

**PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY
CONSTRUCTION
OF FEMALE ENGLISH TEACHERS
IN RURAL KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA:
A NARRATIVE INQUIRY**

**BY
MEHAK GUL**



**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN
LANGUAGES ISLAMABAD**

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**Professional Identity Construction of Female English
Teachers in Rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:
A Narrative Inquiry**

By

MEHAK GUL

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Submitted by: Mehak Gul

Registration #: 1919-M.Phil./E-LING-F19

Master of Philosophy

Degree name in full

English Linguistics

Name of Discipline

Dr. Aziz Ullah Khan

Name of Research Supervisor

Signature of Research Supervisor

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Safeer Awan

Name of Dean (FAH)

Signature of Dean (FAH)

Date _____

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I Mehak Gul

Daughter of Noor Wali Jan

Registration # 1919-M.Phil./E-LING-F19

Discipline English Linguistics

Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **Professional Identity Construction of Female English Teachers in Rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Narrative Inquiry** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Professional Identity Construction of Female English Teachers in Rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: A Narrative Inquiry

This qualitative study inquires into the meanings female English teachers make of the professional identity they have developed under the collective impact of nativity, gender, and rural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Using narrative inquiry as the research method, it examines how the four participant female language teachers connect their professional identity construction with their English language teaching, and thus form their language teacher identity. The theoretical foundation of the current work is based on Barkhuizen's (2016) conceptualization of Language Teacher Identity (LTI), while the analytical framework has been borrowed from Barkhuizen's (2008) conception of the three-pronged conceptualization of 'story'. The design of the current work is such that the theoretical and analytical lenses and the methodology all form a nexus whereby they have been derived from the work of the same theorist (i.e. Gary Barkhuizen) and all of them deal with the narrative investigation of language teacher identity. The findings of this study foreground the dynamic and fluid nature of LTI by emphasizing the intersection of gender, non-nativity, and the rural context. Further, the findings provide evidence of how LTI starts developing at the very onset of the teaching profession and then grows in tandem with one's additional identities as the person goes through life. The participants' emotional and historical attachment with English and their perceptions that English is a subject that can set them apart forms their initial LTI. Another key finding reveals how LTI is formed under the effect of social expectations of what career path a lady residing in a rural area should go for. Exploration into the third point of interest i.e. non-nativity throws light on the challenges that non-native language teachers face in a rural context as they are aggravated by the lack of support and opportunities for the female gender, but it also shows how the participants' non-native status was not found to be a hindering factor in the participants' LTI development. Rather, their LTI was more a product of their observance of socio-cultural ideologies about women, work, and the English language, and the limitations posed by the rural context, as well as their gendered identity.

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DEDICATION

To my father, with love.

CHAPTER 1

GETTING STARTED: INTRODUCTION

Since time immemorial, scholars and researchers have positioned the concept of identity as central to comprehension of human knowledge and consciousness. Recently, the forces of globalization and digitization have brought the world communities closer, necessitating an adjustment to how humans go about shaping and shifting their identities in the fluid online-offline communication environment (Blommaert, 2013). Correspondingly, mainstream theoretical and empirical scholarship views identity as multiple, shifting, and dynamic, mainly because it is under the influence of a variety of personal, contextual, and global factors (Norton, 2010).

When it comes to academia, teacher identity is a promising area of research especially in relation to the hybrid, dynamic, and emergent nature of who teachers are, and come to be, in a given context (Noonan, 2019). Teacher identity refers to the concept of one's recognition as a teacher, the processes that lead to this recognition, and viewing this recognition as a confluence of various socio-cultural, economic, and personal factors (Barkhuizen, 2016; Gee, 2000; Yazan, 2019). The interaction between these factors inevitably affects how a teacher teaches and how students experience the learning process. Analogously, language teacher identity (henceforth LTI) has recently been reconceptualised against the background of multilingualism, the native-non-native debate, and the non-native speaker teachers' attempts to navigate their multiple identities (De Costa & Norton, 2017; Song, 2016).

Recent research has also taken into account how matters of nativity and gender play a crucial role in determining the identity of a language teacher (Lawrence & Nagashima, 2020). For instance, the identity of rural language teachers has been explored from multiple dimensions such as the impact of local language ideologies, English language proficiency (Fogle & Moser, 2017), and social, administrative, and personal factors on their identity development (Mingren & Shiquan, 2018). Likewise, workplace dynamics and policies have also been known to exert an influence on how the identity of language teachers is shaped and how their professional identities are differently constructed due to conformity or non-conformity with institutional policies (Rahimi & Bigdeli, 2014). Similarly, researchers have explored how gender is a vital player in the development of a language teacher's identity (Mason & Chik, 2020;

