

## **GENDER IDENTITY FORMATION OF INDONESIAN WOMAN EFL TEACHERS: *BECAUSE WOMB-MAN DOES EXIST***

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims at investigating the gender identity formation of some Indonesian women EFL teachers as they had experiences in advancing their study abroad. The study adopted a qualitative methodology within a feminist framework. The data were generated from some women who had been teaching English in Indonesia for at least two years prior to coming to another country to further their education. Through self-completion questionnaires and focus group interviews, the participants shared their lived-experiences and their adjustments as they were exposed to different cultural movements transnationally, between Indonesia and another country. How these women EFL teachers construct their gender identity during their transnational movement and how English actually influences these processes is the focus of the study. The findings reveal how the processes of gender identity construction were formed through governmental policy and socio-cultural values in the society. The findings also show how for these women EFL teachers their professional milieu was a site of contestation for women to promote their status in the society and gender equality. Finally the study highlights that English language is viewed as a benefit to elevate women's social status as it facilitated their socialization in professional and educational contexts when they furthered their study in another country. Drawing on the findings, further research is suggested around the issue of gender identity construction of men EFL teachers in order to get more comprehensive picture.

**Keywords:** gender identity, women EFL teachers, English language

### **ABSTRAK**

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pembentukan identitas gender pada beberapa perempuan Indonesia yang berprofesi sebagai guru Bahasa Inggris karena mereka memiliki pengalaman pernah melanjutkan studi di luar negeri. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dalam kerangka feminis. Data dari beberapa perempuan yang pernah mengajar bahasa Inggris di Indonesia selama*

*sedikitnya dua tahun sebelum pergi ke luar negeri untuk melanjutkan pendidikan. Melalui kuesioner dan wawancara kelompok secara terfokus, para peserta mengungkapkan pengalaman dan penyesuaian yang mereka lakukan dalam menghadapi perbedaan budaya, antara Indonesia dan negara lain. Fokus penelitian ini adalah pembentukan identitas gender pada guru bahasa Inggris perempuan selama di luar negeri dan pengaruh bahasa Inggris dalam proses tersebut. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan proses pembentukan identitas gender yang dibentuk ternyata juga dipengaruhi oleh kebijakan pemerintah dan nilai-nilai sosial budaya di masyarakat. Hasil penelitian juga menunjukkan bahwa lingkungan profesional mereka adalah sebuah tempat untuk menunjukkan status dan penyetaraan gender.*

**Kata kunci:** *identitas gender, guru bahasa Inggris perempuan, bahasa Inggris*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Before the issue of feminism and the contestation of gender identity are highly debated, being an Indonesian woman was generally represented by being obedient, caring, loving, and devoted to the family. In a real life example, Indonesian people have positioned men to be number one members in the society because of the patriarchal system which is mostly practiced in almost all the regions in Indonesia. Indonesian society believes that women should accept their *kodrat* (inherent destiny) to cook, to clean, and to bear children, and to be good mothers and good wives—fully and solely responsible for the social development of her children (Roosseno, 2000) which consequently position them to be ‘runner up’. The general view is that women should give number one priority to marriage and the family, and their assigned role is rearing the future generations of leaders, particularly men, rather than pursuing their own aspirations and dreams (Gardiner, 2002) of their ‘internal space’ which is constructed in their imaginary world (Foucault, 1986). Besides, it is viewed that men are inclined to do jobs which need upper body strength, to compete, and to reign; in contrast, women are inclined ‘to work in and around households, to feed, and to clothe’ (Harris, 2004). It is the society that plays a significant role in labelling ‘who’ is allowed to be or not to be. The images of how women should look, behave, manage the house, and pursue their personal dreams are shaped by the forming of ideological system in the society (Smith, 1978). Therefore, identity which is ‘assigned’ by the society should be negotiated, challenged, and produced, instead of being contested by women in Indonesia.

