared their own experiences and opinions in the group setting, they may influence each other through their presence and reactions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990, 2014). As a researcher who was from the same community of the participants sharing the same religion and cultural background as the participants, I was aware of these disadvantages and in response, I tried to be a good listener in a nonjudgmental way during all the focus group discussions, and give the participants the freedom to interact with each other to share their views and experiences.

7.6.2 In-depth interviews

Participants also participated in in-depth individual interviews to elaborate on their personal attitudes and thoughts, including any impact of participating in a focus group interview.

An in-depth interview is an effective qualitative research method that allows participants to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences so the researcher can gain insight into how particular participants view, interpret, and order the world. Interviews are one of the most common techniques for collecting data in the social sciences (Atkinson & Silverman, 1997) and the most common source of data in case study research (Merriam, 1998). Patton (2002) argues that interviews enable the researcher to gain access to the interviewee's thoughts and ideas:

“We interview people to find out those things we cannot directly observe...the fact is that we cannot observe everything... we cannot observe how people have organized the world and meanings they attach to what goes on in the world...interviewing then, is to allow us to enter the other person's perspectives” (pp. 340-341).

Mishler (1986) argues that the interview is inevitably a co-construction process between the interviewer and interviewee in which the language used mediates the exchanges of views, perspectives, events, and experiences that occur in the interview. Such interviews are very rich because they are meaning-making events, with the meaning constructed through the interview process wherein the participants construct versions of 'self' as they narrate their life stories or experiences. Thus, participants are not simply reporting on experiences or events or telling stories outside the interview but using the interview itself to

gain a better understanding of their lives. Within this co-construction process, such interviews must be seen as significant rich life events. In this way, both the researcher and the interview subject can produce more in-depth understanding of participants' lives, experiences and viewpoints; thus gaining insights into the participants' beliefs, perceptions, and opinions within this process of construction. My selection of interviewing technique was motivated by my desire to learn everything the participants could share with me about the research topic. This meant careful preparation, and a well thought out method of interviewing and interview technique. Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue that "the most important aspect of the interviewer's approach is conveying the attitude that the participant's views are valuable and useful" (p.145). The significance of interviews is that they could help me to understand the world from my participants' points of view. Conducting these interviews provided me with an opportunity to gain insight into how the Iraqi teachers constructed their identities through their interpretations of the discourses that influenced and surrounded their teaching profession and in the light of their teaching experiences as teachers of English. Kahn and Cannell (1957) refer to interviewing as "a conversation with a purpose"; it was one that helped me to get more specific answers and attitudes about my research questions (p. 149). The in-depth interviews provided me with rich data concerning interviewees' feelings and perspectives on the topic. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) state that the "in-depth interview uses individuals as the point of departure for the research process and assumes that individuals have unique and important knowledge about the social world that is ascertainable through verbal communication" (p.119). An interview

...is designed to allow the respondent to tell their story in their own way....it also allows the subject matter to be explored in some depth to discover the nature of experience, feelings and perceptions of the respondent (Carter & Thomas, 1997, pp. 40-41).

Some disadvantages of in-depth interviews, mentioned by Stack (2011) are as follows. The major disadvantages include the high costs and heavy time commitment, difficulties in gaining access to the interviewee...and the method does not allow for generalizability to a larger population” (p. 174).

Bless et al., (2006) add that:

The weakness of unstructured interviews lies partly in the fact that if the interviewers are not competent they may introduce many biases. In particular, recording the comments of participants is a delicate matter because of the great variety of answers and their complexity. Moreover, interviews are a time-consuming and thus expensive [method] (p.119).

In the case of my interviewees, because I shared with them the same cultural background, language, similar teaching experiences, as well as being a postgraduate student in Australia. I could avoid misunderstandings and be familiar with their answers and points of view.

7.7 My insider/ outsider role and the validity of the data

I have already discussed extensively in chapter one, my own involvement in the study. Here I want to add some of the advantages of being an insider researcher. Acceptance and trust figure as very important in my research for two reasons: first, the participants (as well as the Directorate of Education and the school

principals) were not ready to open their mouths unless they trusted that person and knew that originally, the person was from Iraq and had been part of the Iraqi educational system for many years. They would have been suspicious about talking about the Iraqi educational system with some outsider coming from Australia.

Secondly, there are many factors that might prevent the Iraqi teachers from identifying issues or giving points of view in regard to the education system, especially as the Iraqi education is based on religious, political, and cultural foundations; thus, without trusting and accepting the researcher, those teachers would not participate at all.

In terms of the TESOL trained teachers, and especially knowing that they might return to Iraq and these were sensitive issues, they would not have given feedback or criticism to an outsider researcher. Thus, my proximal status helped me to gain the participants' trust, acceptance and interest in participating in this research. Adding to that, my familiarity with the unique terms and phrases (and as well with how Iraqi people use indirect ways and long detailed sentences to express their points of view) enabled my transcripts to remain faithful to the words spoken by participants. As a result, the quality of transcripts and integrity of interpretations increased.

There are however, disadvantages of being an insider researcher. As a result of the very familiarity, the researcher may presume to understand meanings that an outsider would further investigate. O'Connor (2004) states:

The very familiarity that comes with insiderness necessitates particular caution because it can diminish the researcher's interpretative ability. Familiarity may

mean that the researcher makes presumptions as to what is being said rather than seeking clarification as an outsider would (p. 169).

Dwyer and Buckle (2009) also argue that as a result of familiarity and being a member of the group being studied, “it is possible that the participant will make assumptions of similarity and therefore fail to explain their individual experience fully” (p. 58). It is also possible that “the researcher’s perceptions might be clouded by his or her personal experience and that as a member of the group he or she will have difficulty separating it from that of the participants” (p.58).

I tried to overcome the disadvantages of my role as follows: As I mentioned above, I was accepted by both groups of participants due to my Iraqi identity as well as my experience as a teacher (or as Master of Applied Linguistics holder for those TESOL trained teachers of Australia). The trust I gained enabled me to express that my current role was only that of a researcher seeking to understand the education context through the participants themselves, which I made clear at the beginning of each interview with each participant. In addition, I did not inform any participant of what I think or what other participants had said.

Participants may have assumed I already knew what they know: I made it clear to both groups of participants that I had been out of Iraq for several years and I valued any data they could provide me with. Also, I asked participants to give more details each points they had talked about, to indicate that I was willing to get as much detail as I could from them. It is a common figure of speech in Iraq to say ‘as you know’. In such situations when any of the participants said “as you know”, I kept replying by ‘I don’t know and that’s why I am here to know

from you'. This technique gave them the motivation to keep going without assuming that I already knew what they intended to say.

7.8 Analysing the data

The FGD and interviews were transcribed and each participant was provided with a copy of their transcripts. I asked the interviewees to check whether their views and answers were represented exactly as they were portrayed in the interviews. Maximizing the validity of the data this way, leads to a more “credible and defensible result” (Johnson, 1997, p.283). The participants were given the opportunity to clarify and add comments in relation to any point made in the interviews. Through this technique, it allowed me to make sure that I rescripted the interviews to reflect my research participants’ beliefs and attitudes.

In order to analyse and understand the data, I employed both thematic and narrative analysis, following inductive principles. Flick (2002) states that inductive data analysis –when themes are suggested by the data – involves three phases: open coding where all themes are captured and categorised; axial coding where the categories are interconnected with each other; and selective coding where only relevant and potential themes are selected for discussion. Selective coding, Flick (2002) adds, requires ample understanding of the issues by the researcher. Therefore, referring to the literature and above all to my own experience was important.

The initial thematic analysis was carried out in six steps: “becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Firstly all the transcripts of the focus group discussion and the semi-structured interview transcripts were first set up as separate Word document files. I then started the open coding process by working on the hard copies of the interviews and the group discussion transcripts, reading and rereading to allow patterns and themes to emerge. Different coloured pens were used to highlight various emerging concepts and themes. I also immersed myself in the data by repeatedly listening to the audio files. The themes that emerged from the thorough analysis of the transcripts were used for matching and cross referencing to identify similarities and differences (axial coding). The themes that were very similar or very different were highlighted and discussed in the research findings in accordance with the research questions and overall aims.

Referring back to the research questions was very helpful as a starting point for the focus group discussions. Also, some of the themes discussed during the focus group discussion arose from the literature that was reviewed. However, generally, rather than creating categories prior to the identification of themes, I identified themes within the collected data. In other words, the themes were grounded in the data collected. For example, the themes regarding the ‘community of practice’ and the ‘culture of teaching’ was based on a thorough analysis of the participants’ experiences and narratives that they related during the focus group discussion or individual interviews.

Studying the data in depth and analysing and interpreting the participants' responses helped me extract themes more accurately and successfully. In so doing, I had to read behind what the participants said in order to understand how they perceived the English language and English language teaching as well the discourses associated with the English language or with their own roles as teachers within the community of practice of Iraq.

Before interpreting the themes, I carefully re-examined the data to capture the emergent themes' similarities, and differences. The adoption of thematic analysis allowed me link the various concepts and opinions of one group of participants and compare these with the data that had been gathered in different situations at different times from the other group of participants during the study (Alhojailan, 2012).

For my data analysis, after I had identified the themes that emerged from the data, I then looked for evidence of narratives within the data in order to present rich deep data. Narrative analysis emerges from narrative inquiry as a methodology and way of thinking; in research it refers to a particular way of using human experiences as data (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) to make sense of ourselves and others (Riessman, 2008).

I draw on Connelly and Clandinin's (2006) conceptualization of narrative inquiry as a process of research with three dimensions. The first dimension is temporality, which pays attention to the past, present, and future of events, experience and people. I understand those events, experiences of people under investigation as 'in process, as always in transition' (p. 480).

Within the second dimension of sociality, I draw on ‘the existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise, that form the individual’s context (p. 480).

Within the third dimension of place, I draw on ‘the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place’ p. 480).

By adding the specificity invoked through narrative analysis, I was able to include and respond to a richer level of detail reflecting Connelly and Clandinin’s three dimensions, in my findings chapters. This framework helped me structure the lived experiences of my participants. Applying this conceptual framework to my study, I was able to understand identity as a narrative that is embedded in the history of Iraq, in the socio-cultural, religious, political and educational context of participants; and also within places, including educational institutions in Iraq and in Australia.

The following themes which emerged from the data are the basis for the organization of the findings and discussion in the three chapters that follow.

1. Teacher community of practice in Iraq: being, belonging, and becoming.
2. The English language: status, role, and expansion as perceived by the Iraqi teachers of English
3. Professional expectations and perspectives of the Iraqi English language teachers in relation to teaching the English language in the context of Iraq.

7.9 Conclusion

This chapter focused on my research design, research participants, my insider/outsider role, and methods that I used for collecting and analysing data. Then, used narrative analysis in order to offer insight into how I made sense of my participants as well as my own experiences within the particular context of Iraq. The chapter introduced the three themes that emerged from the data and which are the basis for the discussion of the findings in the three chapters. The next three chapters discuss the findings of this study followed by a conclusion chapter.

Chapter 8: The data: Teacher community of practice in Iraq: Being, belonging, becoming

8.1 Overview

In this chapter I describe how my participants negotiate their professional identities in the new Iraq. Two main themes emerged from the data analysis:

- 1- The culture of teaching.
- 2- Teacher agency.

As I report the data in this chapter and the next three chapters, I will put the letter (I) beside the names of Iraqi teachers who are currently teaching English in Iraq. Also, I will put the letter (T) beside the TESOL teachers' names.

8.1 The culture of teaching: authorities and components

The participants used the term *culture* in describing the teaching of culture or the cultural activities within the English language teaching context, such as when they talked about the transformation of culture or the culture associated with the English language teaching. They used the term culture as 'the culture of teaching' [not the teaching of culture]. It stands for all the codes and ethics of being a teacher in the context of Iraq, which define the teacher's job in a manner that meets the state education authority requirements and local community expectations. The codes represent the MoE requirements, agreements,

guidelines and goals, while the ethics stand for the local community expectations, limitations boundaries, and guidelines.

8.1.1 Teacher's job as compliance

Generally, the participants defined the teacher's job as compliance with the education and social authorities. Hassan (T) illustrated this by stating that 'working as a teacher in Iraq means agreeing with the culture or principles of teaching'. Similarly, Zain (T) defined the teacher's job as 'an agreement to follow the educational and social laws'. Razaq (I) described this 'agreement' as meaning that 'the nature of the Iraqi society assigns a social and educational task on the job of the teacher'. He added that being part and member of the Iraqi community means 'engaging in the teaching profession is an acceptance to that'. Hence, it is compliance with these educational principles and social norms that control the actions and practices of the teacher inside the community where he or she practises the profession of teaching.

Participants pointed out that the teacher's job is a combination of two authorities informing what it is to be a teacher. The professional authority draws on the educational components including knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy, while the social authority draws on the teacher's recognition of the society's moral, cultural, and social boundaries. The teacher is then required to cope with education policy as well as the morals and norms of the local community. Mohammad (T) highlighted that the teacher is responsible for applying the MOE instructions as well as to 'serve' the local community norms which together create the culture of teaching.

To follow the teaching instructions which come from the Ministry and delivered by the supervisors or school principals or the teaching guide... also to serve Islam, culture, and morals ...directly or indirectly, this informing me about what is to be as a teacher...[Mohammad (T)]

Naseem (T) regarded the teacher as a representative of the MOE and the community in his or her lesson.

The teacher's job is divided into two sections: a professional job and a social position ... they complete each other... the first one is about how to follow the curriculum... but the social part is how to represent the community perspectives in my lesson...How to act and react in the classroom ... [Naseem (T)]

So a teacher's work involves working for the authority of the government. At the same time, the teacher works for and in accordance with the religious and cultural power of the community.

It can be said that there are two authorities to take into account in the case of working in the field of education ... The first authority is the authority of the government because education in Iraq is a governmental not a private sector. The second authority is the power of the community which can be the power of cultural or religion... [Maitham (I)]

8.1.2 Teacher's job as a state of harmony

Within this professional and socio-cultural context of teaching English in Iraq, codes and ethics (as components of the culture of teaching) are integrated together to work in concert with all the sum of concepts and meanings derived

from the Iraqi Islamic culture and social norms of the Iraqi society in terms of traditions, prohibitions, and norms.

Kasim (I) and Saif (I) mentioned that the teacher needs to create a state of harmony between the MoE expectations and social expectations

The question here is what I need to be a teacher...of course beside my degree, I need to understand how the Ministry expects me to practise and what the society expects me to teach ... at the end of the day I am in between these two formal and informal pathways of being a teacher... [Kasim (I)]

Regardless what perspectives I hold, I have to fit myself in a form that ensures educational objectives are in line with other general objectives of the society... in line with Islam and local culture... [Saif (I)]

Hussein (T) told a story which illustrates the responsibility assigned to the teacher by the community which he is part of. He referred to a case when a parent came to his classroom asking him to make his son behave. His narrative clarified that the community creates a definition of what is meant to be a teacher and in turn imposed a social or moral role in addition to the educational role of the teacher.

One day and while I was teaching, a parent came to my lesson and said: “my son (named his son) is causing us so many troubles...I want you to behave him to whatever you think is good for him... you can take the meat and leave the bones for us”...He meant that I can behave and punish him until we reach the bones...imagine what responsibility is placed on the teachers...[Hussein (T)]

Participants explained how the culture of teaching shapes their professional practices as teachers and more inclusively builds up their own understanding

about being teachers. The teacher has to assume the role of a guide, mentor, and moral model in the classroom. Aliaa (T) highlighted her dual role. On the one hand, she works as a teacher who is employed by the governmental sector and thus has to represent the educational authority's vision in her lesson. On the other hand, she represents the ethical and social visions of the Iraqi society that she is part of.

I am doing two jobs at the same time because I am working for the government and also I am working for the society...the ministry wants me to teach according the education plan and the families also want me to teach culture and morals beside English... [Aliaa (T)]

Ghaida (I) also mentioned that the culture of teaching has attached the status of being a moral and social model to the professional role of the teacher.

The culture of teaching adds many duties beside teaching the language... the teacher has to act as a teacher of a specific subject... at the same time as a guide and a model in the classroom...I have to achieve all the educational or non-educational goals...Achieving the harmony and balance between them... [Ghaida (I)]

Abass (I) confirmed the same view by illustrating that the teacher is responsible for enhancing the religious and cultural norms or perspectives in addition to his teaching duties. The teacher is not immune from criticism and thus has to be aware of all the social and educational basis of his work as a teacher.