Vavrus, 2009). In the context of Pakistan, various researchers have explored the dynamics that influence the identity construction of female teachers. For instance, Nadeem et al. (2011) found that although female teachers are given more respect than male teachers, their socio-economic status negatively affects their identity construction and, thus, their teaching performance. As the rural context is often characterized by down-trodden socio-economic conditions, the current study will also look into how this factor is at play in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, considering that the study by Nadeem et al. was conducted in rural Punjab, a different context. Additionally, gender roles in the Pakistani society often clash with one's professional requirements. This factor was investigated in a study by Fatima and Sahibzada (2012) in which they found that female university teachers faced more difficulties in trying to balance their personal and professional lives owing to their domestic responsibilities, leading to stress and demotivation. These findings have also been confirmed by studies by Ahmad and Masood (2011) as well by Malik, Björkqvist and Österman (2017), in which they investigated the professional identities, attitudes, and performance of male and female university teachers from Pakistan and Finland. However, it will be interesting to see how the same dynamics are at play at the school level in teachers in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the context of Bannu, KP, a study has been carried out by Shah et al. (2014) in which they identified that financial, political, and social factors were influential in the identity development of female teachers. However, they do not relate their study specifically to language teachers, nor do they mention the theoretical framework and methodology for their study. Overall, it seems like a rashly conducted study, being rife with grammatical and structural mistakes, with little effort put into conducting proper research.

As evident by a brief overview of the studies, the effect of the three factors i.e. nativity, gender, and the rural context have all been studied individually by different researchers; however, there is a scarcity of research on their cumulative effect, specifically with regard to professional identity development. This study, therefore, taking a constructivist theoretical stance on identity, aims to narratively inquire into how English language teachers make meaning of their professional identity as non-native, female, rural teachers and the kind of personal, social, and contextual dynamics that shape this identity.

1.1 Background to the Study

When it comes to teacher identity, by way of their dynamic social, cultural, and personal engagements, the teacher is in a never-ending journey of defining and redefining themselves (Amineh & Asl, 2015). Their professional identity and the effect of their professional identity on their teaching are ultimately shaped by the collusion of these factors (Barkhuizen, 2016). The current study will employ a theoretical framework (i.e., Barkhuizen, 2016) which also utilizes this post-structuralist conception of identity. Such a phenomenon operates differently in different settings. The highlights and contours of an urban area teacher's identity cannot be generalized to include the experience of rural teachers (Goodnough & Mulcahy, 2011; Preston, 2012). Similarly, the experience of language teachers differs from the experience of teachers teaching other subjects (Martin, 2017). That is because they have to master not only the *content* of what they are teaching but also the *language*. For instance, a teacher of biology only needs to concern themselves with concepts in the biology textbook, and the language they teach biology is given secondary importance only. The same is not true for English teachers. In their case, the teacher has to master not only the content contained in the English textbook but also should have some level of fluency in the language; otherwise, they are not considered a *good* teacher (Martin, 2017). Thus, English language teachers have to face the dual challenge of teaching grammar-related concepts and other lessons while also developing a certain level of fluency in the language. Consequently, the experience of English language teachers differs from that of other teachers. This is one anchor for the current study.

That English has become the world's lingua franca does not need any further clarification. As English grows and spreads into previously uncharted territory, it is useful to explore its impact on the lives and identities of people who speak it as a second or third language. It is estimated that around 80% of English teachers across the globe are non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) (Sahragard & Sadeghi, 2017). The identity of such language teachers exists along a wholly different dimension than that of native English speaker teachers (NESTs) (Canagarajah, 1999). Because of their unique relationship with an imperialist language, the identities they form as language teachers cannot be treated conterminously as those of NESTs (Canagarajah, 1999; Wolff & De Costa, 2017). For example, as Ortaçtepe (201) suggests, the second (or third) language *learner identities* of NNESTs are interwoven

in such a way with their *teacher identities* that they would deem themselves inferior both when there was a miscommunication or a word/phrase that they did not know because they feel a strong urge to know that word/phrase, or to express themselves fluently because they are trying to compensate for their so-called non-native (and, hence, supposedly inferior) status. Such an understanding of blurred identities across nativities inevitably shows that non-native teachers (as well as learners) bring to the classroom multi-faceted and complex, rather than deterministic and static, identities which are co-constructed across time and space. Moreover, given the increasingly globalized and multi-lingual societies of today, linguistic boundaries have got porous and unclear. This has necessitated research into how non-nativity interacts with factors such as one's gender and the rural context. The current study, thus, aims to look into the language teacher identity of such a group of NNEST women.

Analogously, the identity of a female teacher varies vastly from that of a male teacher (Vavrus, 2009). Factors like stress levels, lesser partner and colleague support, and unfair criticism have been found to affect the professional identity development of female teachers more than that of male teachers (Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012; Malik, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2017; Nadeem et al., 2011). They also generally have a hard time striking a balance between their work and family owing to gendered expectations (Ahmad & Masood, 2011; Fatima & Sahibzada, 2012; Malik et al., 2017). In short, the teacher's gender, the subject they are teaching, and the social context in which they teach are all impactful factors in relation to their identity development.