However, contemporary phenomena such as global migration, global communication, modernisation, and global corporations go parallel with the

‘shifting’ role of women. They have a paradoxical influence upon cultural dynamics of Indonesian women and their roles in the society (Ingham, 2005). One of the important aspects is the changing position between men and women are in terms of educational level. Based on the data issued by BPS—Statistics of Indonesia in 2009–2011, the number of women who advance their study into higher level has increased gradually from 6.13% to 6.67% (BPS, 2012). This silent and continuing revolution has been occurring in Indonesia over the past few years which indicate that there is a changing role on the way women ‘claim’, ‘construct’, and ‘negotiate’ their gender identity in the society.

Nowadays, many Indonesian women are going abroad to advance their study and interact transnationally with people from different cultures and languages. These women are in many ways having to communicate in a different language, act, and position themselves differently. Highlighted by the frameworks above, this research aimed at investigating Indonesian women, especially women English teachers who advanced their study abroad and used English as the language to communicate in the ‘third-space’ society of diaspora.

In this project, the researcher positioned herself as one of those Indonesian women who had to be ‘a good mother’ and ‘a good wife’ based on the standard required by Indonesian society. On the other hand, there was a shift in the researcher’s role as a student who had an experience to continue her study in one of the universities abroad. The researcher started considering that there were many different ways in ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ a woman. Based on these thoughts, this research focused on the interaction between English language (which is considered as a ‘modern’ language) and gender identity of Indonesian women in social integration. Further, this study was also limited to the Indonesian women who were EFL teachers because reflecting to the researcher’s profession was as an EFL teacher back home in Indonesia. Researcher’s status as an insider was expected to enrich the data of the research and part of the data were included a ‘self’ reflection.

The study aims to investigate the construction of gender identity of some Indonesian woman EFL teachers. Specifically, this study is designed to answer the following research questions: (1) what are the gender roles of Indonesian women in Indonesian society, particularly their changing roles in the society as EFL teachers and as women? (2) do English language and the profession as women EFL teachers have any impact on the society as English is considered a modern and globalised language in Indonesia? How are these ability and career manifested?

## **B. BASIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

### **1. Perceptions of Language, Identity, and Gender**

According to poststructuralists (Hall, 2011; Norton, 2000; Weedon, 1997; Woodward, 2004) identity is fluid, subject to change, dynamic, multiple, and contradictory. Weedon (1997) shows the interconnection between language and identity, when she points out that:

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

This indicates that identity is represented through language, while language is constitutive of and constituted within identity. Further, Weedon’s perspective of language and identity is developed by Pavlenko (2004), who defines feminist poststructuralism “as approaches to language study that strive (a) to understand the relationship between power and knowledge; (b) to theorise the role of language in production and reproduction of power, difference, and symbolic domination; and (c) to deconstruct master narratives that operates certain groups – be it immigrants, women, or minority members – and devalue their linguistic practices” (p. 53). Language is therefore a site for constructing social meaning, it is a repository where individuals bring their subjectivity to interpret the social world. From the poststructuralists perspective, this understanding of language is termed as discourse. Within linguistics, the definition of discourse is a formal one, originating from the organisation of the levels of linguistic units, such as phonology, morphology, and syntax where it simply means passages of connected writing or speech. However, Gee (2012) argues that “a good deal of what we do with language, throughout history, is to create and act out different “kinds of people” for all sorts of occasions and places” (p. 3). Discourse in this viewpoint is language in context, which is positioned to use in social situations. Both definitions relate to language in use, but in the linguistic concept; meaning is fixed and internal to the linguistic system, whereas in social theory ‘discourse’ is meaning constructed within social relations and power configurations.

Norton (2000) also views language from a broader perspective, noting that although language is generally perceived of as a neutral instrument for communicating, yet it is understood with reference to its social meaning. Pavlenko (2001b) further adds that language is “a symbolic capital and the site of identity construction” (p. 319). Drawing on these poststructuralist conceptions of the relationship between language and identity, it can be proposed that language

and identity are not separate elements, they are interrelated and interconnected. This mutual relationship between language and identity has been used by some researchers in the field of sociolinguistics and sociocultural theory to investigate the interconnection between the role of gender and language. Hence, the researcher attempts to give examples of some studies which focus on the relationship between language and gender in the workplace (Holmes, 2006), and immigrants and refugees (Kouritzin, 2000; Pavlenko, 2001a; Warriner, 2004).