The Iraqi teacher is responsible and at the same time is being questioned... responsible in front of the Ministry of Education as educational legislator as well as in front of the community about the cultural, religious within the class...It must be in line with all the outlines laid out for him as a teacher...The teacher is convicted and

not protected and easily can be targeted with criticisms ... [Abass (I)]

8.1.3 Teacher's job within the Islamic boundaries

Generally, the data indicated that the teachers' work is informed by Iraqi Islamic and social norms that represent the foundation of education and thus provide a systematic framework for the teacher's role in the classroom. For example, Intithar (T) indicated that the teacher's profession is characterized by the social basis that determines how the teacher acts and what to do in the classroom. She also referred to the social norms that surround the female teacher regarding the practical aspects of her interaction in the classroom. These norms limit what she can do and what activities she can conduct or participate in.

The way we act or what personality we reflect is determined by the ethical guidelines... for example, interaction of a male or female teacher and how do we move or walk in the class are characterized by culture or traditions... a female teacher cannot for example conduct a role play and takes part with secondary school male students... [Intithar (T)]

Mansoor (T) said that the Iraqi teacher is part of the Islamic community that dominates the Iraqi society. In turn, the sense of belonging to this community means following the Islamic guidelines in the education practices of the teacher, even if he or she is a non-Muslim individual.

Teacher naturally in Iraq will not teach anything out of the Islamic borders and environment... a teacher in Iraq has been formed as a Muslim teacher... And do not forget that is it not only the teacher...

Islamic culture controls the whole Iraqi education even if the teacher is following Christianity or Judaism or Mandaism ... [Mansoor (T)]

Jamila (I), Samia (I), And Ahmed (T) described how their professional identities as teachers and their language teaching, including teaching the culture through foreign language teaching, are constructed within Iraqi-Islamic culture norms. These Iraqi- Islamic cultural and ethical foundations construct the discourses that draw up what a teacher can teach or how a teacher can teach and what the teacher uses to teach which include assumptions about the cultural learning and teaching in teaching English as a foreign language.

Teaching whether English or Arabic mainly aims to transmit Iraqi Islamic cultural heritage and views...it means I represent the community in delivering this message through my teaching ...there is a verse in a poem says that 'the teacher is almost a messenger... [Jamila (I)]

Beside all the teaching aspects as a job, religion controls the content and what a teacher can teach...for example, we cannot use a Western authentic text or materials and teach it in Iraq without an Islamic view...this view informs my teaching pathway and draw the teacher's job of what is meant to be a teacher ... [Samia (I)]

Religion, culture are core units... they are source and origin of the educational legislation...they regulate the work of individuals and institutions in the education ...when you try to go beyond the cultural or social or religious lines; you will find the students themselves reject that. The society will not accept that... [Ahmed (T)]

The participants also clarified that all social, religious, and moral criteria and concepts are taken into consideration and cannot be exceeded, either in the

preparation of curriculum or in adopting a teaching method or in constructing the teacher's role. Hence, the educational process or reform is based on the Islamic foundations.

In Iraq, it is impossible to do any changes or to create a new education policy or even a new way of teaching the language without considering, culture and traditions...they are derived from Islam naturally... [Rafid (I)]

I remember a statement made by the Ministry of Education says that 'Decisions related to curriculum reform should be purely Iraqi and will be consistent with the values, culture, and heritage of Iraqis'....

Putting in mind that Islam is the main source of them all... [Ali (I)]

The English language teacher as an individual cannot be excluded from the wider community of Iraq. These teachers grew up and were formed as Iraqi individuals and thus the teachers were basically members of this community that tightly determined the nature of the teacher's work. Therefore, these teachers essentially carried the same views and concepts of what teachers represent or what they serve which was evidenced in how they defined teachers' work and responsibility. Thus, it seems there is another authority that emerges, which is the authority of belonging. Rather than being imposed by the education authority or the social authority, this authority stems from the teachers' own sense of belonging to the Iraqi society which assigns an internal responsibility to serve the cultural and religious components of his or her own society (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004).

8.2 Teacher's agency

In the data, participants said that their voice was marginalized in the decision-making process. Secondly, they referred to power relations as influential factors in educational decision making. They also suggested ways to activate or strengthen their voices in the educational reform.

8.2.1 The marginalized teacher's voice

The data showed that these Iraqi teachers were greatly marginalized in the process of decision-making and in curriculum development; they felt they had no voice or involvement in the wave of educational reform in general or in curriculum change in particular. Rather than the teacher acting as an important figure who plays a vital role and integral part in the educational development, these teachers believed they were considered as mere implementers of the curriculum.

Ghaida (I) for example referred to the gap created by isolating teachers from being involved in the decision-making process by stating that “the holy message of teaching cannot be done through throwing a curriculum in the lap of teachers to teach and then go home...there is a gap between decision making and the practice in the classroom”.

Likewise, Ali (I) pointed out that teachers were marginalized before 2003 and also afterwards in the process of making the educational decisions, including changing the curriculum; yet they have to deal with all educational, cultural, religious and political pressures placed on them. Ali (I) likened the teacher to

tight rope walkers who must create the required balance for the success of the show.

In both stages before or after 2003 religion plays the most influential role in Iraq... the teacher has to be like the circus player who walks on the rope where he needs to create a balance or he will fall down ... I need to teach English and look after culture, traditions, politics, and religion ...I need to teach English but in a more Islamic way...I need to teach the English stories but in an Iraqi cultural frame... that is the pressure placed on us as teachers... [Ali (I)]

Zain (T) pointed out while the teacher's responsibility is to deploy the MoE goals in the classroom, there is no clear strategy for involving the teachers in the process of decision making. He used the story of the Prophet Moses (Peace be upon Him). Through his example, he wanted to clarify that the educational message rests exclusively on the teacher; however, this responsibility apparently does not entitle the teacher to have a role in making the educational decisions:

The Ministry reminds me about the story of Moses (Peace be upon Him) when his people told him "go with your God to fight, we are only sitting here" ... the case now is take the book and your method and go to classroom...we are sitting in the Ministry building and we do not care about how you teach... go fight in your classroom and at the same time you have no words in making decisions ... [Zain (T)]

The teacher has to work as a transmitter of knowledge rather than a facilitator who can determine the right materials for students. Jamila (I) narrated an example from her teaching experience where she asked the educational supervisor about the possibility of adding more reading passages but this was rejected and she was directed to use the textbook content only. She related this to the textbook content being designed by the MoE so the teacher's

responsibility is limited to teaching only the textbook content and to preparing the students for the final central exam.

In Iraq, I have no choice or right to say this is good or this is not suitable. I have units and I need to finish them without adding or changing anything simply because at the end of the year the exam will be central and the question will come from the textbook that was initially designed by the Ministry... I remember that one day I asked the supervisor about adding some reading passages but “he said no. You need to follow whatever in the book only” ...then where is my role to create the best teaching materials? [Jamila (I)]

Intithar (T) emphasized the importance of taking the teacher’s agency into account in relation to adopting methods of teaching, and dealing with issues and difficulties associated with teaching. The teacher would not take over the responsibility or the role of the education authorities, but should participate in feedback and suggestions in order to improve the teaching. She used Australia as an example to support her view in that the teachers need more space to share their thoughts and points of view about what needs to be done or improved.

Sadly, the Iraqi teacher works as a mute agent while in theory the teacher is the only one who knows what issues the education or the students suffer from. I think, the teacher must be asked about how do they see the teaching approach or what else can be improved...It does not mean the teacher will step on the Education Department, but it means the teacher gives suggestions based on the experience in the class. The Australian education is one of the advanced ones in the world and the teacher has the space to innovate or to share feedbacks and so on. Then why cannot we do the same In Iraq... [Intithar (T)]

Maitham (I) highlighted the teacher's role as the only connection between the MoE and the students. He illustrated that the teacher is the actual implementer of the curriculum and therefore should be regarded as a 'valued professional actor' in the overall process of curriculum development.

The teacher is the only link between the Ministry and students... the teacher is the actual educational leader who is standing all the day in the classroom and knows better than others about teaching and students... the teacher deserves to be listened to and to be seen as a valued professional actor and his views to be taken seriously in the overall process of curriculum ... [Maitham (I)]

Hussein (T) pointed out that the teaching must be based on the combination of theory and practice, in which theory means setting up the teaching goals, designing the curriculum, specifying the teaching approach, introducing the textbook content. The practical side of teaching is undertaken by the teacher, so the teacher has to be seen as an important figure in determining the quality of the curriculum and what goals have been achieved. Hence, the teacher's agency must be taken into consideration for the purpose of evaluating the curriculum outcomes.

We have theory and practice to achieve the goals of teaching... Theory is to be managed by the Ministry of Education and the practice is to be managed by the teacher... in this case it's a combination of policy making and those who will achieve that in reality...They are the teachers...the results have to be evaluated not only by the exam results but by what the teacher thinks of what they achieved or what they need to achieve not only by following the curriculum as blind [persons] ... [Hussein (T)]

Kasim (I) also criticized what he called a “dictatorship” in the educational decision making. He stated that the education reform or curriculum updates did not change the fact that the decision making is done by the same education bodies, who neglect the teachers’ thoughts and feedback about the education process. He blamed MOE for not taking the teachers’ voice into account especially when it comes to applying new curriculum or in understanding the school’s needs:

I call it dictatorship...we have to identify the initial issue ...changing the government or changing the curriculum did not change those who control the decision making in the Ministry of Education. The same faces before or now do not want to share the thoughts about how to better teach the English...The talk here about the dominance of specific group of senior educational supervisors who are not in contact with the actual education reality for example in the small towns or in the far south of Iraq where schools are in a miserable condition ... [Kasim (I)]

8.2.2 Power relations in decision making

Power relations appeared as an issue, especially as the decision making in the educational reform can be affected by outsiders who are not part of the education system. Mohammad (T) criticized the double standards, particularly in marginalizing the teachers who are at the core of the educational process, yet taking into consideration the advice of those who are outside the education system. For example, he mentioned how the textbook contents were amended due to criticism made by the religious leaders.

I am not exaggerating by saying that the teachers got no hand in the new curriculum...I remember in 2007 the Najaf seminaries criticized the textbook content and as a result the Ministry of Education changed some of the content to be suitable for the Islamic bases... it was only a small issue about pictures of women without hijab or about using names such as John or Peter...but at the same time no one accepted or take into account what the teacher can say, with my respect to the Islamic leaders or faith but the teacher has to be listened to too... [Mohammad (T)]

Similarly, Mansoor's (T) narrative gave an example about how power relations influenced decision making. He referred to a situation when he visited Iraq and met one of the religious personnel who manifested the ability to reach the Minister of Education, in order to inform him of Mansoor's expert views in regard to education in Iraq. This case made Mansoor (T) wonder about the influence of religious bodies on education and policy making. At the same time, this case showed him that Iraqi education policy was subject to power relations. He also raised the question about the role of teachers who do not have suitable channels to those with influence in the government, to deliver their voice to the higher educational authorities:

In 2013, I was in Iraq for a visit...I was invited to attend a dinner in a house of a well-known religious man...We talked about education and I was talking about some issues in the Iraqi education...I was shocked when he said: I can write down your points and will be able to reach the Minister and tell him about them'...I told myself, how if I do not know him, can anyone listen to my points? And if they can listen to him, then why cannot they listen to the local teachers? [Mansoor (T)]

Mohammad's (T) and Mansoor's (T) comments illustrate the extent to which religion and the religious authorities are involved in the decision-making process, including designing the curriculum and amending the textbook content. The religious authorities appear to be among the decision makers in the education sector and therefore the religious orientations or perspectives work as a discourse that impact on the decision-making processes as well the teacher's role in the education sector.

Hassan (T) explained that the period after Saddam and the change in the government led to the increased role of religion in the formulation of the education decisions. The dominance of the religious orientation was evident in the domination of the Islamic parties at the highest level in the Education Department. Within all of that, the role of teacher was marginal in the formulation of the education changes and policy, which led to some degree of pressure on the teacher because of the need to comply with those educational changes that had been legislated by the religious orientations.

After Saddam era, the religious authority became more powerful which was clear when the higher authorities in the MOE were dominated by the religious parties and their members and their points of view. In contrast, we find that the teachers were outside the calculations. Again the teacher appeared as a zero on the left with no value...There is no dialogue between educational bodies and teachers to find out what requirements and ways to improve the teaching and learning... [Hassan (T)]

It is evident from this data that these teachers' identities were also sites of struggle to create a harmony between the authorities' requirements on the one hand, and how the teachers fit their roles within the frame of these requirements,

as the educational authority is a site of change itself depending on the changeable circumstances of Iraq. These teachers' identities consisted of several complex dimensions: identity was for them a personal, social, and professional site of change, which was being constructed through the influences of the personal, contextual, social, cultural, educational milieus and developments (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Beijaard et al., 2004; Varghese et al., 2005). Thus, in their identity formation, these teachers were under the influence of a range of factors both internal and external (Flores & Day, 2006; Phan, 2008; Rodgers & Scott, 2008).

8.2.3 Activating the teacher's voice

The participants argued that teachers need to contribute to educational reform by exchanging opinions and points of view in regard to curriculum changes, including the methods of teaching and textbook content.

The teachers suggested several ways to strengthen teacher input in evaluating the updated curriculum and the new teaching methods, such as conducting surveys or questionnaires.

Why the Ministry does not conduct questionnaire among the English teachers about the method and textbook...or an annual conference in each directory of education about difficulties and suggestions of these teachers... [Ahmed (T)]

Razaq (I) pointed out that he considered this moment important and critical because the government is setting out education goals and policies which impact the future of Iraq. Although he admitted the difficulty of asking each individual

teacher about their point of view, he expressed the importance of taking the voice of the teacher seriously through conducting surveys among teachers about changes in the curriculum and the teaching method.

This time is very critical in the present and for the future of the Iraqi education...what we are doing now will be pathway for the future of the country... I know that it is impossible to ask each individual teacher about what he think or what he want... but instead they can conduct a survey or now the internet is available and they can ask the teacher too about the method or whether the textbook is suitable or not...[Razaq (I)]

Saif (T) similarly highlighted the importance of taking the teachers' feedback into consideration through surveys. He gave an example from his postgraduate study in Australia about how he was receiving invitations to participate in surveys to evaluate the units of study outcomes and what points or subjects needed to be improved.

I have noticed in my postgraduate study that at the end of semester we receive a survey letter asking about what do we think about the units...difficult or easy... we benefit from it or not? What needs to be improved in the future? Why cannot we have the same thing in Iraq? At least by randomly choosing a group of teachers and ask them to fill out a form stating what do they think about the curriculum?... [Saif (T)]

Rafid (I) also suggested that the education authorities share responsibility for curriculum development including the textbook and teaching approach. He suggested that teachers can be responsible for micro-decisions such as suitable teaching materials and for finding out the best methods to teach the students,

especially with respect to differences between the educational environment in cities and rural areas.

I think the Ministry has to share some responsibilities or decision making with the teachers ...we can say that the Ministry can be responsible for the curriculum, the books, the methods while the teacher is only responsible on the micro-decision such as selecting the materials or can add more authentic texts because the conditions and the atmospheres are different in cities from those in countryside...this sort of freedom which is not that big can give the teacher the flexibility to find what's better serve delivering the information to students...[Rafid (I)]

This data shows that these Iraqi English language teachers criticized the state of marginalization especially with regard to the process of decision-making and curriculum development. They act as recipients of the curriculum that was designed and updated by the MOE; and thus, they only act as implementers or transmitters of what has been decided by policy-makers. Within this, they have no voice whether in the initial stage of development or later to evaluate the outcomes of curriculum implementation.

Participants referred to power relations as influential factors that affected decision making while teachers themselves had no right to provide feedback or views; yet in reality they were responsible for applying the new curriculum. Also, the participants revealed how the religious authority took over the previous authority of politics. Under the influence of this authority, the teachers again appeared as silent agents who had to construct their professional role in accordance with the discourse of religion of the dominant religious authority.

The participants construct their identities as teachers in that context of teaching English in Iraq and at the same time they negotiate these identities to fit themselves into their professional environment and the educational requirements. The data reflected the participants' desire to contribute to curriculum development in terms of designing and evaluating the curriculum. The participants suggested various ways to face the challenge of their voices being neglected and marginalized. Through sharing the authority with the MoE, they would be identified as educational leaders and valued professionals, rather than as mere instructors or implementers.

Their suggestions reflect the extent to which their identities are shaped and reshaped by the tension between how they wanted to be identified (personal) and their experiences (professional) and the surrounding factors such as marginalization and power relations (contextual factors). This accords with Beijaard et al.'s (2004) argument that the process of teacher identity formation is not only an answer to the question, 'Who am I at this moment?' (as implementers or transmitters of what has been decided by policy-makers), but also an answer to the question, 'Who do I want to become?' (to be identified as educational leaders and valued professionals in the decision-making process). Such 'becoming' is constructed within the teacher's own agency to achieve the internal desire of being regarded as a valued actor in policy or curriculum change whose voice deserves to be heard and listened to.