Barkhuizen (2016) takes account of all the above factors in his composite conceptualization of language teacher identity. The conceptual roots of Barkhuizen's theory of LTI let us examine how a person builds themselves over time. His conceptualization is a novel way of looking at LTI. Getting down to brass tacks, Barkhuizen (2016) states that theorizing LTI is a complicated exercise because it involves a borrowing of concepts from socio-linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, and even philosophy. This is a welcome addition to the general conceptualization of LTI by other scholars such as Varghese et al. (2005), who emphasize that teacher identities need to be looked at from different perspectives but do not specifically mention what kind of perspectives may be incorporated into this exercise. For Barkhuizen (2016), LTI are *inside* and *outside* the teacher. By *inside*, he refers to the inner thoughts, feelings, ambitions, and plans, while '*outside*' signifies everything that lies outside the physical person of the language teacher. This may include a range

of factors such as the local and global educational context, non-material objects, and connection with other people (family, friends, colleagues, learners, policy-makers, etc.). The fact that Barkhuizen has placed them side by side means that they influence one another deeply. Barkhuizen's conceptualization of LTI also includes that they are "being", "imagining", "doing", "storying" and "feeling" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 5). These five powerful verbs describe how LTI finds manifestation in the multiple contexts a language teacher engages in. For example, the context is different as a language teacher delivers a lesson, when they mark the papers, when they attend training sessions, and when they engage with learners' parents to provide them feedback. Barkhuizen continues to term LTIs as "struggle and harmony" (p. 6). Throughout their lives, language teachers engage in a process of negotiation, construction, and re-construction as they evolve—learning and developing from past experiences. Then, Barkhuizen (2016) states that LTIs are "core and peripheral, personal and professional" (p. 6) and that they change over time.

The above discussion shows how Barkhuizen's conceptualization of LTI is nested in a constellation of factors. Different studies have also explored teacher identity from various angles. Examples include: the link between teacher identity and emotional labour (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2020); construction of teacher identity through reflective approaches (Walkington, 2005); the impact of institutional policies on the formation of teacher identity (Martínez-Prieto & Lindahl, 2020); identity of non-native English speaker teachers (Wolff & De Costa, 2017), and the implications of personal as well as professional experiences on teacher identity formation (Bukor, 2015). This bulk of research on the different aspects of teacher identity has, however, taken inadequate account of the processes of identity formation in female NNESTs in rural contexts. Thus, there is a need to understand how the multitude of identities taken up by the non-native, female language teachers in the rural context of Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, influence their professional identity as language teachers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Language Teacher Identity (LTI) is inextricably linked with how teachers see themselves as well as with how people around them perceive them both as individuals and teachers. A variety of contextual dynamics influences the formation of this

teacher identity. Since identity is inextricably linked with the lived experiences of teachers, it lies at the core of their professional output, making it an important area to investigate. However, while various facets of LTI have been researched by scholars in diverse contexts (Ortaçtepe, 2015; Safari, 2018; Wolff & De Costa, 2017), the area remains under-researched in Pakistan. More importantly, a big research gap exists in relation to the ways in which female NNESTs in rural areas carry their LTIs. The current study is a step towards filling this gap as it attempts to examine a group of female teachers teaching in a rural area to explore how their professional identities have formed over time and across different contexts. Particularly, using narrative inquiry, the intention of this study is to unearth significant experiences and occurrences in the lives of the participant female teachers that have led to the formation of their identities as language teachers.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What views do rural Pakhtunkhwa female English teachers hold regarding their professional identity?
2. What are their perceptions about the collective impact of nativity, gender, and rural context on their professional identity development?
3. In what ways do the female English teachers connect their professional identity construction with their English language teaching?

1.4 Delimitations

- I. This study was delimited to an investigation of professional identity in female language teachers from rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan only. The participants have all been picked from rural Bannu since it is a qualitative study and my aim has not been its generalization to the larger population of Pakistan, or even the whole of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- II. The focus of this research study was to gauge the effect of the related set of identities of a language teacher upon their professional identity according to their *own* perceptions only.
- III. Theoretically, this study has been de-limited to Barkhuizen's (2016) idea of LTI development. Here, I acknowledge the complex process of

the identity formation of a person who is operating in a dynamic context with complicated features like their non-native status, female gender, and the rural background at play. Not only this, they also possess various other sub-identities that sometimes clash with their LTI. Thus, I admit that the process of figuring out the highlights and contours of their LTI may need immensely meticulous research and a variety of strategies, approaches, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies other than the ones used in the current study. And although the current study offered new insights into the workings of LTI, more research work based on different participants and in varied contexts is needed to figure out how LTI takes shape in different worlds.

1.5 Significance of the Study

As LTI is inextricably linked to the teaching and learning practice, there is a need to examine how female language teachers in the rural areas deal with the multitude of socio-cultural and interpersonal identities they possess in combination with their professional identity. The contribution of the current study into the existing bulk of knowledge lies in the fact that numerous scholars (i.e. Ortaçtepe, 2015; Safari, 2018; Wolff & De Costa, 2017) have made teacher identity a subject of their research however, none has based their study on rural female language teachers residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additionally, the use of Barkhuizen's (2016) theory of language teaching is also a fresh take on the existing concepts.