Since the earliest history, gender has been utilised to explain the conceptions of all kinds of linguistic variation including communication style, grammar, and vocabulary between different gender, males and females (Weatherall, 2002). She goes on to point out that “language not only reflects and perpetuates gender but language constitutes gender and produces sexism as a social reality” (5), thus language is considered as a site of contestation to identify gender and language functions as a means to differentiate between man and woman in the society. Gender, as stated by Holmes (2006), “is one particular type of meaning or social identity conveyed by particular linguistic choices” (p. 5). Holmes (2006) highlights the ways gender plays a significant role in the workplace interaction. Further, she gives a succinct analysis of how women and men negotiate their gender identities in everyday workplace talk. She deconstructs the notions of previous language and gender research which suggested that men are concerned mostly in competition, challenge, and contestation, while, women prefer negotiation, cooperation, and peaceful interaction. In her study, she showed that both female and male employees, draw on both feminine and masculine discursive resources and gendered norms to attain their transactional and relational objectives in different workplace contexts. This suggests that language is important, but in complicated ways, not predictable.

In much the same way, Kouritzin (2000) discusses gendered inequalities that hinder immigrant mothers to educational and social interactions. In her study, she asserts that these immigrant mothers have two apparent roles. In order to undertake the first role, they have to keep their origins, their mother tongue, by rejecting English. Whereas, to undertake the other, they have to adjust as quickly as possible to the new life, acquire English language, and socio-cultural ways of being to benefit their family especially their children. Her study shows that cultural power dynamics that exist between men and women are embedded in these immigrant mothers’ contribution in English language education. A further example can be seen in Warriner’s (2004) research of three Sudanese refugee women struggling in USA. She explains the different ways the individual gendered work identities of three Sudanese women are constructed by employing their linguistic resources and cultural knowledge. She discovers that community-

based adult educational institutions in the United States are often associated English with better opportunity and social mobility.

Pavlenko (2001a) further explores how language learners respond to the new set of subject positions they encounter in L2 (second language). She points out that woman immigrants in her study often found the new gendered subject positions more favourable than in their home culture. Pavlenko (2001a) explains this experience as “discursive assimilation, (re)positioning, and self-translation” (p. 133) with the intention to underline the reinterpretation of the self in the new context. The women also experience uncertainties and frictions because of shifting identities. Her findings demonstrate that these woman immigrants do not entirely leave their gender identities that they acquired in their home culture, but instead, they develop the ability to shift between gendered subjectivities in distinct local contexts. As Norton (2000) points out that “identity is a site of struggle” and that “identity as changing over time” (p. 125–128). Moreover, Norton highlights (2000) that the construction of identity is interconnected with other factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity.

These studies support the idea that identity shifts over time and place (Norton, 2000). It can be concluded that a transition to a different cultural background, a different society may engage a change in how individual views and performs identity, in this case is gender identity. Furthermore, the transformations of gender identity which are experienced by individuals, L2 learners, and L2 users in cross-cultural transitions encompass a wide variety of inter-related events, consisting of “dominant ideologies of gender, normative gender roles, social and economic gender relations, and verbal and non-verbal gender performances” (Pavlenko, 2001a, p. 165). Therefore, there is interconnection between gender identity and the use of English language, either as a means of communication or as a second or a foreign language. Secondly, language “is not expression of unique individuality: it constructs the individual’s subjectivity in ways which are socially specific” (Weedon, 1997, p. 21).