At the same time, the Iraqi teacher's identity consists of other sub-identities relating to the different contexts where he/she practiced or lived. These comprise their personal knowledge and beliefs, as well as the ideological,

political and cultural interests of the local powerful community. The research participants struggle with creating a professional view of teaching and following the pathway established by living in a particular type of society that had already defined what teachers should do and framed how the teacher should teach.

In this sense, while the teachers construct their professional identities through the cognitive dimension of how they see and view themselves as teachers of English language (or as Stuart Hall (1990) suggested; identity as 'being'), their identity construction is an ongoing process that involves their own belief system about teaching and what it means to be a teacher of English language; guidelines created by society (cultural or religious); and the government designed policy at a time of incredible social change and turmoil. Thus, these teachers' view of professionalism meant coping with the fundamental guidelines imposed on them by the educational authorities and society, all within the teacher's primary choice of being teachers of English language. In negotiating their professional identities within the community of practice (whether educational, as represented by the Directorate of Education or social, cultural, and religious, as represented by the society that they are part of), which determined the foundation, limitations, and culture of teaching, they constructed their own internal belief system and view of professionalism: about how to teach and what to teach and what they could use to teach in order to respond to and cope with the centrally reformed curriculum. This corresponds with Wenger, (1999)'s model of how the teacher develops a professional identity through 'engagement' within the school's direct setting, 'alignment' within the

professional network of teaching, and ‘imagination’, which is teacher’s own sense of individuality.

Thus, the teacher’s sense of professionalism as well as their understanding of their roles must be realised within an Islamic framework as well as the theme of belonging to this Iraqi community in which teaching English language takes place. Also, the English language teaching as a profession surrounded by the sum of authorities and components represents a mission to transmit the socio-cultural, religious, and even political views throughout regarding the English language as a vehicle to convey such views within the classroom’. Hence, the teachers can exert agency and even resist within the overwhelmingly conservative Islamic context – which is what their stories show

At the same time, we can understand the teacher’s identity as developing or becoming (Hall, 1990) within the political and socio- cultural and religious discourses surrounding the teacher. Hence, these teachers create meaning for themselves as part of their self-concept of being a teacher. But they further create a sense of professionalism within the constraints imposed by a centrally imposed curriculum. They understand themselves as teachers, labelling themselves as part of their community of practice, defining their action within the larger community, and interpreting the meanings and discourses surrounding or imposed on them, situating themselves in the socio-cultural representations attached to them

Chapter 9: The status and expansion of English language as perceived by the teachers

9.1 Overview

In this section I explore the data in regard to the expansion and status of the English language in Iraq. Three themes emerged from the data analysis:

- 1- English as a world language.
- 2- English language in the Middle East.
- 3- The role and expansion of English language in the particular context of Iraq.

9.2 English as an international language

The data indicated that the participants believed English is an international language that enables its users to interact and communicate with other people and cultures. Participants agreed that English has become a lingua franca, and the world language which people everywhere need to learn. They associated the English language with globalization, technology, education, and economy, colonialism, imperialism and other identifications.

The data showed the most positive attitudes towards English language among the TESOL trained teachers who lived in Australia at the time of the study and were in contact with the English language as a medium of communication.

Mohammad (T) provided an example about how English has gained an

international status regardless of religion or faith, especially in a place where Arabic language dominated the scene, in *Kabba'a*. Mohammad (T) regarded English as a world language that does not belong to a specific race or user. He explained how he even used English during the Hajj pilgrimage to communicate with other Muslims:

When I went to Hajj, I found people that people from different countries speak English around Kabba'a, which is the Islamic and you can say Arabic place... in Saudi Arabic and in such Islamic practical thing and among Muslims who speaks Arabic or use Arabic in their prayers, you need English and you hear people interact by English...for example I met an Iranian Muslim and we wanted to interact and know each other... to do so we used English not Arabic to interact... [Mohammad (T)]

The important point here is that English was not regarded as only a Western or Christian tool; rather it was used even within that religious practice of Islam, merely as language of interaction.

From this standpoint, the English language did not represent a specific category or a particular race, but a global language so that its expansion proceeded in many directions. For example, Zain (T) and Adnan (T) believed that English language represents a bridge for cross cultural communication between people of different nations and backgrounds.

It is the bridge that we use to reach other people or other cultures... Yeah it is a reason of the British Empire or the USA power but it is something we cannot neglect or forget... [Zain (T)]

It's the time of English...amazing spread of a language in such a short time... yes the British did well... now English is everywhere and you can see that English is used in conferences and even in

sport...Take the Olympic Games or the world cup as examples...wherever they happen, the commentary has to be by English in addition to the other languages... [Adnan (T)]

Ahmed (T) identified English as an international language as a tool to communicate just like mobile phones or the internet, which people use without asking about the initial production:

Like it or dislike it, English is the language of the era... I am not searching about reasons of why or what they did to make it act as international...English like the internet or mobile phones...do I need to say who made them? If he is British then, can I say I am not going to use them? Is that right? Definitely not... [Ahmed (T)]

The data shows that the Australian trained teachers in particular believed that English was available for anyone and of any race so that it no longer belonged to its native Western speakers but must be seen as a global language wherever and whenever needed.

9.2.1 The dual face of English language

Positive identification with English language was not as evident in the Iraqi participants who lived in Iraq at the time of the study. In terms of describing English as an international language, they referred to English as the language of trade and business and wider communication, beyond just the language of the British and Americans.

Ghaida (I) referred to English as a living language that would keep expanding due to its flexible nature which enables people to acquire and learn it easily, but also as imposed on all as an international language.

My point of view is that English language is alive and will not die or disappear. I have to admit that it is flexible but at the same time it is compulsory to be learned not because of how easy it is. No, but we use it because it was made and pushed and imposed to be international language... [Ghaida (I)]

Participants expressed various views in regard to the reasons behind the international status of English. For Maitham (I) English language represented a kind of international passport because of its powerful speakers.

‘English in the first step is a global language that came from its strong speakers...same like the Roman or Arabs when they controlled the world...whenever and wherever they expanded their empires or borders, they expanded their languages... they got the success in that...’ [Maitham (I)]

At the same time, participants identified English language as the language of imperialism and colonialism. Their views indicate that it has not been possible to isolate the English language from the colonialism experienced by peoples of the region, especially with presence of British and US forces after 2003. Moreover, it seems that English was still expanding and this had impacted the general image of the language in the Middle Eastern society of Iraq. For example, although Samia (I) referred to English as an international language, she expressed her conviction that the spread of English represents an invasion that serves and benefits certain nations at the expense of others:

No doubts it’s the international language...but I have to admit that there is a hidden hand before and even now. Some nations or say powers like the Americans are benefiting of English. I can see it as invasion without using troops. Sometimes they invade countries

with troops and tanks. But now they invade the minds and mouths by language ... [Samia (I)]

Similarly, Jamila (I) held the view that the expansion of English did not happen as a co-incident, but occurred through systematic planning. She referred to the British Council educational strategies as one factor that was used to preserve the value and status of the English language:

The British Council enhanced that global use of English since the early days of the British empire and wherever the British go, they carry their language to the others as the language of advance and education... it was a planned strategy...even these days the British Council is adopting that view of increasing the use of English through offering funds and scholarships and many other ways to keep the English as the world number one language... [Jamila (I)]

Likewise, Abass (I) clarified that the historical position of Great Britain as a colonizing power as well as the image provided by the Western media about the superior American modernity had played a vital role in enhancing the international power of English:

The English language was presented to us in the form of the language of the former occupier, where it was imposed in an overt manner...then; it was presented by the media as the language of modernity or the language of successful modern American lifestyle... [Abass (I)]

Kasim (I) explained that English language expansion has been supported by the Western governments; and thus, English serves and represents the Western soft invasion of the non-English-speaking countries.

The English language speaking countries provide so many tools to support the expansion of English among other users ...now you can

see English language in any mobile setting and thus refer to two things...that English is an international language and it is a way to support the position of English among other speakers...let me say that it is a compulsory English language learning ... [Kasim (I)]

The data shows that there was a growing recognition of English as an international language among Iraqi English language teachers in particular. Both groups perceived English as a global language, international language, language of communication, and language of technology and trades; and they predicted that its rise would continue as a worldwide language, as is argued by numerous scholars (Crystal, 1997, 2003; Gnutzmann, 1999a; Graddol, 2006; Harmer, 2007; Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002; Mohd-Asraf, 2005; Phan, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004; Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007).

However, the participants reflected different interpretations in regard to the English language expansion. One group (mostly the TESOL trained teachers), recognized British colonialism as the main reason behind the initial global spread of English (Ferguson, 2005, 2006; McKenzie, 2010; Pennycook, 1998), but also accepted that English can be regarded merely as a way of communication (Kachru, 1983). Moreover, participants like Mohammad (T), Adnan (T), Mansoor (T), Naseem (T), and Ahmed (T) considered the expansion of English as a reality that must be dealt with and adapted to.

In contrast, a second group (mostly the current teachers in Iraq) seemed to be more judgmental about the reasons behind the expansion of English and its achievement of international status. Participants like Jamila (I), Abass (I), Kasim (I), and Samia (I) regarded English as a Western, British, colonialist or imperialist language (see also Edge 2003; Holborrow, 2006; Karmani &

Pennycook, 2005; Mohd -Asraf, 2005; Pennycook 1998; Phan 2008) referring to activities like the British Council as invasion, soft invasion, hidden hands, powerful hands, British, Western media and the American superior model. Thus, they reflected arguments regarding Western linguistic expansion in the literature (e.g., Phillipson, 1992).

The data shows the complicated status of English language. On the one hand, it was recognized as an international language. On the other hand, it was regarded as the object of the invasion and its expansion as a planned strategy. Teachers studying in Australia were more convinced of the global status of English, regardless of any debates around it, which suggests that their views were affected by the context of TESOL study and the Western native-speaking English language context they were living in. The teachers in Iraq had views about English and its expansion which were more influenced by how the surrounding local community described and identified the English language as Western, of the Others, and as invasion.

9.3 English in the Middle East

The data once again shows diverse views in relation to the status of English language in the Middle East, which reflect the teachers' perceptions of the factors that led to the spread of the English language in its current form. Although the initial contact of the Middle East countries with English language was through British colonization and the Christian missionaries (Mohd-Asraf, 2005), followed by the presence of the Western troops in the region along with

greater language contact and closer political ties with the United States, other factors have triggered the need for strengthening the status of the English language. These include globalization, development, the expansion of the integrated global economic market, and digital communication (Akerlund. et al., 2006; Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996; Al-Khatib ,2000; Al-Moneef, 2006; Fox et al., 2006; Hopkyns, 2015; McKenzie, 2010; Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002; Swales, 1987; Zughoul, 2003).

The participants referred to the phenomenon of English as have become entrenched in the Middle East, and suggested that English has expanded in the Middle East as a result of the British colonization and American presence; however, they added that it provided improved communication to cope with the growing business and the various bilateral relations between the Arab world and the West in fields such as technology, defense, and foreign affairs.

9.3.1 The initial contact with the English language: British colonization

Some of the participants recognized the initial impetus; Mansoor (T) for example stated that: “The Middle East was under British occupation and, as in the rest of the British colonies... English was leaked to these countries as a result of a decades-long occupation”. Mansoor’s view acknowledges that the initial steps of the English language expansion in the Middle East were a result of decades of the British colonization, when English language was imposed on the colonies. Thus, the English language was colonial in nature in this part of the world.

Ali (I) went further to state that Christian missionaries contributed to the spread of the English language for religious and missionary purposes in countries of the Middle East. Thus, the spread of English language in the Middle East at that time was associated with Christianity and was religious in nature. Ali also referred to British colonization as a factor in the expansion of the language, which led to a linguistic dominance in British colonies. This initial linguistic hegemony in the colonies where the occupiers left linguistic imprints, contributed to the expansion of the use of English in the Middle East. For Ali, the English language took on the character of linguistic hegemony through its colonial presence in the Middle East. He stated:

In the late nineteenth century, Christian missionaries laid the foundation for the spread of the English language through spreading the Christianity in countries like Iraq, Syria, and Palestine. But the British occupation was the most prominent player in this matter. As in the case of the Turkish and French languages during the occupation of the Middle East, Lebanon and northern Iraq were affected by periods of military and linguistic occupation... [Ali (I)]

Razaq (I) pointed to different reasons behind the initial expansion of English language among the countries of the Middle East. His view can be summarised thus: in the some countries, expansion was a result of colonization; and in others a result of industrial growth, oil discovery, and the close relations with America.

The expansion of English in the Arab region of the Middle East is different and has to be discussed separately... in Iraq, Syria and Jordan was as a result of the British colonization. For example, in the Gulf was as a result of industrial growth and oil and in recent times as a result of foreign workers and relations with America... [Razaq (I)]

The second stage was a result of the Gulf Wars from 1990 to 2003, which activated the expansion of English language and resulted in new curriculum.

The first Gulf War of 1991 and the Second War of 2003 war were other phases of influence with more emphasis on English curriculum imposed by governments such as the in the Golf states and recently in Iraq... [Razaq (I)]

He referred to the pivotal point being the time at which the Arab societies developed more positive orientations toward learning English.

Adding to that, there is now more internal acceptance and orientation among the public to learn English which is more important than the previous reasons... [Razaq (I)]

Abass (I) also attributed the presence of the English language to the period of the British colonization, considering that the military occupation was accompanied by the extension of occupier's language. He said: 'for fact, all the colonial powers had left traces of language in the occupied territories. For example, the Arabs left their traces in Iran, Pakistan and North Africa'.

He gave examples of the linguistic effects during the periods of Arabs' or the Ottoman Empire's occupations to clarify his point of view. Likewise, he stated that the English language continued to attract more users due to the strength of its native speakers and its continued role as a language of science and economics.

French and Ottoman also did the same in the Arab countries. English language was more influential because of the extension of the power of the speaking countries and the adoption of the English language as a language of science and commerce. Therefore, it was

extended and influenced more and more in the Middle East...
[Abass (I)]

9.3.2 Recent contact: military presence and foreign affairs

Participants mentioned that the English language accompanied the presence of military forces and the Western troops in the Middle East after 2003. Kasim (I) was specific that after 2003, English expanded due to trade and economic factors. He referred to the interrelationship between the troops on the ground and the English language expansion by stating that: ‘in fact they are here; their troops and their language’.

The multinational forces presence in the region such as in the Gulf or in Iraq supported the presence of English language ... in fact they are here; their troops and their language... we do not forget mentioning the economy and trade as additional reasons for the expansion of English ... [Kasim (I)]

Hussein (T) mentioned that after the war of 2003, the English language occupied more space in the Gulf States and the Middle East.

Since the war of 2003, English entered the Middle East from the wider door... bases and hundred thousand of soldiers attended and stayed for the reason of invasion of Iraq...a country like Kuwait its population is one million and there is hundred thousands of soldiers all speak English... [Hussein (T)]

Samia (I) illustrated that in the Middle East, historically and at the present, the English language has been closely intertwined ‘hand by hand’ with Western occupation.

‘English looks like came with armies...early in 1920 English came hand by hand with the British soldiers... in the Second Gulf war, English came hand by hand with the British and Americans. I have a newspaper showing soldiers were walking and shopping in Qatar. They do not speak Arabic of course...’ [Samia (I)]

Zain (T) described how the status of English language has varied according to the nature of the relations and policies of the Middle East countries with the Western world.

‘I think, the position of English language is varying according the relations and cooperation with the West. For example, the policies of Iran, the UAE, Syria and Iraq cannot be considered as equal...the foreign affairs are also an important factor in this matter...’ [Zain (T)]

9.3.3 English for education and business

Other participants addressed the current state of English language in the Middle East. Their answers suggested that English had gained such an important place in the Middle East through adoption rather than imposition. Advanced education appeared as a key factor in expanding the flow and the position of English in the Middle Eastern countries.

For example, Aliaa (T) shared a view that the level and advancement of teaching English in each country, which affected language proficiency, was increased by the more advanced teaching methods.

‘There are different levels of speaking English even in these countries depending mainly on the education and what methods of teaching they adopt ... some countries use English as if it is their

second language and that's why they need more advanced teaching strategies to achieve better fluency... [Aliaa (T)]

Naseem (T) explained how stability, foreign workers, and businesses all helped in maximizing the expansion and level of English in each Middle Eastern country. English language expanded in some Middle Eastern countries such as the Gulf States to serve the economic boom and support foreign workers' needs.