Our understanding of LTI has undergone tremendous shifts in the last two decades (which is evidenced by the thriving interest that researchers have recently been showing in LTI research), and it has now been established that LTI cannot be seen as a set of concrete and tangible attributes; rather it should be viewed as something that is socially constructed. Against this backdrop and that of the increasingly global world of today, it is important to hear the voices of the underprivileged, non-native, female teachers teaching in the rural recesses of the country. The importance of this study also lies in it giving voice to, and sharing the insights with the world of a marginalized set of people, living in one of the most conservative and poverty-stricken areas of a developing country. This study is

significant in the sense that it reaches out to what has not been explored before; it is significant because it incorporates narrative account of the process of the identity construction of those teachers. The significance of this study can also be derived from the fact that it explores the challenges and conflicts of a non-native, rural, female teacher in terms of the different factors that affect her professional identity development. Moreover, the current study is important because it will investigate into the extent to which their language teaching performance or their practice is influenced by the kind of identity that they have developed over time.

1.6 Rationale for the Study

A number of arguments contribute to the rationale for the current study. Although different researchers have explored the various facets of language teacher identity development (Ortaçtepe, 2015; Safari, 2018; Wolff & De Costa, 2017), none has used the theoretical framework given by Barkhuizen (2016) in combination with narrative inquiry. The contextual dynamics of the LTI development of female English teachers teaching in the rural areas are even more under-explored. Therefore, there is a need to establish how female language teachers in rural KP, Pakistan, specifically, believe their professional identities take shape under the impact of their related identities. As there has been no research study delving into this concept, the current study aims to further the dialogue by investigating the variety of dynamics that lead to a language teacher being and becoming a language teacher. Through an exploration of the lived experiences of the participants, the current research work contributes to the existing bulk of knowledge and addresses gaps in preceding literature since there have been only a few research works that are plotted in the higher secondary school system of rural Pakistan especially with reference to female language teachers and because there have been only a limited number of studies that delve into the process of how language teacher identities develop under the integrated and cumulative influence of factors like nativity, gender, and the rural context. As will be proved by the literature review and works already done section above, no studies have been conducted in the same context as this study. Moreover, in contrast to previous studies that merely take into account single factors (like identity, gender issues, and the rural context, as discussed in the literature review section), this studies takes an in-depth approach as it looks at the above-mentioned factors cumulatively. Thus, the current study makes a

unique contribution to existing literature by exploring previously under-researched dimensions of teacher identity as guided by Barkhuizen's (2016) theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 2

TRACING THE TRAILS: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Identity

Across various fields of study such as linguistics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology, etc., the concept of identity has been widely researched (Norton, 2013; Tabouret-Keller, 2017). Identity is a combination of features or elements by virtue of which a person defines themselves (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Soodmand-Afshar & Donyaie, 2019). Norton (2013) sees identity spread across three planes: the past, present, and the future. Norton (2013) conceptualizes that identity signifies a person's connection with the world (the present), the features of such a connection as embedded across spatial and temporal regions (the past), as well as their imaginations of the self in the coming times (the future). Thus, for Norton (2013), identity is an amalgamation of these diverse elements. From the fact that it is a combination of various features stems that it is multi-dimensional. It is the way people relate to their social, economic, cultural, and religious surroundings, *inter alia*. From this, we can derive that the formation and re-formation of identity is an ongoing process. Likewise, Wenger (1998) maintains that identities are a construction; they are a product of the intersection of a person's investment in the various ways they are nested in the society and that person's capability "to negotiate the meanings that matter" in such contexts (p. 188). Wenger (1998) states that this process consists of two steps, the first of which is identification of meanings and the second their negotiation. This process of identification may sometimes lead to identity conflicts. Moreover, the construction of identity is a matter of day-to-day practice whereby people engage in different groups. Wenger (1998) refers to these groups as *communities of practice*, which are characterized by many things in common. The more a person engages with a certain group, the more hard-core their corresponding identity becomes. This does not, however, mean that being embedded in a community of practice makes one's identity stagnant. Rather, researchers (e.g., Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Burke & Stets, 2009) maintain that even identity features that were earlier considered essentialist (for instance, gender, class, ethnicity) have now come to be seen in more loose terms. They are now termed local and context-dependent.

For a substantial period of time, identity was viewed as something linear, singular, and individual in nature. The idea might have emerged out of a unitary understanding of it, but it has since surpassed it. Nowadays, researchers, scientists, and philosophers agree that stagnation is not a feature of identity (Glass, 2018). It is a relational concept and cannot be thought of in terms of fixed attributes (Beijaard et al., 2004). Some even say that a person's identity change depending on the different situations they are in; thus, the more the contexts they operate in, the various their identities. The respective identity is activated as a person enters a certain context (Blumer, 1969; Burke & Stets, 2009). Similarly, Rodgers and Scott (2008) define three characteristic features of identity which are: multiplicity, instability, and transformation. They add that an essential component of identity that is linked with these three factors is its context-dependent mechanism. They also place the role of emotions and self-perceptions on a high pedestal in the formation of identity as time passes.