## **2. Identity and Thirdspace**

Another conceptual tool to understand identity formation in this study is through the angle of ‘Thirdspace’ approach of Edward Soja, a postmodern geographer. Soja’s conception (1996) of ‘Thirdspace’ is developed from Henri Lefebvre’s theory of specific “modes of production of space”. Lefebvre distinguishes *a perceived, a conceived, and a lived space*, or in Soja’s terminology of *Firstspace, Secondspace, and Thirdspace*. Firstspace or perceived space is physical, it relates to factual knowledge, it can be quantified and

described, it is ‘real’ (Soja, 1996). Yet, Secondspace, or a represented space is defined in opposition, it is an imagined space, Soja (1996) argues that “Secondspace is entirely ideational, made up of projections into the empirical world from conceived or imagined geographies. This does not mean that there is no material reality, no Firstspace, but rather that the knowledge of this material reality is comprehended essentially through thought, as *res cogito*, literally ‘thought things’” (p. 79). It does not signify that material reality does not exist, rather than it can be understood by thought to interpret the meaning. However, Soja argues that both Firstspace and Secondspace are incomplete, he notes that Thirdspace is the interconnection between Firstspace and Secondspace, it is “the real and imagined” and it is an ongoing process of combinations and negotiations between physical realities and intellectual viewpoints.

In accord with previous notions, Soja (1996) asserts that “we are first and always historical-social-spatial beings, actively participating individually and collectively in the construction/production – the ‘becoming’ – of histories, geographies, societies” (p. 73). In spatial terms, Thirdspace is a place of becoming, it is a site of struggle where identities are contested and negotiated, and that individuals actively participate in it. Soja (1996) points out how issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality intersect with what he calls “spatiality of social life”, and the new cultural politics of difference and identity that this generates (p. 12).

By employing Soja’s conception of ‘Thirdspace’, the researcher investigated further about gender identity formation through the interconnection of ‘being and spatiality’. For one thing, the woman EFL teachers in this study had to travel transnationally, their being in ‘Thirdspace’ was a contestation between their real-unimagined and imagined circumstances. This, space is then understood as a principal milieu, “it is simultaneously objective and subjective, material and metaphorical, a medium and outcome of social life” (Soja, 1993, p. 45). Therefore, space becomes a significant stake of individuals’ actions and struggles; everything occurs in spaces where our actions take part in constructing the social reality. The interrelationship between spatiality and the construction of individuals’ sociality is not merely incidental but it is understood as a vital part of lived experience.

### **3. In the Thirdspace-Indonesian Women EFL Teachers**

The influence of New Order ideology has also been reflected in middle-class conservative Indonesian discourse about the characteristics of women and work. What is more, during New Order era it was supposed that women should

ideally be in the ‘home’, through the discourse of *kodrat wanita* (women’s inherited role) which defines and positions women as *ibu* (mother) which then implicitly restrained the career opportunities of Indonesian women. In accordance with this, Nilan and Utari (2008) point out that “middle-class, well-educated Indonesian women seem to prefer to work (in moral safety) in female-dominated work places and occupational sectors” one of which is being a teacher (p. 138). Thus, being a teacher is perceived to be closely related to women’s natural characteristic; to nurture, for instance, Bolton and Muzio (2008) note that:

“Teaching has historically been numerically dominated by women and its ethos of vocationalism, dedication, and nurturance delineates it as ‘women’s work’, drawing on stereotypical notion of the ‘caring woman’” (p. 291).

This conception seems to uphold that being a teacher is the most suitable job to be a ‘good women’, and by being a teacher, women are able to manage the hierarchy they engage in the workplace, in the sense that “they occupy the contemporary subject position of *wanita karir* (career women) within the wider conservative discourse of *kodrat wanita*” (Nilan & Utari, 2008, p. 138).

When women decide to take a job as a teacher and (or) a lecturer, it is likely that they conceive a future working life with ‘suitable’ working hours and ‘suitable’ working conditions for reputable women. To highlight, Britzman (1998, cited in Alsup, 2006) affirms that there is a “myth of ‘normalcy’ in education; the teaching life is relatively uncomplicated, and those who select it are “average” citizens (usually females) who wish to maintain their “regular” (married, heterosexual’ conservative) lives in well-adjusted, middle class context” (p. 63). Further, Alsup (2006) reasserts that teaching enables women to focus more on other concerns on their lives, such as family.