The Middle East these days has become economy destination such as the case of the Gulf states or even Iraq where the role of English language to follow these businesses...Of course, there is a difference between the Gulf states and Iraq depending the stability, economy, and education, foreign workers, foreign maids to work in their houses... all of that needed English... [Naseem (T)]

However, Maitham (I) referred to the English language 'as a successful carrier of the Western modernity'. He regarded the English language as riding the crest of globalization and technology:

It is the time of globalization and the English era and the Western domination... in order to copy this, the Middle East became more oriented toward English as Aladdin lamp and as key to open the doors of economy, education, advancement... [Maitham (I)]

This implies three things; first, the English language has been introduced through globalization. Second, English has become an instrument of integration with the world of globalization and Western hegemony. Third, learning the English language is a result of self-motivation in order to cope with the world of globalization and thus support advancement.

Participants like Hassan (T) mentioned learning and communicating by English is a global need that also applies to the Middle East, stimulated by the power

and current position of the English language in regard to business, trade, and communications. Hassan (T) gave an example of the important status of English in the growing business in Qatar.

In the Middle East or any other part of the world there is a global need to learn the English... The Middle East these days has become economy destination such as the case of the Gulf States where the use of English language increased to follow these businesses. When I visited the Doha airport for the first time, I felt like if I am in the United Kingdom. Everyone was communicating by English...
[Hassan (T)]

Ahmed also gave the example of Dubai where the increased use of English provides more access to wealth and attracts more tourism. Participants from both groups referred to English language occupying an important position in the Middle East due to various reasons such as globalization, the oil industry, the economic boom, and digital communication. They believed that the English language in the Middle East is currently seen as representing modernity and advancement.

Almost all the TESOL trained teachers focused on advanced education and the extent to which a particular country was attached to the West whether politically or in the fields of trade and economy. Hussein (T) was the only TESOL trained teacher who mentioned the Western military presence in the region. On the other hand, the teachers of English in Iraq referred to Western modernity, but also to Christian missionaries, British colonialism, and mostly focused on the presence of the Western troops. This implies a general stereotypical image about the West and the English language stimulated by the history of colonialism and the current political reality of the American presence in the region.

9.4 English language in Iraq

The data shows that political, economic and ideological changes are reflected in the status of the English language in Iraq. Participants reported different attitudes and views toward the status and role of English in Iraqi society and the educational system according to the times and the regime, reflecting English as a language of the West but also as a language that could open the doors for more communication and advancement.

English has passed through different stages in the last four decades. The data revealed that on the one hand, English language in Iraq cannot be isolated or separated from the past and present of Iraq as a country at war, and its position in the Middle East where the British in the past and the Americans in the present, played and are playing a controversial role through colonialism and the invasion of Iraq. On the other hand, English language in Iraq cannot be isolated from its international status and its position as the language of advancement and global communication. In order to explore this, I have divided the discussion according to the situation before and after 2003 (the invasion of Iraq).

9.4.1 Before 2003

Before 2003, English was isolated to the classroom; the data showed that for these participants English did not play any significant role in Iraqis' daily lives and it was a compulsory school subject only. The political situation affected the English language's status and expansion in Iraq. The anti-Western government

played an essential role in shaping views against English as a Western language. Moreover, participants indicated that there were no opportunities to learn English through a natural interaction with the target language because of war, embargo, and the isolation of Iraq.

Mohammad (T) explained that there were no opportunities to learn English through natural interaction with target language native speakers, nor was there any commercial or other context that might contribute to expanding the English language in Iraq. Likewise, he referred to a unique reason that led to the lack of strengthening the status of the language in Iraq, which was the absence of the religious connection with the language in contrast to the case of Arabic:

We had no foreigners coming to the country so we learn from communicating with them...also, there are reasons that call for using a particular language...commercial or religious sometimes...for example, whether we are Arabs or non-Arabs we are in contact with Arabic as a language for our daily worshipping...this feature does not exist in English... [Mohammad (T)]

Razaq (I) and Ghaida (I) indicated that English as a foreign language was neither widely used for communication, nor was it used as the medium of instruction in Iraq, and its range of functions was restricted to a few specialised domains such as English for Academic Purposes. Their description was of English as a foreign language, which was learnt and used in educational institutions and typically did not play an official or national role in the social life of its users (see also Broughton, 1980; Crystal 2003). For example, Razaq (I) stated that English language did not serve any form of social practice of meaning-making or cultural interpretation within the Iraqi community.

In order to talk about English, we need to tell that it is a foreign language anyway...adding, it imperative to see whether there was a social or cultural need to use the English language or not which I believe was almost non-existent... no practice or interaction...[Razaq (I)]

Ghaida (I) said that the English language did not acquire any practical role in relation to culture or economy or religion and thus was limited to educational use only.

Several factors combined have undermined the use of English...for example there was no for religious need, and there was no economy or cultural needs...the English language was kept in a complete isolation more or less only in education... [Ghaida (I)]

Saif (I) pointed to the lack of motivation among the Iraqis prior to 2003 to learn English, as it was considered as merely a school subject and its importance was limited to passing the exam and only in a few fields such as engineering and medicine studies. Thus, the English language was isolated in terms of communication or formal/informal functions within the Iraqi community.

Before 2003... English was the last priority to any Iraqi...difficult and useless language with no reason to be learned...Only as school subject for getting mark in the exam...We did not have the interest in learning English...only we needed English for studying or for some field such as engineering or for medical reasons... [Saif (I)]

Intithar (T) pointed out that the English language was exclusively learned and taught in educational institutions, which were affected by the surrounding circumstances and conditions in the country such as wars and political crises. The education sector, including the English language curriculum and teaching

methods, were affected by these crises and were influenced by the major neglect in the government sectors.

The only formal channel for English language learning was the schools. The education has been largely neglected due to wars and random policies which have severely weakened education...Curriculum and methods of teaching English language were not in isolation from this and this was a real reason behind the deterioration of the level of English language in Iraq... [Intithar (T)]

Jamila (I) referred to the Western identity of the English language as a reason for the decline in popularity and space in Iraq over the decades. Her view is that the English language was characterized by a Western identity which in turn was characterized by a colonial character and a colonial identity. Considering the British colonization and the American invasion, the status quo at the time created a negative reaction towards learning and using the English language.

No one can separate the English language from its Western identity... English language accompanied the military intervention, whether British or American... Until 2003 and within all those times of wars and changes, no need was sought to learn the language of the invaders... [Jamila (I)]

Ahmed (T) identified three reasons that contributed to the lack of the breadth of popularity of the English language in Iraq before 2003. First, the English language teaching curriculum focused on grammatical rules more than fluency, which means that education played a key role in minimizing the expansion of English language. Second, there was an absence of any real-life situation to use and interact in English, which reflected the foreign status of English language in a context where there was no need to use it. Third, the influence of the anti-

Western (especially anti-American) orientation, which indirectly politicized the role of English as it was regarded as Western.

The level of English was only about teaching how to make a sentence but not speaking...writing but not using...I never thought of using my English skills out of my teaching profession...where to use it? With the shop keeper who does not speak English or with Iraqis who hate the America and UK for attacking Iraq? I myself stepped on images of the American flag on the street during the time when Iraq had war with America... [Ahmed (T)]

Similarly, Hassan (T) and Naseem (T), agreed that the political anti-Western orientation, political propaganda and the tension between the Iraqi government and the West were reflected in many aspects, including the role of English language as seen as an evil Western attachment. To the extent that the English language was regarded as essentially Western, learning and using the English language outside of educational institutions was almost non-existent in Iraq. The following narratives of Hassan (T) being reported because he wore a T-shirt with the word 'West' written on it, or Naseem writing the words USA and UK on the streets so that people stepped on them, shows the extent to which the government through various ways to equip the local community with anti-Western perspectives.

'It was the language of our enemy but now it's the language of our cousins (laughed)) it's always about what the leaders want.... I remember in 2001, I was in a big trouble because one of the Baath party members reported me for wearing a T-shirt wrote on it the word (West) ... [Hassan (T)]

They were writing the negative statements about the USA and UK everywhere on the streets and on the schools and inside the

classrooms; ... as result locals were fully charged and equipped with negativity against the West and all those related to West or come from the West like English language... [Naseem (T)]

Mansoor (T) referred to a press interview with the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein at that time. During that interview, Saddam sent an indirect message to the public about the nature of the Iraqi-Western relationship indicating that the English language belongs to the West. This narrative shows to what extent the English language was embedded within the Iraqi-Western political conflict and how the ruling regime took this point seriously.

‘Our people believe of all what their leaders say... when Saddam said that he knows English but he will only use Arabic during a TV interview... Saddam told the reporter that he is not going to use the language of the West... in the next morning, people said that he was a hero last night and he preferred our Arabic on the West language... definitely that would affect the English...’ [Mansoor (T)]

Rafid (I) also referred to the anti-Western religious orientation, where Shia religious views were also negatively oriented towards the West, in Iraq and also in Iran, which shared the same sectarian religious identity was adopted and where religion dominated general perspectives and attitudes and created a barrier that impacted the expansion of English language. Accordingly, in both Iraq and Iran, the English language was embedded within a conflict that was characterized by religious-cultural perspectives in Iraq and by religious-political perspectives in Iran.

‘I believe religion helped in weakening the English language as a Western product or instrument to sweep the Muslim world. The Shia have always been against the cultural, military or linguistic

expansion, particularly the British and the American in the region; since the early days of the British, the scholars in Najaf city called for not to deal with the British. Later, Imam Khomeini in Iran was referring to America as the Great Satan...' [Rafid (I)]

Abass (I) gave examples from his Shia community in Iraq. However, it was also clear that he did not generate his view from the wider diverse community in Iraq. His view was constructed and embedded within his own Shia religious community.

I remember every Friday after the Friday prayers, Imam Al Sadr in the holy city of Najaf and among thousands of prayers was saying no no America... no no the devil... no no imperialism...it was not only in Najaf but all Shia everywhere in centre and South of Iraq... [Rafid (I)]

Overall, the data shows how before 2003, although English was the main foreign language taught, it was applied in classrooms only, with no real-life interaction situations outside the classroom setting, which confirmed its foreign status. Participants highlighted that the English language was affected by the isolation of Iraq and thus there was no space to apply English other than in limited fields such as education or medicine.

Secondly, the participants reported that the English language symbolized the West, as British, American, and the representative of Western and colonial identity, which reflects to a certain degree the dominant stereotype against the West, supported by the past and present colonial presence in Iraq and the region. Besides, politics and political propaganda appeared to be major players in conducting a state policy where English was regarded as a Western evil and

where attitudes in the local community were fully charged against Western linguistic or cultural attachments.

Thirdly, religious perspectives appear to have been a dominant factor in shaping the role and status of the English language in Iraq. The religious orientation was anti-Western in general and therefore the religious slogans influenced image of everything that was Western, including the English language. The absence of religious connection with English, together with the succession of wars and political crises, were the reasons behind the minimal expansion of the English language in Iraq.

9.4.2 After 2003 - English at the gates

The data shows that English has played a more important role in Iraq since 2003. Iraqis' attitudes towards learning English language have become more positive. The English language has taken more space in the Iraqi educational system, which reflects the state policy toward increasing English language use and proficiency. This new role for English language in Iraq after 2003 supports Zughoul's (2003) contention that after the Second Gulf War in 2003, the English language became entrenched in the Arab world (see 5.3). The data also indicates an increasing demand for learning English language due to the country's opening, the growth in construction and economy, the State orientation, and in order to deal with the occupying military forces after 2003.

9.4.2.1 English as a requirement in the information era

Generally, the participants highlighted the new social orientation toward learning English after 2003. They pointed out that families started to pay more attention to their children's English language skills and fluency. Several factors contributed to increasing the need for English language, improving the image of the English language within the Iraqi community, and moving the English language from a state of isolation to a state of importance.

The English language started to be seen as a requirement for the information era. For example Ahmed (T) indicated that English language gradually has gained more popularity and space in Iraq, and that after 2003, Iraqis started to realize the importance of English language as a bridge to connect them with the world.

What happened after 2003 can be seen as a matter of growing confidence in what the English language can give to a country fighting to ride the wave of globalization...gradually it became the most needed skill to achieve the goals of getting postgraduate degrees, working especially in foreign companies, and to use the social networks... [Ahmed (T)]

Abass (I) pointed out that Iraqis have become confident about what English language can offer as an international language, which is a significant change in the Iraqis' perceptions toward the English language and English language learning. English language skills are seen as crucial components to achieve educational and financial goals.

We have the motive to learn it.. I have some friends who are teachers of other subjects even those who teach Arabic asking me

about the best way to learn English... large numbers enrolled in private language institution to learn and to get certificates in English language. At the beginning, it was only in North of Iraq but now these institutions or language schools are everywhere... [Abass (I)]

Aliaa (T) also referred to self-motivation and the internal desire to learn the English language regardless of any academic achievements, and how thus English has gained the status of becoming entrenched in the Iraqi society.

There is now a personal need to learn English even if you are not a student or a teacher of English... among Iraqis, the prevailing belief is that Iraq is heading towards more growing business and English will be a key factor in the nearest future. That's why families pay for private English teachers to give their children more English education... [Aliaa (T)]

Similarly, Hassan (T) and Jamila (I) referred to English gaining more importance in Iraq after 2003 due to the increased social orientation towards learning English. These views clearly show that English, a little over a decade of time, has occupied a larger space compared with the period before 2003.

Significantly, the English language has changed from being an educational requirement for the purpose of passing the school examinations into a personal learning requirement that Iraqis pursue regardless of their academic needs.

It became more about learning the language itself not for passing the exam ... the matter here is not the students but its the whole country... no doubts it is a bit late to realize the important of English... but to come late is better than not coming at all (laughed)...[Hassan (T)]

Every time I check my Facebook, I notice many of my friends posting websites about how to learn English in 3 or 6 months...

Hundreds comment on these posts and show a great interest in them...others post some common basic and phrases...This means that now a great deal of the society are interested in learning...
[Jamila (I)]

9.4.2.2 Official use of English language

Some participants referred to how the English language was needed to communicate with the American supervisors who were in the Iraqi ministries. Once again, the English language derived its strength from the powerful native speakers who were supervising and dominating the Iraqi ministries. Hence, the “slave boy” learns the “master’s language” (Lin et al., 2001 cited in Chowdhury & Phan, 2008, p.307) or that of “the powerful nations” (Phan, 2008 p. 72) (see also 5.5.1)

Political and military cooperation between Iraq and the Western world has increased and forced the need for English...After the war, the government departments had American supervisors managing the government work...even the army had those American trainers... we had to interact with them because we had no power to force them to speak Arabic... all Ministries and official offices had to have an interpreter that time... [Mohammad (T)]

Manssor (T) referred to the political situation in Iraq as an important factor whether before or after 2003 with regard to the extent of expansion or reduction in the influence of English in Iraq. He highlighted that the position of English language depended on the nature of Iraqi political relations with the West, which completely isolated the English language in Iraq before 2003, while later

(after 2003) English became a focus of interest of the government due to the presence of the Americans on the ground.

Let's hate the English, it's the Western language, it's the Americans' language – that was during the Saddam era... Let's like and learn the English that was around 2003 and 2004 while uncle Sam is here ... what I want to say is that English is the victim of politics as well... [Manssor (T)]

Maitham (I) and Intithar (T) highlighted that learning English and increasing the students' ability to speak English have become educational priorities which stem from the state orientation towards according a greater role to English language in the Iraqi curriculum. Maitham (I) mentioned that the educational authority plans to teach other subjects such as maths through English language.

Nowadays there is a statement on the English textbook that is 'learning to learn' which means learning the English language to be alive inside your mouth and mind but not to learn it to pass or get a mark in the exam. The Ministry of Education plans to even teach math by English in order to provide more chances to be in touch with the language... the aim is to increase the use of English even in the other subjects... [Maitham (I)]

Intithar (T) asserted that the state authorities were making the effort to implement educational strategies to improve education in general and the English language teaching in particular. These steps illustrate the State investment in teaching and learning English to increase the English language fluency and use in Iraq.

From the early stages of forming an Iraqi government after 2003, the authorities announced that efforts will be made to improve the

education sector, especially in relation to the English language teaching... [Intithar (T)]

9.4.2.3 English and the occupation

The English language was and still is linked to the general situation in Iraq including politics, war, and the development of Iraq and the Gulf region after 2003. The participants highlighted a further aspect of English that had accompanied the presence of the military forces in Iraq.

Adnan (T) and Samia (I) pointed out that in the case of Iraq after 2003, people were killed and arrested simply because of their inability to speak or understand English language in the presence of the US soldiers who were using rifles side by side with English language.