As an individual goes through life, they act different acts; they do not become someone, rather identity is a process of *becoming*. It is helpful to think of identity in terms of continuous tenses rather than perfect ones. Such a conception of identity is not uni-centric; rather, it is multi-centric. For instance, a teacher is not only a teacher; they might be a parent, a home-maker, a political activist, and so on. Moreover, theorists like Connelly and Clandinin (1989) maintained that identity is an amalgamation of the stories that have come to be through the events of the past, the milieu of one's present as well as one's vision for the future. In the next section where teacher identity is discussed, this concept will be linked with Carter and Doyle's (1996) conception that just like other forms of identities, teacher identity is also integrated with the stories they tell about their lives. Sfard and Prusak (2005) go a step beyond this concept and opine that stories are at the foundation of identities. They maintain that such stories fall into two domains whereby the first is the one that is told by a subject about themselves and the second is the essentially the first one but which is impacted by the stories told about a subject by others. Later theorists such as Day et al. (2006) propose that identity is formed by the interaction of many factors, which may be from the personal, social, contextual or situational and professional dimensions. In a similar vein, Maskit (2013) presents four dimensions of identity: personal, personal-professional, interpersonal, and professional. All of these dimensions are conceptualized to work in relation to each other in a way that one

factor cannot escape the effect of the others. Moreover, in all of the above conceptions of identity, a linkage is evident among the assumed identity of the person and the stories of the past that are linked with them. In this context, Glass (2018) states that as identity is always in transition, it is important to decode the factors that direct and shape this transition. Thus, it is an outcome of the way people see their past lived experiences. By reflecting on their past, people essentially shape their identity in newer ways. In fact, Beauchamp (2014) concludes, by quoting several studies (e.g., Urzua & Vasquez, 2008; Scultz & Ravitch, 2013), that identity is formed by virtue of reflection. By reflection, they mean locating oneself amid a certain context in which the reflection takes place. In this way, they say identity and reflection are inseparable. When a teacher locates themselves amidst a reflective background and ask, 'who am I and what am I doing', they are essentially being constructors of their teacher identity. Through such reflective dialogues or monologues, teachers become cognizant of their today, their yester years, and also have a chance to plan for their future professional identity. This is because through reflective practice, the teachers have a chance to self-evaluate which leads to a clarification of events and this is followed by introducing modifications in one's teaching practice. It is as if by reflecting on their lived experience, the teachers have an opportunity to be objective and thus to have a better view of what needs to be corrected. Reflection becomes a process of consciousness-raising in this way. Thus, they become more than just teachers: they become philosophers; they become drivers of their own journey; and they become consultants to their own selves. In other words, there are several ways one's professional identity develops, and reflective practice is one such way. Alongside, Beauchamp (2014) acknowledges that such reflective practice is complicated in nature because of the complexity of identity and because many sub-identities are at work in any given context.

Once we have established that identity is fluid and dynamic and accepts influence from a range of factors, it is important to discuss the importance of identity in relation to education. In this context, Gee (2001, p. 100) has an interesting perspective to offer. They say that identity is a viable analytical instrument to understand the educational system in addition to the society at large. Gee (2001) gives four dimensions of identity, which are: identity as nature, discourse, institution, and affinity. Whatever a person is becoming is a product of these four factors, as discussed by Gee (2001). By nature, Gee means that we are product of our feelings,

sentiments, and bents of mind. Secondly, discourse identity signifies whatever we have achieved in negotiation with others. Institutional identity is the place we hold due to our position we hold in a certain workplace. This identity is supported by the high-ups in that particular institution. Lastly, affinity represents the experiences and places we are attached with. For the purposes of this study, although the institutional identity is my main concern, but all the other are not any less important since I have looked at how a person's related identities impact their professional identity development. Such a perspective of identity can be neatly encompassed under the discussion of language identity given by Barkhuizen (2016), discussed in detail in the previous sections.

In continuation of my previous argument about the transitioning nature of identity, Soodmand-Afshar and Donyaie (2019) maintain that the interactions and intersections that shape a person's identity in the professional context is known as their professional identity (which in our case is teacher identity generally and LTI specifically). This professional identity is a combination of various individualistic and contextual factors, such as how the person sees themselves and how others see them. Thus, as will be discussed in detail in the next section, professional identity is as much personal as it is multi-dimensional.

The above-quoted research surrounding identity makes it clear identity has been a hot cake for researchers throughout ages and across countries. Ironically, the more research it has attracted, the more complicated the term has become. However, to reach a fuller understanding of the term, it is crucial to explore it from a variety of approaches, through a range of lenses, and across different disciplines (which in the current case is the discipline of language teaching). Due to the complexity of the term and to avoid being lost in a multitude of definitions, it is generally suitable to stick to a particular conceptualization of identity (Chen, 2020), which for the current study has been Barkhuizen's (2016) theory of LTI.

I conclude by stating that the transitioning and dynamic nature of identity was also visible in the stories narrated by the participants (this is in line with constructivist and post-modernist views). There are moments when the participants reminisce how they came to be an English teacher and all the factors that helped them (or pushed them) into making this consequential decision. At other places they narrate how societal expectations, institutional policies and the attitude of their superintendents helps them engage more or less with the language and thus become better teachers, or

otherwise. Across such narration, the fact that identity is essentially fluid remains a persistent theme. In essence, this helps us see how identities are impacted by the different relationships that the teachers are engaged in and the embedded emotions that the teachers link with such relationships (Glass, 2018).