Similarly, in Indonesia a teacher seems to have a firmly embedded position in the society. Thus, the position is considered to not oppose any male-dominated areas of work and challenge the social customs. However, the position of EFL women teachers in the society is slightly different to those women teachers who teach different subjects. One of the many reasons is that English is considered as an ‘exclusive’ language, and it is entitled to be the first foreign language taught in Indonesia (Lauder, 2008). Moreover, English is perceived as a language of globalisation, as it is believed to be an essential requirement to encounter modernisation by many people in Indonesia (Zacharias, 2003). In much the same way, Diah (1982, cited in Lowenberg, 1991) asserts that English in Indonesia is also used as an international instrument of ‘communication, science, and technology’ and is employed as “sources for lexical development of Bahasa

Indonesia as a modern language” (p. 129). This suggests that English is a ‘masculine’ discourse in Indonesia. When women teachers with their ‘feminine’ nature act as a channel to realise the globalisation process in Indonesia, the discursive role of women as EFL teachers positions them to become more ‘masculine’ in the society.

Hence, the position of EFL women teachers in Indonesia is between two spheres. On the one hand the characteristic of women as ‘nurture by nature’ confirms their choice of work as teachers and also their job is not a male-dominated area where the contestation between women and men is obvious. However, with the status of English in Indonesia as ‘masculine’ language in Indonesia suited for men, these women may be considered as negotiating a Thirdspace, between imagined English with its modern and globalised spaces and the real spaces where women are expected to play a traditional nurturing role. When English is taught by women these women EFL teachers cannot be excluded from the discourse of globalisation and modernisation which are interlinked with the ‘masculine world’. They are ‘feminine individuals in the masculine world and masculine language’.

Drawing on the aforesaid conceptions, the researcher employs qualitative research as the appropriate approach since this study attempts to explore gender identity formation of some Indonesian women EFL teachers who have the experience to study in another country. Specifically, the study focuses on the gender roles of some Indonesian women as they enacted and negotiated different roles through different time and space between Indonesia and another country. Additionally, this study investigates how their English language use actually impacts on their gender identity formation and attempts to look closely at how these women portray themselves and how other people portray them in the society. Therefore, this research relies as much as possible on the participants’ viewpoints of the situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2005). In other words, this research attempts to unveil participants’ perceptions, opinions, thoughts, and feelings.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

There is a profound and significant relationship between qualitative research and feminism. For example, Bryman (2012) summarises that qualitative research allows: (1) women’s voices to be heard; (2) exploitation to be reduced by giving as well as receiving in the course of fieldwork; (3) women not to be treated as objects to be controlled by the researcher’s technical procedures; and (4) emancipatory goals of feminism to be realized (p. 411).

Moreover, Maynard (1994) argues that quantitative research is perceived to represent “masculinist” research as the main source of knowing, “where the emphasis was on the detachment of the researcher and the collection and measurement of ‘objective’ social facts through a (supposedly) value free form of data collection”. In contrast, she affirms that qualitative research emphasises more “the subjective experiences and meanings of those being researched” (p. 11).

Qualitative study is particularly relevant to the feminist approach, given its focus on the necessity to both describe and understand people. Further, in doing qualitative study, the researcher must break the conventional patriarchy, as the researcher needs to get as close as possible to the participants in order to gain more insightful understanding (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Creswell, 2013; Mertens, 2005). In accordance with this, feminist research is based on the principal that the experiences, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of all human beings are valid and must not be excluded from our understanding. Thus, feminist research is concerned with the ‘intimate’ relationship between researcher and participants since it is crucial for the feminist researcher to be sensitive and aware of many different aspects during the research process, such as participants’ educational background, prior knowledge, experiences, perspectives, and emotional condition of the participant (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Fonow & Cook, 1991a; Hesse-Biber, 2012).

Drawing on from this mutual relationship between qualitative and feminist research, qualitative study is employed within feminist approach to explore the gender identity formation and negotiation of Indonesian woman EFL teachers in particular contexts; of different time and space. Furthermore, the use of a feminist approach is to provide careful, ethical considerations, and socio-cultural sensitivity and understanding during the research process, which coincides with above-mentioned discussion that participants’ feelings, thoughts and perspectives play significant roles in feminist study.