Without English, tell me how can you communicate with a soldier who has a rifle in his hand and direct you to do something in the check point? ...do you know how many people killed only because they could not understand what the American soldier ask them to do...I know a family who has been killed only because the American soldier told them that if you move for one meter I will shoot you and they did that and was killed... [Adnan (T)]

The Americans had patrols to search for weapons in the rural areas... Those simple people cannot read or write by Arabic so of course they cannot speak English... one day the American soldier asked the family whether they have weapons or not and wanted them to answer by yes or no... they said yes without knowing the meaning and had been captured and insulted and disappeared because they treated like terrorists ... [Samia (I)]

Rafid (I) also confirmed the importance of English resulted at some stages from the need to communicate with the Marines so that Iraqis could prove that they were not members of the Iraqi army or the ruling regime forces and thus avoid death or arrest. Accordingly, the English language was promoted by force of rifles and the position of English language stemmed from the need to communicate with military forces and thus to avoid death. Here the English language learning emerged from tragedies that occurred in Iraq, not through a natural understanding of the status of English as international language.

The first signs of the need for English emerged when Iraqis needed to prove their innocence in front of the Marines soldiers. Countryside people were desperate to speak English even by a simple form to prove that they were unarmed or were not members of Saddam Hussein's forces. I was in the hospital and watched how the Americans were questioning wounded patients to see if they were soldiers wounded in the war or not. English was the only way to get rid of the guns and prisons of American soldiers at that time...

[Rafid (I)]

Overall, the ways that the English language is associated with the development of the country and represents the key of advancement after 2003 is apparent from the data. English was seen as an important aspect in the rebuilding process of Iraq. Participants believed in the role that English can play in merging Iraq with the international community, business, advanced education, and new technology, understanding that English can connect different people for different reasons such as education, exchange of cultures, and finance (see also Crystal, 1997; Harmer, 2007; Singh, Kell & Pandian, 2002; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007).

Secondly, English is seen as a language of war and Western soldiers, as when participants referred to the tragedies of those Iraqis who were not able to speak English. English in Iraq at certain times and among certain communities was seen as a language of the West that people needed to learn in order to be on the safe side. In this case, learning English was not only for its global status or its ability to connect people in the time of globalization, but to acquire the language of powerful countries so that the powerless people might avoid destruction and death, as well as to facilitate dealing with the military and political power imposed on the ground. In the Iraqi case, English has had a particular role that was connected with war rather than peace. This aligns with the argument of Phan (2008) that English can be seen as a tool for imperialism where ‘the powerless are pawns on a chessboard’ of the imperialist game (p. 72).

Thirdly, the data pointed to a government strategy toward openness with Western countries in particular and the world in general, in order to get Iraq out of its international isolation, since English represents the convergence of civilizations.

At the same time, language learning has become a social requirement, given its influence for work and study. English language teaching has also been influenced by changes in teaching pedagogy and teachers’ attitudes and identities. Although the role of English in Iraq has been influenced by war and the rapid changes in the country since 2003, it continues to play an important role in education. English language teaching in Iraq is seen as the main if not the only source of learning English language.

Chapter 10: Teaching English in the ‘new’ Iraq

10.1 Overview

This chapter sheds further light on the identity of English language teachers in Iraq in terms of the struggles between the teaching goals and the policy; between teaching the English language and minimising its impact on community; between the status of English as a global language and as the evil language; and between the influence on teaching and teachers of the educational authorities and the sociocultural context, including the religious authorities.

The chapter has three sections. The first theme explains English language teaching before 2003. The second concerns the participants’ points of view with regard to English language teaching after 2003 including the consequences of educational reform and curriculum updates and particularly the adoption of CLT. The third theme is Iraqi culture and the challenges associated with teaching English language today.

10.2 English language teaching in Iraq

English language teaching represents the main pathway to learn English language in Iraq. The data shows that, like the status of the English language, English language teaching has passed through different stages. Participants discussed English language teaching in four dimensions: Firstly, they talked about English language teaching before 2003, under Saddam Hussein regime.

Secondly, they talked about the new contexts for English language teaching after 2003. Thirdly, they talked about the adoption of new teaching methods and their advantages and disadvantages. In particular the teachers discussed the implementation of adopting CLT and the cultural concerns associated with that. Fourthly, they discussed the socio-cultural context as well as religious dimensions of teaching English in Iraq.

10.2.1 English language teaching in Iraq before 2003

Generally, the data shows that participants criticized the progress of teaching English before 2003. They referred to many issues surrounding education in general such as politics and wars as reasons behind the decline of education in Iraq. Besides, they mentioned methods of teaching as a particular reason for low proficiency among the Iraqi students. Iraqi education suffered from ‘low quality, weak preparation and training of teachers, a highly politicised, outdated and distorted curriculum, and ineffective instructional methods’ (Alwan, 2004, pp. 9-10). Participants reported the absence of long and short-term educational goals in relation to English language teaching, the adoption of outdated curriculum and teaching methods that promoted grammatical competence rather than other skills, and the incompatibility between equipping the students with sufficient knowledge of the English language and the goal of the actual teaching, which was to pass the exams.

The English language teachers were not sufficiently equipped and prepared to deal with teaching methods or the teaching content in the classroom because there was a gap between the theoretical content of teacher preparation and the

practical side of how to teach and what the teacher could teach. Finally, the wide use of Arabic language within the English language lessons weakened the students' fluency in the target language. The participants confirmed The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Report (2003) in that the Iraqi 'curriculum and textbooks have not been revised for about two decades, and teaching methodologies are not updated (p. 2). Razaq (I) and Rafid (I) stated that the English language curriculum had not been subject to any updates or changes, and thus had not reflected the pace of educational change in the world.

For 35 years, English language learning and teaching in Iraq had not been affected by the global changes...we did not have a plan with goals to achieve for example in five or ten years in relation to update or change the English language curriculum ...[Razaq(I)]

The Ministry of Education for many years did not even try to provide modern curriculum that provide a better learning or teaching... or even a curriculum that is close to reality to make sense...the curriculum remained as it is for decades ... [Rafid (I)]

Saif (I) explained that school curriculum lacked objectivity and did not stimulate the students' attention through realistic topics from the actual living circumstances of Iraq. He gave an example about how the current textbook included topics that were written in the late seventies of the last century talking about the use of electricity and colour television for the first time in the areas of the Iraqi marshes. His example shows that the textbook had not been updated for many years.

We were teaching a reading passage that has been written by the end of 1979, which talks about marshes in South of Iraq...the reading passage explains that the people in the marshes have a colour TV

and electricity...when I teach it, the students laughed at that's why I have to tell them that the author wrote it when colour TV or electricity were like dreams ...they were like gods (he laughed) ...

[Saif (I)]

Teachers pointed out that English language teaching before 2003 promoted grammatical competence rather than speaking or listening. Mansoor (T) explained how the teaching approach aimed to enable the students to only pass the exams. The focus was basically on the grammar, language forms, and vocabulary.

We teach our students about how to pass the final exam...let me tell you an example...we taught them the difference of using between and among...In the exam all what he needs is to follow the rules or where to put the between or among... [Mansoor (T)].

Intithar (T) also referred to the gap between the educational goal of equipping the students with sufficient knowledge of the English language and the actual teaching that was focused on passing the exams.

The goals are to equip the students with English knowledge but the reality was learning to pass the exams only...For example, I taught my students about if you find 'He' you will need to put 'is' but no one gives the students a chance to create a full meaning sentence...

[Intithar (T)]

Naseem (T) referred to the issue of teachers' preparation at university level. The content of the preparation of teachers in universities was different from what was taught in the classroom, which created a gap between the theoretical content of teacher preparation and the practical side of what the teacher knows about how to teach. The teachers had to create their own pedagogies by following the same teaching methods that were taught when they were students.

The preparation of the teacher in the Iraqi universities was not compatible with what is taught in the classroom. Over 4 years of being a university student, I had only a 3 months course about methods of teaching only...The teacher finishes the university level where he studied novels, poetry and linguistics. But then, told to go to the classroom and teach grammar... [Naseem (T)]

Hassan (T) commented that there was a plan in the 1990s to introduce a new more advanced curriculum in cooperation with the Gulf States that focused on the students' abilities to interact and communicate in English rather than focusing on grammatical competences. However, the circumstances of the Gulf War of 1990 and the consequent conflict with the USA led to the suspension of the project.

In the 1985, there was a project to produce one English language curriculum for Iraq and the Gulf States. The new curriculum was planned to focus on conversation and interaction more than grammar and vocabulary... by the end of 1990 the Gulf States worked according to the plan but Iraq did not because of the invasion of Kuwait and later the issues with America... [Hassan (T)]

Also, Jamila (I) and Abass (I) related the low proficiency in English to the wide use of Arabic language as a language of instruction in the English classroom. They explained that they were teaching the English language through the use of Arabic language, which weakened the students' ability to use the English language. They also pointed out that the teaching instruction and notes were totally given through the Arabic language with only few chances, such as dialogues, to practise the English language.

Arabic language was the language of the classroom even in the English lesson...during the 45 minutes of the lesson, myself or my students speak Arabic...I only use English when I pronounce the words for them and they use it when they read the dialogue or the reading passage for maybe 5 minutes... [Jamila (I)]

Abass (I) identified that using the Arabic language was due to the method of teaching itself as well as to the natural flow of Arabic language in the interaction between the teacher and students.

I never expected the students to speak by English...this issue is related to the method of teaching itself and sometimes to the naturally flow of Arabic among us but definitely it was one reason for the minimized use of English for interacting within the classroom... [Abass (I)]

Politics appears again as a reason for the decline in the English language teaching. Razaq (I) and Ghaida (I) stated that education in general and English language teaching in particular were directed and guided by general government policy, which was at that time negative toward the West. Razaq (I) highlighted how the Iraqi education was subject to state hegemony including Faculties of Education in each University, which were responsible for the preparation of secondary school teachers. This reveals that education was a reflection of the ruling regime. Adding to that, education including English language teaching was a reflection of the general atmosphere in the country, which was at war and had tensions with the West.

The Iraqi education is part of a wider government policy...they used to call the Colleges of Education within all Iraqi universities, which are responsible for graduating the teachers of English and other subjects, the 'Colleges of the Ba'ath Party'. They were directing the

education to serve what Saddam wanted that time especially in the 1990s with all those times of war and tension with the Britain and America... [Razaq (I)]

Ghaida (I) confirmed that education in general was a 'victim' of the wars and the weak economy of Iraq at that time. She also agreed that teaching, whether of Arabic or English, was directed to work as a tool to enhance the Ba'ath party's control.

Education and students were victims of the politics, war, weak economy, and the ongoing conflicts with the West and even the neighbours of Iraq no difference between teaching English or Arabic at that time, all the subjects were serving the Baath party against Iran or Kuwait or America... [Ghaida (I)]

Kasim (I), and Rafid (I) suggested that the Iraqi-Western conflict as a reason behind the decline of English language teaching. They explained how English language teaching was implicitly embedded in that conflict. The English language teaching suffered from politicization and association with the Western intervention in Iraq, which overshadowed the whole English language teaching process. Kasim (I) supported his view with an example of how teachers had to wear military uniforms to school in order to demonstrate their support of the state stance against the West. He pointed out that in times of war and conflict, teachers were ordered to take students to rallies and protests against America. He also asked a question about expectations of teaching English and motivation for learning English at a time when Iraqis as people were suffering from a Western embargo which affected their daily lives under a government that was in constant conflict with the West.

‘The teaching of English has been implicitly linked to the hostility with the West in the past or later especially during the embargo of the 1990s. The English language and its teaching were not in the state of popularity... what do you expect from a hungry student only because the Americans and the British forced the embargo on Iraq? Do you think there was any motivation to learn English? Do you think that helps the teaching? Of course, no...’ [Kasim (I)]

Further, Rafid (I) differentiated teaching English language from any other subjects, due to the sensitivity of the English language itself that was associated with the history of colonialism and the fears that surrounded Iraqis because of American hostility. As a result, students themselves had no psychological desire to learn the English language.

Teaching the English language is different from teaching other subjects because of the sensitivity of the English language itself. The teaching of a language associated with colonialism, wars and conflicts cannot be underestimated by a people who were in fear because of America and Britain. Therefore, the student's psychological fortitude was basically weak towards learning English... [Rafid (I)]

Aliaa (T) linked the educational situation to the Iraq wars since the year 1980, which affected all the state aspects including education. She stated that the wars exhausted the state resources including the human ones and pushed back the education advances. During that time, education and thus teaching or teachers were not among the government's priorities.

The last time the government paid attention to teaching was before the Iraqi-Iranian war...After that everyone was busy with war... then the 1991 war and the 1998 war... Saddam employed everything for the wars that have destroyed the infrastructure, used all the human

and economic resources. As a result, so education had lost all its previous achievements and the government were busy with wars not teaching or teachers... [Aliaa (T)]

This data demonstrates three sorts of issues that impacted the Iraq educational sector in general and ELT in particular before 2003. First, educational issues such as an out of date curriculum, the absence of upgraded teaching methods to increase students' communicative skills, the wide use of Arabic language for teaching the English language, and insufficient teacher training (Alwan, 2004).

The second issue was politics, in relation to English language teaching and which reproduced anti-Western policy in education. English language teaching was embedded in the Iraqi-Western conflict which shows the extent to which English language teaching was seen within the wider political frame in Iraq during that time (Alwan, 2004; McKenzie, 2010; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Phan, 2008.)

The third issue related to the preoccupation of the state with wars and economic crisis that plagued all the aspects of the state including education. Within that, the education sector seriously deteriorated, due to the overall consequence of Iraq's engagement in constant political conflict and wars since 1980; and thus, a decline in the quality of education and teaching (Alwan, 2004; Mackey, 2002; Merrouche, 2006; Rizvi, et al., 2007). Also, it seems evident that the image of Americans and the British worked against students' motivation towards learning the English language as well as the teachers' own perceptions about English teaching as a profession.

10.2.2 English language teaching in Iraq after 2003

Participants pointed out that after 2003, English language teaching was associated with the many educational, social, and even political changes in Iraq. After 2003, policy makers regarded English as a factor for advancement rather than a Western tool. Teachers referred to the important of English language teaching for their students as well as highlighting the new social orientation towards learning the English language.

There were new educational strategies aiming to improve the education sector in general and the English language teaching in particular. English in this process was regarded as a cornerstone in modernizing and advancing the country. English language teaching appeared to be associated with the rapid changes of Iraq in terms of openness, a new political atmosphere, and a new personal interest in learning the English language. English language teaching was seen as a leading factor in the progress of advancement of Iraqi education and Iraq in general. English was to lead the education reform; various steps were proposed, aiming to increase students' oral proficiency as well as their grammatical competence. The English language curriculum was updated and the methods of teaching and textbook content were changed. The aim was to improve English language teaching as well as to increase the Iraqi students' abilities to communicate effectively in English.

The participants reported that the English language teaching curriculum was updated to cope with the rapid changes in Iraq after 2003. Serious attention was given to re-shaping the educational system especially the English language

teaching. To do this, a new teaching approach was introduced and new textbooks were used.

The new English language curriculum aimed to enhance English language teaching by minimizing the impact of politics on the education policy, and motivating the students to acquire more knowledge in relation to English language (Abass, 2012; Al Attaby, 2011; Alwan, 2004)

Ali (I) explained that the MoE initiated changes in the form of gradual steps to begin from grade one in the primary schools and to be continued upward until grade twelve in the secondary schools. Also, he mentioned that as part of these educational changes, the English language learning/teaching would start from grade one in primary education rather than grade five as it had previously been.

After the time of change, the State education authorities had set up a comprehensive educational plan to update the English language curriculum, the teaching method, and the textbook ... they started the changes from grade one in the primary schools and to be continued year after year until they change the whole curriculum up to year 12...the biggest step was to start the English language learning from grade one rather than grade five... [(Ali (I))

Maitham (I) acknowledged the difficulties of renewing the educational curriculum that had prevailed in education for many years. However, he also acknowledged the need for such changes. He also highlighted the goal of the new curriculum was to increase the students' fluency rather than their knowledge of the grammatical rules by giving opportunities to practise the target language.

The new curriculum enables the proficiency rather than accuracy...to speak more than to write...focus on the language itself not the form...The educational supervisors direct us as teachers to create the motive inside the students and to give them the opportunity to practise more English and correct their interactions mistakes.... (Maitham (I))

Manssor (T) regarded the educational reform as 'a new blood injected in the education body'. He pointed out that the education reform focused on English language teaching as a priority, aiming to improve this through adopting new teaching methods, textbooks, and new educational goals.

The education systems after 2003 became more open and a new blood has been injected in the education body...more focus placed on the English language teaching with new advanced teaching approach and textbooks and new goals have been adopted to provide more advanced English language teaching... [Manssor (T)]

Rafid (I) agreed that the new curriculum reflects advancement and modernity within the English language learning. He admitted that Iraq needed an English language curriculum commensurate with the state of English as a world language.