2.2 Teacher Identity

Across various disciplines the common thread in identity research is that identity is a process (Jenkins, 2014), not a destination. Just as identity in general is not something one is born with, teacher identity also takes form over time and place during “one’s whole life” (Beijaard et al. 2004, p. 107). The way that teachers view and recognize themselves, how they narrate stories about their professional journeys (Clandinin, Connelly, & Bradley, 1999), connections between the self and the society in which they operate (Wenger, 1998), and the role of gender (Carlone & Johnson, 2007) etc. have been studied differently. However, despite differences, there is a consensus among researchers regarding the utility of the construct of identity to explore teacher progress and learning. Lee et al. (2013) maintain that three sub-identities make up identity out of which one is professional (teacher) identity, and the other two are personal identity and situated identity. Exploring teacher identity in detail, they state that it constitutes emotional, personal, as well as technical fields related to teaching. However, they do not talk at length about how interlinked or separated the personal and emotional aspects are. However, the relationship between the teacher’s personal and their socio-cultural and institutional milieu has been examined in detail by Skorikov and Vondracek (2012), who say that teacher identity takes shape when the personal and the socio-cultural intersect in the daily context of the teacher.

In the case of teachers, Sachs (2005, p. 119) suggests that identity “provides 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”. No longer is teacher identity seen as an aggregation of attributes that teachers need to possess to excel in teaching. Instead, mirroring postmodern perspectives, it has come to be seen as an inextricable mixture of various sub-identities, all influencing each other in varying degrees (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). This signifies a movement away from the conceptualization of teacher identity seen as mere possession of particular attributes

or assets such as their command over the subject they are teaching or their individual beliefs about identity development (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Another downside to viewing teachers merely as objects that are to be examined from the outside is that it makes no reference to how teachers themselves are actively engaged in making meaning out of their professional lives.

I have talked at length about the dynamic nature of identity in the previous section. Here, I come to that point again to elaborate it in relation to teacher identity specifically. In the context of teacher identity, dynamism not only means how the teacher sees themselves at present in light of the past but it also takes into account their future aspirations (i.e. telling us not just about ‘who am I’ but also ‘who I aspire to be’).

In a related manner, recent developments in teacher identity research studies are marked by a recurrent theme i.e. viewing teacher identities in terms of lived experiences (e.g., Avraamidou, 2019; Smit, Fritz, & Mabalane, 2010)). And to uncover these lived experiences, the life history approach and narrative inquiry are found to be the most preferred choices as one reviews literature on teacher identity. Thus, teacher identity should be seen as an amalgamation of a sense of self as well as its acknowledgement by one’s surroundings including one’s family, colleagues, and the society at large (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). It may be useful here to elaborate a bit further the concept of teacher identity put forth by Beijaard et al. (2004) since it aligns closely with the current study. Beijaard et al. (2004) have conducted a meta-analysis of studies spanning the period from 1988 to 2000 and presented the findings in a series of qualities or features of teacher identity. Firstly, they state that teacher identity formation is a process without stops whereby teachers interpret and re-interpret the experiences of their lives. Secondly, teacher identity is not a uniform whole; rather, it is a set of sub-identities. By sub-identities, they mean elements derived from the other identities they possess besides being a teacher. Such sub-identities may either be in congruence or in conflict with their teacher identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). It is expected that a person’s many sub-identities may be in conflict with each-other up to some extent. However, if they are completely in discord, the person may suffer from discomfort, which may even lead to identity attrition. In other cases, conflict may even spur personality growth and grooming as the person learns to cope with their many internal conflicts (Chen, 2020). For example, there are more chances that a female teacher’s sub-identity as a mother will

be in harmony with her professional identity, especially if she teaches children. This is because she already has some idea of what works and what doesn't with children. Thirdly, the process of teacher identity formation depends not only on the teacher but also on their varying contexts. And lastly, they opine that 'agency' is central, which means the teacher ought to keep activity alive as they go through the process of their professional development. The above-mentioned insights are helpful in examining 'what' teacher identity is and 'how' it develops over time and context. It also helps us understand and find new ways to support their professional development. In other words, the way the teachers see themselves in relation to their social and professional milieu helps us understand factors that may help or hinder their professional identity development (Glass, 2018), which in our case are nativity, gender, and a rural context. Varghese (2017) agrees with this point and says that we can understand teaching wholly only when we take into account the teacher's other sub-identities such as their individual nature, their social affinities, political tendencies, and cultural linkages, etc. In the context of gender, Carlone and Johnson (2007) have found that female teachers faced problems when it came to acknowledgement by one's surroundings. In our case, the issue has been even more complicated as the female teachers' non-native status and rural context were also determining factors. The stories told by the participants showed that the twists and turns of their journey were dependent on contextual as well as personal factors. This was expected since neither the identities of the teachers nor the social and cultural environment they work in are static. Thus, an intersection of two entities always in transition leads to an interesting, and, at the same time, complicated, network of relations. The results of this and many other studies conducted in similar domains show that teacher identities do not take form in the confined spaces of a school, college, or any other educational institution. Belonging to a vibrant society and sporting a complicated mind, teachers derive their influences from a number of outlets. Teaching is a complex process involving cognitive, personal, and social factors, and this teacher identity builds and re-builds over time and throughout the teacher's career. This change finds manifestation through the teacher's professional identity (Soodmand-Afshar & Donyaie, 2019). Here, it is helpful to divide teacher identity in two portions for convenience: '*being*' and '*doing*', as quoted by Soodmand-Afshar and Donyaie (2019, p. 5). *Being* signifies the teacher's 'self-image' at present which, however, alters as time passes and as contexts change. '*Doing*', in contrast, signifies that actual practice of the teacher as they teach