#### **D. DISCUSSION**

From the data collection process, it was discovered that there were some factors affecting the gender identity formation processes. Thus, they were divided into three major premises. They were as follows:

##### **1. Women as Child Bearers, Child Educators, and Men’s Supporters**

As the stories, opinions, and experiences were shared, child-raising work was pivotal to woman’s sense of identity. Children’s education was considered as the most important matter and it was mostly ‘mother’ who became the decision maker about children’s education. The first part of the findings showed that the

role of woman in the family was major in decision making, especially in children's education. Their identity as women was identified by their position as a mother, to nurture and take care of the family; husband and children. 'Mother' was seen as capable in contributing to children's education and the one who was responsible for the children's schooling.

Maria is a mother of two children, and because she had to further her education in Australia she brought her two children with her while her husband was in Indonesia because he could not leave his job.

**Maria:** "In my small family, it seems that decision making has mostly become my responsibility as a mother. If I recall from my previous experiences, opinion can be delivered and conveyed by anyone, either my husband or me. However, since the most important matter in my family is closely related to our children's education, so my husband fully trusts me to decide what's best for our children. At some point, I feel proud that I can make an important decision about my children's future." (laughing)

Maria's viewpoint was in accordance with the idea of *peran ganda* (dual roles) which was introduced during New Order era. In this period woman was considered as *ibu* (mother) and *istri* (housewife) (Ford & Parker, 2008). These roles, to some extent, portray woman as the person who takes responsibilities of bringing up children and doing the domestic chores.

It can be concluded that in everyday life, woman still lives within social expectations of gender identity as identified with their roles, as a mother and a housewife. Although the gender roles of the New Order have been transformed since the collapse of Soeharto, the viewpoint that being a woman means to conform to dominant gender ideals and traditional roles is still embedded within the development of cultural and national ideology. Thus, the professional women in this research try to negotiate their existence of self in the society without disregarding their existence as 'being true women'. As Locher-Scholten (2003) demonstrates, women's participation in this instance is still focused on 'maternal feminism' where the main responsibilities are as "child bearers and child educators", in addition to that, women are positioned as man's supporters or 'companionate feminism'. These two concepts, which are reinforced through national ideology and by cultural and ethnic backgrounds, underpin the construction of Indonesian women's gender identity until now.

## 2. Straddling between Two Worlds

Moreover, their movement to another country has challenged the role as a woman. Suci, for example, experienced different life-situations between her life in

America and in Indonesia. In Indonesia, when she visited her family, she had to keep ‘the normalcy’ of what being a woman in order to not jeopardize her husband. She asserted that when she was in Indonesia, her husband was ‘the boss’, she did all the house chores even though she had house assistant and she could not ask help from her husband to take care of their daughter.

**Suci:** (...) because when he goes back to Indonesia to visit his family and acts like that he will be considered as a weird man. For instance; kamu di bawah ketiak istri (you are under your wife’s armpit), people will say that to him because he is too kind by helping me to take care of my daughter (...)

Because of her movements, Suci negotiated and reshaped her identity. This experience is in line with Pavlenko’s (2001a) idea of “discursive assimilation, (re)positioning, and self-translation” (p. 133) in the new context. Further, these movements “necessitate identity formation to take place in multidimensional directions, resulting in different kinds of negotiations of identities” (Phan, 2011, p. 102).

The data imply that transnational movement can be a catalyst for many changes in their sense of selves and their gender identity. As women they straddle of many distinct worlds, the roles that they have to play are complex, the changes and transformations experienced by these women considerably influence their lives. The cycle of fastening, refastening, and unfastening identity makes these women strive to understand the sense of being a woman, because their distance from the home community cultural values and constraints of family make them reconstruct their identity concurrently. As Phan (2011) affirms, “transnational identities are not only fluid, flexible, and dynamic, but also attach to specificity and particularity of places and times” (p. 103), transnational movement has played a significant role in the identity formation of the women participants in this study.