The new English language course of Iraqi schools try to provide better access to knowledge by providing an English language with a new content that help accessing the modernity and the advancement ...Iraqi students were in urgent need to get English education copes with the role of the English language world... [Rafid (I)]

Abass (I) was more detailed, pointing out that the changes mainly focused on included the curriculum of the English language compared to other teaching subjects, for many reasons, including the rapid economic and political

development in Iraq after 2003. Moreover, he suggested that the existence of a new government with new ideas was because many of its officials had been outside Iraq for many years, which suggests this affected their views on the role and status of the English language.

By looking at the education reform, I think we need to call it as the English education reform because it was mainly on the English language teaching, not other subjects. The economy changes, the new government who came from outside Iraq and spent most of their lives there... [(Abass (I))]

He also made an important point by linking the American presence in the period that followed the occupation and the changes in the English language curriculum in Iraq. At the same time, he acknowledged the importance of the curriculum reform “regardless who made them or pushed for them” in order to get better English language teaching outcomes like the neighbor countries of Iraq.

And the American influence on curriculum formulation, especially in the first three years of the occupation...They all pushed to renew the English education. However, I think, the English education was in need for changes and updates regardless who made them or pushed for them...As teachers we believe of the important of better English teaching at least to cope with our neighbours...[Abass (I)]

Some participants referred to the updates as a ‘revolution’ which aims to create better English language teaching. Hussein (T) referred to the positive aspects of education after 2003, including the absence of the impact of politics on the educational policies, and, to the trend towards communication in the teaching of

English through the development of new textbooks with more meaningful textbook topics and the adoption of communicative teaching.

‘I think there are many difference between English language teaching before and after 2003...less politics impact or interference, a new communicative approach...better textbook and meaningful topics...they all good things to support the English language teaching...we needed these changes after decades of serious decline...’ [Hussein (T)]

Intithar (T) also pointed out that the new English language curriculum no longer represented the ideology of the ruling party or followed the views of the President.

‘The Ministry of Education aimed to improve what themes we can grow up in the students’ minds...Now the textbook promotes new themes, talking about technology and peace and history. No more what Saddam said or what the Baath party did. These are a major change if want to consider education as a message to educate but not to brainwash the students.’ [Intithar (T)]

However, participants highlighted there were still various issues with the new educational reforms, which often paid attention neither to the teachers’ capabilities nor to the schools’ needs. Ghaida (I), Mohammad (T), Ahmed (T), and Ali (I) mentioned that the educational reform focused on goals more than on reality: Ghaida (I) acknowledged the need for updating the English curriculum; but at the same time criticized the ‘random’ steps in the process of education reform. For example, she referred to the issue of teachers’ ability to teach in accordance with the principles and bases of the new curriculum. Also, policy makers did not take into account school needs or realities.

The policy makers have no idea about the schools' needs or the teachers' evaluation...I personally expected more researches to be done prior to changing the curriculum such as about the teachers' abilities to teach by the new approach and the new textbook or about what the schools might need to successfully apply the changes...

[Ghaida (I)]

Mohammad (T) suggested there was a gap between what the teachers can do and what the educational authorities want to achieve. He criticized the absence of processes to evaluate the suitability of the new curriculum applications to the schools and teachers' capabilities. He argued that the success of the education reform should not be limited to updating the curriculum; it also depended on evaluating the teachers' abilities and the schools' capacities.

'The Ministry draws a line between what teachers can do and what they want... they think Iraqis will speak English within few years just by announcing the new curriculum or by announcing steps of the education reform...changing the book and the method will not achieve anything if they do not look at the teacher's ability and the schools readiness...' [Mohammad (T)]

The new political strategy was to thoroughly improve English language teaching to achieve comprehensive progress in the society and to meet the needs of the development plans. New teaching goals associated with updated curriculum aimed to increase the English language level in Iraq. The goal was to increase the students' fluency in the target language through providing students with opportunities to practise the English language in the classroom. However, participants pointed out that to successfully introduce valid education reform, (rather than imposing random strategies), evaluation has to be put in place to identify what areas need to be improved. Also, participants raised particular

issues in regard to the adoption of CLT, including teachers' capacity and schools' needs which are discussed in the next section.

10.3 The adoption of CLT

Generally, the data showed that the participants believed in updating the English language curriculum including the adoption of CLT. Most participants highlighted the advantages of adopting CLT as a teaching approach. They suggested that within the communicative classroom, the teacher should be a facilitator who is able to understand the student's needs.

According to the participants, and as discussed in Chapter 4, CLT assists students to communicate using the target language and provides them with an important role in the classroom (Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2002). CLT holds the belief that the learning process depends on teachers and students who use the target language as a mean of communication (Brown, 2007). Moreover, as participants explained, the close relation between teacher and students within a CLT classroom enables teachers to select what is appropriate and useful for students to learn (Brown, 2007; Richards, 1994).

Participants mentioned that CLT enables the student to be active during class by offering the opportunity to practise the target language within the communicative classroom activities. CLT offers the teachers the chance to work as a facilitator to be able to understand and evaluate the students' levels and thus to focus on what points need to be improved to achieve a better proficiency outcome.

CLT gives the chance to the teacher to work as a facilitator...it really shows that learning processes is also depending on the student...student must have the chance to learn the language...communicate by the language and to learn how to interact successfully by using the English language... [Mohammad (T)]

CLT does not make the teacher as the only boss of the class...but gives him the space to know the students better and interact with them as a teacher and even as a friend at the same time... good teacher is the one who can see what is suitable and important to the students...I think that the best teacher who can understand what his students need to be able to use the language in a better way, which I can see in the communicative classroom... [Hassan (T)]

The classroom activities of the communicative offers more flexibility and also helps the teacher to know the level of students when they participate in an activity...also, it helps the student to be active and creative rather than being silent taking notes only... [Kasim (I)]

This data shows that the participants were convinced of the need to update and modernize the English language curriculum. Also, they agreed with the adoption of CLT to teach English in Iraq especially as it provides more opportunities to practice and interact through the target language and thus increases the students' fluency in the English language (Brown, 1994; Littlewood, 1981, 2013; Richards, 2006; Robertson & Nunn, 2007). But while the participants concurred about updating the English language curriculum and pedagogy, they had diverse perspectives with respect to the goals, requirements, and steps to accomplish that.

10.3.1 Issues with the required materials and classroom setting

Participants highlighted the challenges associated with classroom size, student numbers, and budgetary necessities that accompanied the adoption of CLT. Participants indicated financial difficulties, as well as issues with lesson time, buildings, and numbers of students in a class, which need to be addressed in order to have a successful communicative classroom.

Although Hussein (T) agreed with the adoption of CLT as a successful teaching approach, he raised the issue of the large number of students, which is not commensurate with the short lesson time. Sufficient lesson time needs to be taken into account for the application of communication activities.

We have to distinguish between the adoption of CLT and the potential issues to embrace the CLT...it's a good successful teaching approach but are we ready to use it?... how can I teach 50 students within 45 minutes...? In some schools, it is only 30 minutes... [Hussein (T)]

Naseem (T) and Jamila (I) also mentioned classroom size as an issue in relation to conducting communicative activities with such a large number of students.

The classroom is small compared with the number of students... no boards or projectors or labs to do any exercises or group works... three students on each desk will not help conducting any communicative activity... [Naseem (T)]

Students still cannot get enough desks to sit or write on and we got a method that needs tables and chairs... not sure to laugh or cry... sometimes we put two classes together to teach them when there is not enough teachers... do they want me to put 100 students and make an activity? [Jamila (I)]

Razaq (I) also highlighted the lack of the required materials such as visual aids that are necessary for adopting communicative teaching activities.

Supporting the schools with more buildings and materials... more important is the practical side in classroom which can increase both student and teacher interaction. Having the activities in the book does not mean I can do them with my students without having suitable tables, chairs, screens or televisions to show them some videos...' [Razaq (I)]

The data evidenced the challenges of the considerable lack of materials, the short lesson times, and the large student numbers. Classroom sizes require particular attention from the education authorities in order to successfully achieve the communicative goals and to ensure the practical functioning of CLT (Al Attaby, 2011; Al-Mawla & Al-Azzawi, 2011; Bax, 2003; Phan, 2008).

10.3.2 Issues of opposite sex, teacher authority, and teacher training

Another challenge was the issue of the teacher's position in the CLT classroom as well as the cultural and social sensitivity when it comes to students and teacher being of the opposite sex within the communicative activities.

Gender differences were a challenge because of the problems for female teachers to take part in classroom interaction and activities where there are social, cultural, and religious sensitivities, and where limitations and boundaries constrain the female teacher's role in the classroom (Al Attaby, 2011). Intithar (T) and Ghaida (I) mentioned this issue with regard to communicative classroom activities. They both stated that the social norms and traditions of the

Iraqi society would prevent them from interacting or conducting communicative activities with their male students.

There are many problems in our schools such as the lesson time, students' number...Male or female teacher is really big issue, I cannot interact with the opposite sex student...also, I cannot sit and talk and even participate in an activity with my male students. In Iraq, we have social boundaries and limitations stop me from accepting such interaction... [Intithar (T)]

The Iraqi female teacher can only move near the white/black board and try to avoid any social interaction with the students...She cannot form a group and start to interact with them especial when she teach male students... it is something no one can neglect or ignore as a part of the Iraqi society traditions and the Islamic values... [Ghaida (I)]

In addition, the participants referred to the issue of the teacher's authority in the CLT classroom. The data indicated that Iraqi teachers have grown up within a social framework that regards the teacher as the master of the classroom and that CLT principles might conflict with this. Holliday (1997) insists on the importance of considering that "any methodology in English language education should be appropriate to the social context within which it is to be used" (p.1). Hence, the CLT principle that requires the teacher to take part in an equal teacher– student relationship challenges traditional social perspectives about how the teacher should act and what authority and role he or she is expected to have in the classroom. Also, it challenges the teacher's own view of him or herself as the only authorized leader in the classroom. This confirms Phan's (2008) argument that "the equal teacher–student CLT principle challenges the hierarchical teacher–student relationships and the necessity to show respect to

teachers in many countries, and consequently faces resistance and unwelcome attitudes in those countries” (Phan, 2008, p. 92; see also Ellis, 1996; Holliday, 1994).

Maitham (I) stated that the CLT activities influenced his manner and thus the respect he received as a teacher.

As a teacher, CLT affects my practical and personal work in the lesson... I cannot do the right practical side of the CLT because I am losing my manner as a head of the class...my respect as a teacher can be affected by participating or singing in front of my students...
[Maitham (I)]

Ali (I), similarly, indicated that the communicative activities impact the teacher’s respect and control within the classroom. He explained the sociocultural view that the teacher is the only authority in the classroom and that changing this social status would need decades.

Imagining the teacher sitting and very friendly makes me worry about teaching...then how can I control my class...the teachers will not like that equal relationship between teacher and student in Iraq...generation after generation, we grew up with that the student have to be silent and doesn’t have the right to speak unless the teacher agrees about that ...the teacher is the only speaker. I don’t think this can be changed just over few years. It will take decades to do so... [Ali (I)]

Adnan (T) explained that CLT activities and the flexible role of teachers within these activities do not match with the social perspective that regards the teacher as the respected controller of the classroom.

Our society does not bear the idea of a flexible teacher...I have to appear as a leader and distinguish myself from my students...Even

the other teachers in the same school will criticize me if they see me losing my control because CLT... [Adnan (T)]

Razaq (I) also mentioned that the need to take into account the teachers' internal acceptance of communicative teaching and thus of losing the traditional authority of being the master of the classroom. He also referred to persistence as an important factor for the success of CLT. Moreover, he maintained the importance of considering the student's ability to participate in communicative activities in front of the class.

The teacher and students need to be ready and comfortable to participate in the CLT classroom...can the teacher leave his power of authority and be happy to try something new and be in way or another equal to his students? Can the student break the social rules and participate in front of other students? If we can do that, then CLT might be good... [Razaq (I)]

Moreover, participants mentioned the teachers' fluency as an issue that needs to be taken into consideration. Ghaida (I) for example referred to this concern in regard to teachers replacing their previous teaching approaches with CLT when they do not have sufficient language proficiency and fluency to teach communicatively.

On papers, the CLT is great but in the class, we face many issues. For example, the teacher is not ready to take [hand] over his classic style...the teachers are not perfectly fluent in speaking English language...we still need more time to get ready and to be able to fluent before we can teach our students to be fluent... [Ghaida (I)]

Samia (I) also mentioned the difficulty of applying CLT principles for teachers who were used to using Arabic as the language of instruction and the requirement for the teachers to be fluent in the target language.

Moving the teacher from using the Arabic to teach English to a method that needs a teacher who can speak English the whole lesson time is an issue by itself...to be honest this is a real challenge for the teachers... [Samia (I)]

This implies the importance of teacher development should not be overlooked in order to reach teaching standards that respond to the principles of CLT. Teacher development was viewed as an urgent requirement for successfully adopting CLT', and the participants specified that the adoption of CLT must follow systematic steps to deal with the rehabilitation of English language teachers. Kasim (I) insisted that to achieve these educational goals, more attention needs to be given to teacher development.

I believe it is very important to focus on training the teachers about CLT approach...increase their knowledge about how to teach in a way that achieve the educational goals in our local Islamic culture... [Kasim (I)]

Adnan (T) agreed that improving the English language teaching has to start with preparing the teachers and that the teachers need to be trained by well qualified trainers.

If the Ministry of Education has a real true aim to improve the Iraqi education they need to think about how to prepare a teacher...not just change a teaching content or a teaching method...Teacher development courses have to be done by qualified expert teachers...Not a 15 years experienced teacher to teach 14 years experienced one...expertise not experienced... [Adnan (T)]

Abass (I) also criticized the lack of sufficient teacher development courses which resulted in the English language teachers using their previous teaching techniques to teach CLT.

I attended few days course which was a joke... the ministry selected few teachers and sent them to Jordan for few weeks to see how do they teach CLT there...They came back to teach the teachers for few days about the method...in fact it was waste of time... to be honest the teachers are using the old teaching way to teach the CLT... [Abass (I)]

Naseem (T) mentioned that some of the English language teachers have not enough knowledge or information about teaching approaches to successfully adopt CLT.

I had a talk with many teachers who told me that they did not even open any book after their graduation...they have no idea about the teaching approaches...Then how can we jump to a new method without preparing the teacher' 'Iraqi teachers need workshops in theory and practice... [Naseem (T)]

Aliaa (T) highlighted the importance of evaluating English language teachers' capabilities before adopting CLT so that the education authorities obtain a deeper understanding of the training that is required to achieve the planned goals.

I believe that better teaching needs better teachers...evaluating the teacher's ability to adopt a new teaching method...the Ministry needs to know what are the needs through a deep understanding and a realistic evaluation to teachers and curriculum as well... [Aliaa (T)]

This data highlights the importance of the training and development of Iraqi teachers in order to increase the teachers' knowledge in terms of theory or practice, in order to cope with the implementation of CLT (Abbas, 2012). In addition, participants mentioned the need to evaluate the teachers' capabilities

and fluency as it is important to take into account ‘the capability of the non-native teachers in terms of language fluency and competence in communicative methodology’ (Bahumaid, 2012, p. 446)

10.3.3 Concerns about the cultural values associated with CLT

In many cases, socio-cultural discourses strongly impacted the participants’ points of view. The Iraqi culture of teaching (see chapter 8) affected their role and position in the classroom; their interaction with the opposite sex; and their perspectives on the possible transformation of culture. Participants expressed a variety of views about the potential for cultural transformation associated with English language in general and CLT in particular. They discussed the extent to which foreign language teaching and the associated culture can impact the Iraqi students and the local Islamic culture. Their concerns were that maximizing English language fluency among Iraqi learners would be a contributing factor to spreading Western cultural content at the expense of Iraqi culture, especially with the impossibility of separating language from its cultural norms (Brown, 1994; Gao, 2006; Kramsch, 1998). For example, Ahmed (T) stated that ‘those who are in contact with a language are also acquiring and learning the culture and its attachments but in varying degrees’.

Saif (I) indicated that teaching English in a more communicative way is not only a matter of forms or words but also of cultural meanings and habits. He referred to the transformation of culture within the English lesson, seeing the teaching of English language as another way of teaching the English language culture.

We cannot take out the language from its culture...when I teach a language of course I will teach the culture of this language... inside the communicative lesson, I am not going to teach the words only...these words and sentences carry meanings and these meaning are cultural values and habits... [Saif (I)]

Similarly, Hassan (T) maintained that increasing the real-life interaction by the target language means introducing patterns of cultural behaviours, beliefs and customs which are attached to the language itself.