in the class. Such practice is derived from a teacher's implicit and explicit ideas about teaching. Moreover, 'doing' is affected by the opportunities available to teachers in a given context as well as the hindrances they face (which in our case are three, i.e. nativity, gender, and the rural background).

Relevant to these concepts of 'being' and 'doing' is an observation made by Glass (2018), who states that although teacher identity remains fluid to a great extent, their professional development and possibilities of future change may be hindered by past experiences. In the current research study, the confluence of nativity, gender, and the rural background has been seen to provide such a confining (while at other times liberating) atmosphere.

As I have talked about teacher identity in terms of time and place in the above section, it is relevant to elaborate on the *time* factor since *place* (i.e. the rural context) has already been discussed. Soodmand-Afshar and Donyaie (2019) state that time is as important as place in the construction and re-construction of teacher identity because time is required for professional identity to flourish. Keeping this in view, I chose language teachers who had spent a considerable span of time teaching language.

Particularly during the last two decades, there has been renewed interest in how teacher professional identity is linked with the teaching potential of teachers and the learning potential of students (Bukor, 2015; Kim & Kim, 2016). One often encounters the notion of 'multiplicity' as one reviews the literature on teacher identity. The multiplicity of identity is a commonly agreed-upon factor of teacher identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite (2010) have proposed that a person has multiple and varied identities, of which their professional identity is only one. However, how these sub-identities relate to a teacher's professional identity needs a deep-founded investigation. The current study has, thus, been an attempt to capture the lived experiences of teachers as they narrate them and to construct portraits of their professional identities keeping in view what Sutherland, Howard, and Markauskaite call multiple identities. The aim has been to explore how their professional identities take shape under the influence of such a multiplicity of identities.

Apart from multiplicity, *discontinuity* is a recurrent theme in the literature about identity. Discontinuity refers to the idea that teacher identities continuously undergo a process of formation and re-formation, construction and de-construction,

decay and integration, and which is a plausible extension of the conception of identity as a flexible, rather than a static, phenomenon (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Sutherland et al., 2010). For instance, Cohen (2010) has researched how a teacher's colleagues are key players in the construction and re-construction of one's professional identity and how identity is negotiated and re-negotiated in exchanges with one's professional peers. Glass (2018) also reports similar findings in their research on science teachers. They acknowledge the "messiness" (p. 4) and complicated nature of the reality around teachers and states that social factors like a supportive family and whether or not the parents were teachers has a positive influence in the development of their teacher identities. It also depended on individual teachers how much they made out of such support or how they overcame de-motivational factors. The latter two factors fall into personality traits, as stated by Glass, (2018).

In light of the above discussion, I define teacher identity as a combination of attitudes, beliefs, value judgements, and affinities that allow a person to identify as a teacher (and not, for example, an astronaut, or an interior designer, or an accountant). And since all the above-mentioned factors are subject to change over time and across context, so is teacher identity.

While discussing teachers' professional identity, Beijaard et al. (2004) suggest that since identity is a product of interplay between the personal and the social, further research is required to establish how professional identities are formed across different contexts. As discussed above, the identity of teachers from other disciplines has been the theme of many studies; however, it is essential to establish how the other multiple identities of a person contribute to the identity's shifting and transformation with context and time with reference to language teaching.

2.3 Language Teacher Identity

The idea of teacher identity as a shifting, ever-evolving process is useful in conceptualizing LTI as well. Undoubtedly, language is a crucial feature of any person's identity. When we add other features to the language equation (such as a teacher teaching a language that is not their native language), we complicate the debate by many degrees. However, although a number of research studies have been conducted in other fields (such as science teacher identity, religious teacher identity,

etc.), not many have made LTI their topic of research (Chen, 2020). As discussed by Wenger (1998), language teaching is a kind of community of practice where there are unique influences upon the participants (of the community) regarding their identity *particularly* because they are language teachers. In the following section, I will talk at length about the different theorizations of LTI, although they may not be too many given the scarcity of research in this field despite the fact that thousands of languages are spoken in the world and there are millions of language teachers.