### **3. English and Women**

These women EFL teachers also discussed the relation between English and their perception of English in regard to their identity. They shared that they used English language more frequently at the workplace because they were English teachers. They agreed that being able to teach and use English had brought a different perception towards ‘self’ because English had positioned them in a higher level in the society and how the perception of the society shifted. In the interview Maria shared her story in the discussion:

**Maria:** For me, English is very influential in my life, it is an asset. If I see further, English plays an important role, it opens doors, there are many opportunities with English. One of the many opportunities that I get is I can go abroad to further my study here without having many difficulties. I can catch up more with the new knowledge and renew my expertise in teaching; I can be up to date in terms of the English language teaching issues recently. (...) It cannot be denied that (...) when a person is proficient in English automatically her/his status social in the society will be different, English elevates your status, so according to my opinion English is an asset for me.

**Nita:** I agree with Maria's opinion. I see that English has become a part of my life, my professional job as a lecturer. English and I are one unity, it is a package now, and it cannot be discarded. In my viewpoint, when people realise that you master and become proficient in English, people will not undermine you, you will be considered as 'someone' instead of 'no one' in the society because it is a valuable asset which can help many people.

In the discussion, all the participants shared similar viewpoints and thoughts regarding the use of English, acknowledging that English helped them to elevate their social status in the society and gain access to professional achievement in the workplace.

Looking at the interconnection between English and how these women construct their gender identity we can see that English is employed from different perspectives and experiences. In this data, the complex relationships of language relate to benefits in attaining social status, professional level, and gender equality both in the society and in their professional development. The examples and the stories they reveal show the complexity between language, culture, discourse, communication, social and professional power, and gender identity.

## **E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

The findings of the study revealed the multifaceted and complex construction of gender identity of some EFL women teachers in Indonesia. In spite of the fact that the national ideology and cultural values had shifted, new perceptions of gender identity were still embedded within traditional socio-cultural beliefs. Fluidity in the construction of their gender identity was shown in the way they represented themselves as women who played important roles in the domestic sphere and public sphere. For these women, the key concern of their identity was their attachment with their 'inherent destiny' (*kodrat*) as a mother whose main responsibility was to rear and nurture children, a wife and a housewife. This was in concert with the national ideology during New Order era where woman was defined in regards to their 'dual roles' as a mother and a

housewife. Despite the national ideology, socio-cultural values in the society played a significant role in shaping the identity formation. As noted earlier that these women EFL teacher were from different cultural backgrounds in Indonesia, they ways they viewed and perceived the meaning of being woman could not be disengaged from their upbringing. Thus, the construction of gender identity was interconnected with other factors such as class, gender, and ethnicity; we could see that “identity is a site of struggle” and “identity as changing over time” (Norton, 2000, p. 125–128).

Equally important, the findings had demonstrated that the use of English language, which was embedded within their professional identity as English teachers or lecturers, had significantly improved their social status. The findings showed that these women EFL teachers identify with the language so that English was perceived as a means to reshape and reconstruct their gender identity. They believed that by being proficient in English, they could ‘open many doors’; English had brought many advantages not only for their professional promotion but also their social status. Here, English was seen as a linguistic resource, as language was seen as “a symbolic capital and the site of identity construction” for these women teachers context (Pavlenko, 2001b). The findings emphasized that English language played an important role in constructing the viewpoints of their gender identity construction. English was not only perceived as a means of communication, but also viewed as a benefit to elevate women’s social status and gain gender equality in the workplace as well as in the society.

Finally the findings conveyed how these women who encountered the new set of subject positions experienced uncertainties and frictions because of shifting identities. The findings demonstrated that these women did keep the cultural values of what being woman meant in Indonesian society. These women believed that one of the measurements to determine success in the future was through marriage and becoming a housewife and a mother. These women EFL teachers had come to a standpoint where they ascribed new sensibilities and thoughts in shaping their gender identity. Even though they encountered and engaged with the new cultural norms and values within the national development and through their movement to another country, they did not leave their traditional values; they also showed resistance as well as acceptance to active engagement in the global society. Thus, these women EFL teachers generated possibilities for more receptive and approachable responses to cultural nuances and movements in global contexts, yet they still kept socio-cultural values from their particular setting in Indonesia.

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