Now the focus is on giving the students real life interaction...it is a variety of patterns of culture, behaviour, customs and beliefs inside the language... when I teach you Arabic I will use some Arabic stories and literature. The same case for teaching the English... inside this literature and stories culture is delivered... [Hussein (T)]

Razaq (I) mentioned that in the early stages of the new curriculum, the textbook content was criticized and so it was later amended. There remains, however, the possibility for cultural overlap within the English language classroom:

School curriculum have been modified due to the criticism of the content of the textbook in its early stage...but even with the balance in choosing the social and cultural themes of the textbook, the opportunities for overlapping cultures exist between the walls of the English classroom...[Razaq (I)]

Kasim (I) referred to some other Middle Eastern Arab countries as examples of how these countries have taken on a more Western character due to the introduction of 'more advanced communicative teaching':

In Lebanon or Gulf States they were open and adopted better and more advanced communicative English teaching strategies for decades and you can see they got affected by the Western culture and turned to be more Westernized... [Kasim (I)]

Ghaida (I) and Ali (I) pointed out that Western culture is not only transmitted through the teaching of the English language, but also through the existence of a mentality that believes in the superiority of West and the Western culture and therefore facilitates the flow of Western culture.

English is not only the one we teach or learn in the class, it is the idea of the English is what we need to get in order to be like other advanced countries of the West... It's a bundle of English and its culture, life style and Western ideals... [Ghaida (I)]

Yes, English is the Western key to enter the Middle East ...but I think we must differentiate between the negativity of learning the English language and its culture and the negativity of the mentality that regards the Western cultural norms as the best... learning the English will not affect the local culture unless we have that mentality ... [Ali (I)]

Samia (I) pointed to the existence of an internal struggle that accompanies her role as a teacher: On the one hand, she defined her relation with English language as 'beloved'. On the other hand, she had concerns about fostering the expansion of the Western culture in Iraqi society through teaching.

My concerns put me in a self-struggle between my beloved the English which I spent my life to learn and to teach and the implications of empowering the English language in my community... The closer we are to Western culture and English, the farther away we are from the Iraqi cultural ... [Samia (I)]

Jamila (I) also referred to the importance of learning the English language. However, she mentioned her concerns about teaching the English language in this communicative way especially as she believed that the English language

represents and serves its original Western culture, which she referred to as a 'different' culture.

Let's say that the teaching and learning English is in between the need and fear...The need to learn the language and the fears of what does it represent or deliver when we teach it in this communicative way... I am sure that English serves its original culture ... [(Jamila (I)]

However, participants maintained it was the teacher's responsibility to minimize the risk of the cultural transformation in the English language classroom. They referred to the teacher's role as a guardian, and they suggested that the English language teachers need to create a harmony between the cultural boundaries determined by society and the educational goals determined by the government in order to avoid any cultural side effects of teaching English language.

Mansoor (T) mentioned the teacher's role in creating a balance between educating the students about the other cultures or traditions and his or her responsibility in enhancing the Iraq Islamic cultural norms within the students.

There are two sides...I need to educate my students about for example about some ...for example about celebrating New Year or Christmas...adding to this, I am responsible to save the Islamic cultural and traditions even in the English language classroom...at the end of the day whatever in the class is my responsibility... [Mansoor (T)]

Intithar (T) referred to the social morals that regard the teachers as responsible for the quality of the cultural teaching inside the English classroom. She stated that the teacher is the responsible figure in front of society and therefore has to act as 'guardian of the culture'.

Society does not know the CLT or other methods. all what they know is the Islamic culture cannot be touched...yeah there is side effect of English... but no one says anything about those who welcomed the English or made the book ...only teacher to be blamed... in the society eyes, I am guiding the ship of culture in my classroom...I have to be guardian of the culture ... [Intithar (T)]

Zain (T) called for identifying both the negative and positive social values associated with the spread of Western culture through the English language. He pointed out the positive social values that could be gained through the literature of Shakespeare and other Western authors that could contribute to raising positive awareness among students. Interestingly, Zain (T) identified these positive social values as present in the former textbook.

We cannot say that everything comes from the West is negative...I like to teach my students about how do the West respect the traffic light... again teaching English is a carrier of what the West do and believe but not everything is negative... that is why we have to distinguish...I would like to mention that the one who designed the old text book was very careful and successfully selected Kipps, Oliver Twist, and Merchant of Venice, which provided wonderful social values... [Zain (T)]

Although Hassan (T) and Naseem (T) referred to the possible effect of learning the English language on the learner's identity, they also believed that communicative teaching methods were in their early stages in Iraq and therefore their effects could not be judged within only a few years.

In the short term, I do not think English or what we teach is affecting culture...in the long term yes it will...it is too early to judge CLT side effect but at the same time educators and ourselves

the teachers have to take into account these concerns about the culture seriously...[Hassan (T)]

Evaluation is important but we are just at the beginning of a new curriculum and teaching method ...maybe after 10- 20 years we will see clearly some cultural changes on students' identities but not now...knowing that there is always side effects of learning any foreign or second language and that extends to the social and cultural behaviors ... [Naseem (T)]

The challenge revealed by this data is the transformation of culture within the communicative classroom (Brown, 1994; Brown, 2000; Byram & Grundy, 2003; Duff & Uchida, 1997; Gao, 2006; Kramsch, 1998; McKay, 2003; Tomalin, 2008; Wang, 2008). This challenge refers to the issue of employing CLT principles, the communicative textbook and classroom activities but still complying with Islamic cultural foundations. Kim (2003) argues that language learning is a process of cultural transmission where learners are able to acquire the features of a language alongside their acquisition of new cultural perspectives and thinking. Duff and Uchida (1997) agree, "whether they are aware of it or not, language teachers are very much involved in the transmission of culture" (p. 476).

In conclusion, both the teachers' own internal beliefs, and the external context, constructed the teachers' identity and teaching practices. With regard to the cultural content associated with the English language in general and the adoption of CLT in particular, the participants of both groups suggested that Iraqi teachers need to have sufficient awareness to create educational and cultural harmony between the teaching of English and the religious and cultural boundaries of society. This challenge can be seen from three different angles:

firstly, the teachers wanted to express their own concerns about the transformation of culture, which can be seen as personal concerns stemming from their own internal and personal beliefs (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Mockler, 201; Pajares, 1992).

Secondly, the teachers wanted to express their cultural concerns on behalf of the wider community of Iraq, which they are part of and participate in. This particular Iraqi context regards the Western culture as an 'opposite', which can affect Iraqi cultural norms and foundations. Hence, from this angle, the teachers did not necessarily believe these cultural concerns, but they did not want to be seen as different in the eyes of the surrounding community that constructs their roles within and through the community itself (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Varghese et al., 2005; Wenger, 1998).

Thirdly, the teachers placed themselves in a space between a new curriculum that was invested in interaction and cultural awareness, the community that they believed was monitoring the teacher's teaching and practices, and the students. Thus, the teachers allocated themselves responsibility for teaching the textbook content, guiding the students, and also guarding the local Islamic Arab culture of Iraq. As a result, they assumed accountability for the quality of education the students received, regardless of the fact that they were not involved in curriculum design (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Olsen, 2008; Phan, 2008; Varghese, et al., 2005).

Chapter 11: Conclusion

11.1 Overview

In this final chapter I discuss the implications of this data for English teaching in Iraq, and for the wider field of ELT. This study explores the discourses surrounding English and ELT in Iraq. It relates them to the assumed West–Arab dichotomy; the underlying cultural politics in relation to their religion and their culture, and the influence on the participants' identity as English language teachers.

To understand how these teachers construct their identities means recognising the educational and non-educational discourses and factors surrounding them. The study shows that the negotiation and construction of Iraqi teachers' identities is a complicated process. The teachers' identities were constructed through the interaction between personal, professional, and social factors. They depended on social, cultural, and political contexts; and were multiple, and changeable over time and space. They were constructed and negotiated primarily through the surrounding discourses of the context the teachers are part of and practising in (Beijaard et al., 2004; Mockler, 2011; Olsen, 2008; Sachs, 2005). The study suggests that there is a growing recognition of the importance of English as an international language among Iraqi English language teachers. Still, English continues to play a controversial role in Iraq.

In this final chapter, I summarize the four themes emerge from the data to answer the research questions. I provide an insight into understanding what role these Australian TESOL Iraqi trained teachers might play in the educational reform and what message they intend to deliver into the Iraqi context of teaching English. Finally, I mention the significance of these findings for ELT in Iraq and beyond.

11.2 Iraqi English language teacher identity

In answer the first research question (What discourses and experiences are involved in the construction of these teachers' identities?), findings suggest that these Iraqi English teachers need to be recognised as having a complex identity: Muslim teachers employed by the government but at the same time belonging to a particular local community. They are surrounded by factors that work together to create an ongoing process of struggle, negotiation, and construction.

Within the English language teacher community of practice (Wenger, 1998) in Iraq, a culture of teaching informs English language teaching practice as well as the teacher's role and profession. Hence, teaching English language follows a tacit agreement to work in accordance with the educational and social authorities in the context of Iraq. Iraqi teachers are subject to the authority of the curriculum that determines 'how to teach and what to teach' and at the same time they are subject to the socio-cultural components that determine 'what you can teach and what you cannot'. Hence, these teachers of English are governed and surrounded by sets of educational, social, religious, and cultural principles,

codes, and ethics. Within these, the teachers need to create balance between the authority of the curriculum and the authority of the Islamic community that they are part of.

The teacher community of practice is not limited to the schools as sites of pedagogic practice, but go beyond that to the social and religious community that the teacher belongs to. Belonging to this wider community assigns moral, ethical, cultural and religious responsibilities besides the educational responsibility of being a teacher. These responsibilities assign a pathway as to how the teacher teaches, how the teacher acts, and what materials the teacher uses in his/her teaching. Thus, each of these teachers constructs his/ her professional role in light of the construction of other, religious and cultural identities. Belonging to this wider community of practice appears a powerful factor in determining these teachers' understanding that the teaching profession is a mission to achieve community goals. By regarding their teaching work as an 'agreement' or as an 'acceptance' the teachers showed the extent to which they saw their identity as being representative of the perspectives, traditions, and culture of the context of Iraq. Within these boundaries, the teacher constructs his/her professional role and thus professional identities to cope with the educational authority guidelines as well as to cope with the socio-cultural and religious requirements and expectations of the local community authority. Hence, these teachers' work cannot be seen as merely language teaching instruction. Rather, it is a social, cultural, and religious practice that is shaped and reshaped inside their community of practice (Cooper & Olson, 1996; Wenger, 1998; Day & Kington, 2008).

The data also showed that these teachers expressed the marginalization of their role and voice in the educational reform process, and in the consequent curriculum changes. Moreover, the participants highlighted the power relations that they saw as impacting the educational decision making and their desire to activate their agency in the decision making and designing of curriculum.

I discuss these below as *being*, *belonging* and *becoming*. *Being* refers to the culture of teaching that determines the teacher's role within the context of Iraq as teacher, moral guide, and representative of the community; which in turn creates the teacher identity (Chapter 8).

Belonging acknowledges that understanding the English language teacher identity means shedding more light on the characteristics of the community where the English language was taught (Chapter 8 & 9). This needs to be understood in association with recognising the status of the English language itself, which has passed through different stages of isolation and acceptance, and with what the English language represents to the formal and religious authorities and also the informal socio- cultural context where the teaching takes place, which is also changing.

Becoming refers to the education policy and curriculum changes which determine what and how the teacher teaches (Chapter 10).

These interrelated and complex relationships shape the way the teacher acts, negotiates, and constructs his or her role to better suit all the above. Identity needs to be understood as constructed through discourses available to individuals (teachers) as agentive beings who produce, resist, and construct new

identities through the social, linguistic, educational and cultural resources available to them in their social contexts.

Iraqi teacher identity construction is not isolated from the influence of power relations, the changing political atmosphere, and the socio-cultural or religious elements of the context, the shifting status of the English language and educational policy and reform. They all work together to tell the teachers who they are. The Iraqi English language teachers are created by the circumstances and culture of teaching that define their job; and this goes beyond their professional training in Iraq or in Australia.

In other words, these three factors of *being, belonging, and becoming* are involved in the negotiation and construction process of Iraqi teacher identity. It is a complex matter of how they signify themselves as teachers, label themselves as part of their teacher community of practice, define their action within the larger community, and interpret the meanings and discourses that surround or are imposed on them. Within these multiple influences, these teachers' identities were a site of construction and negotiation in terms of balancing all the external requirements and the teacher's internal views about their own work. However, the data shows that the teacher's identity appeared as a site of struggle in terms of creating harmony between what the teachers believe and what the education authorities decide and what the power relations in the society impose.

11.3 The discourses surrounding the English language in the context of Iraq

In order to answer the second research question of ‘What does the English language represent to these Iraqi English teachers’, the study suggests that the expansion of the English language needs be considered as a multi-faced phenomenon that is perceived within certain contexts, through its past and present, and in terms of different factors.

In general, according to the participants, the expansion of the English language was considered a multi-faced phenomenon that was understood in certain ways within certain contexts, through its past and present and in terms of different factors. They perceived the English language and its current status as international language as representing the language of cross-cultural communication, knowledge, trade, business, development and advancement, globalization, and all aspects of Western modernity, yet not belonging to any specific race or religion. They also perceived the expansion of English language in the light of colonialism, Western belonging, and Western origins as well as political and religious views such as an evil of the West, a tool of the Christian missionary movements, the language of American imperialism, a product of Western hegemony, and as the language of invaders.

The participants attributed the importance of English in Iraq and the reasons behind its expansion to various factors, including the growing international role of the English language within globalisation, Western colonialism and imperialism, Iraq’s will to welcome English and to implement reforms, and the major political and military changes in Iraq and the Middle East. At the same

time, the participants tended to point out that English is a language of war and of Western imperialism that has served the West for a long time. Thus, the English language in Iraq cannot be separated from the nation's past colonial relationships with Britain and its anti-West stance under the Saddam Hussein regime. Neither can English language in Iraq be perceived independently from the recent and current relationships with America through the Gulf Wars, especially the invasion of Iraq.

The status of the English language in general, was based on three measures: firstly, the expansion of English language within the frame of colonialism, Western belonging, and Western origins (Phan, 2008; Pennycook, 1998).

Secondly, the expansion of English language in the Middle East was seen in light of the political orientations and religious views, as an evil of the West, a tool of the Christian missionary movements, the language of American imperialism, a product of Western hegemony, and as the language of invaders (McKenzie, 2010; Phan, 2008; Holborrow, 2006; Mohd -Asraf, 2005; Edge 2003; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). In the case of Iraq, there was also a focus on the factor of the presence of Western troops which was evident when participants gave examples of the presence of American soldiers or mentioned religious positions. Also, the religious perspectives showed as powerful when the participants commented on the English language, alongside educational, social and political positions that enabled or disabled the role and expansion of English language in Iraq.

Finally, the English language was also perceived as an international language that does not belong to any specific race or religion, as the language of cross-

cultural communication, scientific and technical knowledge, trade, development, globalization, and all aspects of Western modernity (Tsui & Tollefson, 2007; McKay, 2002; Crystal, 1997; Kachru, 1992; Broughton et al., 1980)

Interestingly, the significance of the same 'English language' was identified differently in different contexts, even from the same two participants. For example, the TESOL trained teachers regarded the English language as just a way of communication. However, when they commented on its expansion in Iraq, they became more judgmental, just like the current teachers in Iraq. For example, Mohammad (T) mentioned how he used the English language during his Hajj practices to communicate with other Muslims during/within that Islamic atmosphere, which referred to English as a neutral language of communication between people of various races or backgrounds. But when he talked about Iraq, he referred to using English to deal with the American supervisors in the Iraqi Ministries after 2003. In this case, he constructed a different meaning, namely, an English language that was imposed on the basis of colonial reality and not merely a language of communication. Adnan (T) also was impressed by the international status of the English language. However, when he talked about the case of Iraq, he referred to English as the language of invaders and as the language that Iraqis used to avoid being killed at the checkpoints. The identity and significance of the English language shifted in accordance with other contextual factors and how, when or where the English language is used in Iraq.

11.4 ELT in the context of Iraq

The third question asked ‘How do these teachers perceive educational reform of English language teaching in Iraq?’. The study suggests that ELT needs to be understood as an educational, social, cultural, and political activity. It was / is associated with the many educational, social, and even political changes in Iraq; and thus, perceived by the participants in accordance with the social orientation towards the English language before or after 2003; the Islamic rules and perspectives with regard to what to be taught and how to be taught, and the borders of the community of practice that formulate the ELT mission. The data suggests enhancing English language teaching in accordance with the local community context. This means understanding the factors or discourses that inform the teaching, how the government regards the importance of ELT, how the education reform can be achieved, and how the teacher’s practical role is already informed by the community of practice.

The data supported the importance of CLT as part of the education reform for increasing language proficiency as well as in coping with the new social orientation towards English language learning. However, the adoption of CLT has been accompanied by various educational and non-educational challenges related to school requirements, teacher’s fluency in the target language, and teacher training as well as Iraqi cultural values, the teacher’s position, and the female teachers’ role.

The data showed however, that the English language teacher’s voice was marginalized in the process of education reform and curriculum changes or updates. The Iraqi English language teachers felt they were regarded as mere

implementers of the curriculum. It seems that their voices have no place in determining the requirements of the education reform.

11.5 The Australian TESOL trained teachers

To answer the final research question of ‘How do these Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers of English perceive English, English language teaching and their identity as teachers?’ the study suggests the following.

The Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers clearly labeled themselves as ‘teachers from Iraq’, which was also evidenced in their views and perceptions about the English language and ELT. They expressed their belonging to Iraq in various ways when referring to English language ‘expansion’, mentioning their cultural concerns, in suggesting amending the TESOL teaching approaches to suit the context of Iraq. They talked as if they were currently in Iraq throughout the interviews when they illustrated their points of view and described the issues or challenges of teaching English in the context of Iraq – for example, Intithar (T) said “in our schools”, and Hassan (T) “ourselves the teachers”. Zain (T) said, “I like to teach my students”; Intithar (T) said “I am guiding the ship of culture in my classroom”, “I have to be guardian of the culture”, and Mansoor (T) said “I need to educate my students”. Adnan (T) said “I have to appear ...” and Hussein (T) “how can I teach 50 students?”. This shows that the TESOL trained teachers held onto their sense of belonging to Iraq and the Iraqi English teacher community of practice while studying and living in Australia (Phan, 2008).

Also studying in the Western atmosphere of TESOL did not impact Intithar's core cultural perspectives in relation to the female teacher role within the classroom interaction which stems from the cultural foundations of Iraq. "I cannot interact with the opposite sex student...also, I cannot sit and talk and even participate in an activity with my male students. In Iraq, we have social boundaries and limitations stop me from accepting such interaction".

The Australian TESOL training did enable these participants to provide more reflexive analyses about the teaching reality in the context of Iraq, such as when Adnan (T) mentioned the importance of training the teachers or when Aliaa (T) emphasized the importance of evaluation. Intithar (T) and Saif (T) also reflected on their experiences in the TESOL courses in Australia in order to highlight the importance of giving the teachers space for considering innovation and sharing feedback. These examples suggest that their TESOL training in Australia enabled them to identify an educational issue (that of teacher's marginalized voice); suggest what needs to be done (space of innovation and teacher's feedback to be taken into consideration); and, to consider their positive experiences from the TESOL course in Australia for use in the Iraqi education system.

However, the effects of the Western cultural and educational atmosphere of Australia on Iraqi language teachers appeared to be limited to their educational view about teaching approaches, teacher training and teacher involvement in curriculum changes, and the benefits of learning English as a global language. Their TESOL training and experience living in Australia offered them a more balanced lens to evaluate English language expansion, role, and teaching in the

context of Iraq. They appeared convinced of the value of increasing the role and fluency of the English language among their Iraqi students. However, they still mentioned concerns in relation to the suitability of the CLT principles and its associated culture, especially in regard to the teacher's position and gender differences.

They suggested that while CLT can build the student's communicative competences, it also can challenge the educational, social, and cultural setting of their home context, especially regarding the teacher's position and the communicative activities they use. They mentioned their awareness of the impact on the role of teachers of communicative activities, because their cultural backgrounds prompted them to evaluate CLT according to their Iraqi setting and in relation to the Western one they had experienced.

Likewise, their responses and attitudes relating to the situation of ELT in Iraq reflected a desire to be involved in the decision-making process, especially when it concerned teacher training, curriculum design, and the teacher's agency. These Australian trained teachers appeared to be seeking the opportunity to be involved in an effective role in policy making. However, this involvement was based on the grounds of improving Iraqi education through the educational training and knowledge they had gained in Australia, not through a desire to transfer Western perspectives into the non-Western context of Iraq.

The data showed there was no desire to wipe out the core educational or cultural foundations of Iraqi education; rather, it showed the extent to which these teachers sought to play a key role in amending the education reform or

curriculum changes so they would be more effective contextually appropriate language teaching.

Their professional identity formation is on-going and continues to change as they study in Australia. Despite this on-going process of identity construction, they nevertheless showed that their Islamic and Iraqi identities remained very important to them, and these identities would always play a significant part in their negotiation of values, identities, practices, and roles as Iraqi individuals or as teachers.

To sum up, firstly these teachers showed their belonging (Phan 2008) to the Iraqi community of practice. Secondly, these teachers' roles when they return to Iraq will be guided by the Iraqi English teacher community of practice, rather than through knowledge gained from the Western TESOL. Finally, there is a struggle between what they gained from their Western TESOL courses and the culture of teaching in Iraq. This state of struggle reflects a state of 'becoming' (Hall, 1998), to fit themselves within the borders of the powerful culture of teaching of Iraq and yet to be able to take part in the educational reform.

Accordingly, my study concludes that, Western TESOL training increases teachers' educational and teaching knowledge, and is not experienced as a tool for wiping out their original culture of teaching. Adding to that, although they were equipped with educational knowledge they gained from Australian TESOL courses, they were aware (and accepted) that their roles would be determined by the context of Iraq itself.

When it comes to the TESOL courses themselves, the findings suggest that the TESOL courses do not take into account the context of where these teachers

belong to and will return to work in. also, the TESOL courses should take into account that the attempt to transfer Western pedagogies or ways of thinking though these teachers will be limited (and might not happen) because such teachers bring with them their powerful local culture of teaching that will guide them and filter their voices through the guidelines and the power relations of culture, politics and religion.

11.6 The general applicability of this research to other contexts

Following on from the discussion above, this study raises a number of considerations for educational policy makers in the area of teacher training and regarding teacher involvement in curricular changes, beyond the scope of Iraq and the Middle East.

Teacher identity has to be seen as a site of change that recognizes the various factors and discourses within the teachers' particular community of practice. Thus, in examining a very local and contextualized educational system, its teachers, and its contexts, the study provides a contribution to the general field of knowledge on how to improve curriculum delivery in schools. As such, it adds context specific information to the growing literature into how we better recognise teacher identity negotiation and construction. In their TESOL training, teacher professional identity is as a site of change and struggle is not limited only to the professional experience or knowledge about teaching, but has to be seen as negotiated and constructed by the professional knowledge and experience as well as by the accompanying "culture of teaching" components

and the other sub-identities (such as religious and cultural), which in sum work together to create the sense of who the teacher is and what role he or she can play within a particular context or community of practice.

The study suggests that the successful imposition of new curriculum approaches in ELT only occurs as a result of complex social and political circumstances, rather than of enlightened advances in pedagogy. Therefore, any such attempt at imposition always needs to be challenged. In spite of the global drive for educational reform, adopting foreign curriculum and programs into new contexts needs careful consideration of the local socio-cultural environment. The importation and implementation of Western teaching approaches (such as in the case of CLT) for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) without adaptation to socio-cultural contexts can be problematic and raise many educational, social, and cultural issues. The study concludes that although TESOL programs in Australia and elsewhere are designed to equip non-Western trained teachers with Western methodologies and educational perspectives, the perspectives of these Western trained teachers are ultimately determined by their non-Western context's community of practice rather than by the knowledge and experiences gained from the TESOL courses. Thus, the impact of such TESOL programs and courses is limited to what can comply with the limitations and boundaries of these teachers' home country context.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics approval



Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

Date: 18 October 2012

Project Number: CF12/3119 – 2012001577

Project Title: Western troopers or educational leaders: Iraqi Tesol qualified teachers of Australian universities.

Chief Investigator: Dr Phan Le Ha

Approved: From: 18 October 2012 To: 18 October 2017

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to**

provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.

3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.

4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.

6. Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel): Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.

7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.

8. Annual reports: Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.

9. Final report: A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

10. Monitoring: Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.

11. Retention and storage of data: The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Ben Canny

Professor Ben Canny

Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mr Zeki Al Attaby

Postal – Monash University, Vic 3800, Australia

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Email: muhrec@monash.edu

www.monash.edu/research/ethics/human/index/html ABN 12 377 614 012

CRICOS Provider #00008C

Appendix 2: Explanatory Statement



MONASH University
Education

Explanatory Statement

Date:

Title: *Between Two Masters: Dilemmas of English Language Teaching in Iraq*

Today

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Student research project

My name is Zeki Al Attaby and I am conducting a research project with Dr. Miriam as a main supervisor Faine and Dr. Phan Le Ha as an assistant supervisor who both are lecturers in the Faculty of Education towards a doctor of philosophy at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis, which is equivalent to 80,000 words.

The aim/purpose of the research:

This study aims to understand the social, educational, and cultural dimensions of teaching English in the new Iraq, in particular in reference to teachers' professional identities. It seeks to offer a significant contribution to the literature about English language teaching and English language teachers in Iraq. I am conducting this research to find out and answer the following:

1. What discourses and experiences are involved in the construction of these teachers' identities?

2. What does the English language represent to these teachers?
3. How do these teachers perceive educational reform of English language teaching in Iraq?
4. How do these Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers of English perceive English, English language teaching and their identity as teachers?

Possible benefits:

This study will contribute to the limited amount literature that explores Iraqi education and the unique role of English language in Iraq. The outcomes of this study will contribute to the rapidly increasing international literature about ELT teachers' identities'. In addition, in recent times, there have been many debates around the improvement of English language teaching, teacher education and teacher training in Iraq. Thus, the findings of this research might be crucial at this moment in Iraq for policy makers, curriculum designers and developers, in regard to teacher training and English language practice.

The findings of the study are also expected to benefit the Iraq education system because they answer questions about the Iraqi English language identity construction and negotiation process. Further, it offers insight into extent to which overseas trained Iraqi English language teachers are influenced by their studying in a Western context.

Stemming from this, the outcomes of this study will contribute to the limited literature about Iraqi education and Iraqi teachers of English language. Thus, the study will benefit the Western universities including the Australian ones with regard to facilitate greater understanding of the Iraqi international teachers of English. Moreover, it provide a conclusion on how TESOL programs can

contribute in developing the non-Western language teacher's knowledge or understanding towards evaluating their schools needs and the educational context in which they will return to.

What does the research involve?

Qualitative methodology is used for the study; I will schedule focus group discussions and in-depth / semi-structured individual interviews, involving a total of Ten Iraqi Tesol qualified teachers of Australian universities and Ten Iraqi current English language teachers in the Iraqi secondary schools. The participants will be invited to open-ended interviews in which they will be asked to talk about their experiences as personal narratives, in relation to the research questions. This study will also be ethnographic in nature, since I myself am an international Iraqi student studying at an Australian university. I will put myself under the lens of investigation and talk about my own experiences.

How much time will the research take?

The participants will be asked to respond to open-ended questions in focus group discussions and individual interviews. The interview will take 45 minute to 1 hour for those who will participate in the individual interviews. Also, one hour for those who will participate in focus group discussions.

Choosing the participants

All of my potential participants are / were English language teachers in Iraq and they shared the same culture, religion, and language. However, the first group is of Ten Australian TESOL trained Iraqi teachers are from different Australian universities. They came to Australia recently. I will obtain their permissions via

announcement through the Iraqi community. I choose them because they were English language teachers in Iraq before and after 2003, which is the most critical time in the modern history of Iraq where different educational, social, and economic changes happened. Also, they are a TESOL qualified teachers of Australian universities through engaging in a TESOL teacher training courses.

The second group is of Ten Iraqi current English language teachers. I will ask them by announcement letter through the directorate of education in Shattrah and Nassiryah cities in the province of Thi- Qar in Iraq. They all are teachers of English before and after 2003 in Iraqi secondary schools.

Thus, all research participants have sufficient experiences in teaching and learning English in an EFL context of Iraq.

Inconvenience/discomfort

Participation in this project will not cause inconvenience or discomfort whatsoever. No payment or reward of any kind will be offered to participants.

Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation.

Payment:

No payment or reward will be offered.

Can I withdraw from the research?

The participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right not to participate in this study or withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, all information obtained will be destroyed. The decision to participate or refrain from participation will have no effect on you at all.

Confidentiality

I will manage confidentiality or anonymity of the data I have collected and I will manage the information when published. If it is necessary to use the names, I will use pseudonyms or codes to replace my participants' real names.

Storage of data

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations and kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

Use of data for other purposes

I will manage the information when published. I will use pseudonyms to refer to the participants names.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Zeki Al Attaby on 0423962518 or zal4@student.monash.edu.au. The findings are accessible for 5 years.

| | |
|---|--|
| If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator: | If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research <insert your project number here> is being conducted, please contact: |
| Dr. Phan Le Ha | Executive Officer |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Faculty of education Clayton, building 6, room 345 Monash University, VIC 3800 Tel: +61 3 9905 2841 Fax : +61 3 9905 2779</p> <p>Email: Ha.Phan@education.monash.edu.au</p> <p>Dr. Miriam Faine Faculty of Education Building 6, Clayton Phone: +61 3 990 52781 Email: Miriam.Faine@education.monash.edu</p> | <p>Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800</p> <p>Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Fax: +61 3 9905 3831 Email: muhrec@adm.monash.edu.au</p> <p>IMORTANT: For projects in non-English speaking countries, a local person who is also fluent in English must be nominated to receive complaints and pass them onto MUHREC. Please replace above section (in blue) with the details of that person.</p> |
|--|---|

Thank you.

Zeki Mohiy Al Attaby

Appendix 3: Consent Form



MONASH University
Education

Consent Form

Consent Form: (Name)

Title: Between Two Masters: Dilemmas of English Language Teaching in Iraq Today

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

List all procedures relevant to your data collection – delete those not applicable

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher

Yes No

I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped and/or video-taped

Yes No

I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required

Yes No

I agree to complete questionnaires asking me about **<insert the general topic>**

and/or

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

and/or

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / focus group / questionnaire / survey for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

and/or

I understand that I will be given a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write up of the research.

and/or

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

and/or

I understand that data from the interview will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name

Signature

Date

Appendix 4: Announcement letter



MONASH University
Education

Announcement letter:

Subject: Between Two Masters: Dilemmas of English Language Teaching in Iraq Today

Hi

My name is Zeki Al Attaby and I am conducting a research project at Monash University. This research aims to explore This study aims to understand the social, educational, and cultural dimensions of teaching English in the new Iraq, in particular in reference to teachers' professional identities. It seeks to offer a significant contribution to the literature about English language teaching and English language teachers in Iraq.

Interested teachers will be required to take place in a confidential focus group discussions and individual interview lasting about one hour. If you are interested in participating, please contact me for more information and details about conducting the interviews or the research aims.

Thanks

Zeki Al Attaby

Email: Zeki_thefirst@yahoo.com **or**

Zal4@student.monash.edu.au

Mobile in Australia: + 61423962518

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Appendix 5: Focus group questions (for both groups of teachers)

1. What are your points of view about the breadth and expansion of English as a global language?
2. How do you evaluate the situation of teaching English language in the Iraq before and after 2003?
3. To what extent and direction does learning a foreign language affect the learner's identity, whether cultural or social?
4. What role the Iraqi English language teachers can play in the education reform?
5. Do you believe of the need to take in to account and consideration that English language is a carrier of Western culture? Why?

Appendix 6: Interview Questions (for both groups of teachers)

1. Can you please tell me something about your experiences and educational background as an English language teacher?
2. In summery tell me something about the Iraqi education setting, bases, and foundations.
3. How do you describe yourself and your profession as an English language teacher?
4. How do you describe the status of English as a world language?
5. How do you perceive the English language status in Iraq before and after 2003?
6. Can you please describe the status of English language teaching in Iraq before and after 2003?
7. How do you evaluate the new teaching method for teaching English in Iraq?
8. What are your impressions about the cultural content of the new English language textbook of Iraqi secondary schools?
9. What steps you need to consider for the aim of improving English language teaching in Iraq?

Appendix 7: Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) letter acknowledging the title was changed.



Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

5 February 2019

Dear Researchers

This letter is to acknowledge a change in title of Project 3663 (CF12/3119) from *Western troopers or educational leaders: Iraqi Tesol qualified teachers of Australian universities*, to *Between Two Masters: Dilemmas of English Language Teaching in Iraq Today*.

Additionally the change in supervisor from Le Ha Phan to Miriam Faine has been noted. Kind Regards,

Dr Joanna Denyer Human Ethics Officer

On behalf of the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee

Human Ethics Office

Monash University

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