I start with the conceptualization of LTI by my main theorist i.e. Barkhuizen (2016). According to him, LTI is a process that involves a continuous negotiation between the personal and the professional lives of the teacher, depending upon the context (Barkhuizen, 2016). Put differently, far from being a linear process, LTI is a continuous stream of the self-perceptions of the teachers, their roles, and their images as seen from the perspective of different stakeholders such as students, other teachers, and the society at large (Martel & Wang, 2015). In other words, language teachers build and re-build their identities when they connect and interact with others from what Wenger (1999) calls their *community of practice*. LTI is not a segregated and isolated process; instead, it is nested in the teacher's varied interactions, social milieu, as well as personal preferences. This last factor (i.e. personal preferences) is important since two teachers teaching in the same school and coming from the similar socio-cultural backgrounds are exposed to mostly similar experiences. What differentiates them, however, is their personal attitude towards what's coming their way. In the current study as well, emphasis has been put on how the participant language teachers individually make meaning out of their lived experiences, considering that all of them came from the same society. In real life, there are a number of stakeholders that may direct the process of LTI progress, for instance, the teacher's family, their colleagues, students, as well as the society at large. During this study, it was eye-opening to see how two teachers can have strikingly contrasting views and attitudes towards events that may be similar in character. More of this will be discussed in the data analysis section.

Earlier studies on LTI have established that a teacher's professional identity is not unitary or fixed; rather, it is situated, dynamic, and multiple (Ortaçtepe, 2015) and that various factors such as supportive discourses at works, the teacher's academic background, and their socio-cultural milieu play a pivotal role in how their professional identity takes shape (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2020). Other

studies (Kocabaş-Gedik & Ortaçtepe Hart, 2020) have found that the society's customs, familial relations, and even religion impact the professional identity development of language teachers. Given these points of view, it can be established that LTI is constructed socially and historically. Having stated that, LTI is a complex and continually evolving process during which teachers not only perfect their teaching practice but also establish their own perceptions, beliefs, value judgments, which are then fine-tuned according to the different social, cultural, political, and academic demands of their practice (Kayi-Aydar, 2019). In this context, the concepts of 'imagined' and 'practiced' identities are worth mentioning once we have established that LTI is always in transition. Imagined identity is the envisioned and idealized identity a person has when they are about to join or have recently joined teaching practice (Xu, 2013). On the other hand, practiced identity develops in real-life situations and stems from the practical management of educational institutions (Xu, 2013). These concepts are important because the notion that identity is mutable and dynamic (and which will form the core of this research study) hinges upon them. Thus, rather than seeing language teacher identity as a *product*, it has been conceptualized as a *journey of becoming*. Emphasis has been put on the way the participant language teachers have arrived at this point in time and at this particular version of their professional identity. In this process, a transactive and dynamic conceptualization of LTI (rather than a linear one) helped me form a better and deeper understanding of the diverse narrative stories I gathered.

For the purposes of this research study, the notion of language teacher professional identity presented by Barkhuizen (2016) will be employed. He explains LTI as something that is 'cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical'—all at the same time. He emphasizes the relationship between the individual and the society by stating that LTI exists both 'inside' the language teacher as well as in the 'outside' world. This serves to establish that identity is a process that develops as a contract between the self and the society. In other words, the self finds acknowledgment and appreciation in society. Moreover, by looking at LTI not as a product but as a lived experience, it becomes easier to conceptualize it as a dynamic *journey of becoming*. Such a conceptualization is made possible by shedding light on the various dimensions of a teacher's life and outlining their professional identity development along these dimensions. As we focus on the personal, cognitive, and social factors that affect a language teacher's professional identity development, we

are essentially acknowledging the situated character/disposition of LTI. As Barkhuizen (2016) acknowledges, LTI is as affective as it is cognitive, and as it is relational, it accepts influence from the tens (possibly) of other identities that a person possesses. It is a continuous process of *becoming* whereby meaning is created out of lived experiences. To understand the dynamic and multi-faceted character of identity (and, hence, LTI), it is important to form linkages between a person's varied experiences (or sub-identities) to bring out the effect of one identity upon another (Wenger, 1998). The findings of the current study also recommend a relational lens to conceptualize LTI, thus reaffirming Barkhuizen's (2016) thesis.

Additionally, identity is *being* and *doing*—identity is not a static object which someone possesses; rather, it is a performance (Farrell, 2011). LTIs are not only professional; they are personal as well. Given the intertwined nature of LTI with one's other identities, it follows inevitably that they will be dynamic, multiple, and hybrid. Finally, LTIs are not static; they change with the passage of time when they come into interaction with 'spaces, places, and objects'. This implies that the history, culture, society, as well as non-living objects around a teacher leave their imprint on how LTI is fashioned.

In short, going by Barkhuizen's (2016) conceptualization (while also building on the many theorists I have quoted above), I see LTI as simultaneously a personal (cognitive, psychological, affective etc.) and collective phenomenon (social, historical, etc.). And through interplay of such personal and collective factors, it is simultaneously stable ('who am I at present') and dynamic ('who was I, what I have been doing, who I aspire to be'). Correspondingly, my interest has been in generating an understanding of the LTI of the participant teachers considering their non-nativity, gender, and the rural context, and exploring the meanings the teachers derive from their lived experiences as being not only teachers but also carriers of other sub-identities (such as being divorced wives, empowered daughters, and many more). All in all, this research study is an effort to track the *journeys of becoming* (language teachers) of a set of women from a marginalized area, and to understand how they connect their professional identity construction with their English language teaching.

2.4 Work Already Done

Recent attempts to conceptualize teacher identity have emphasized how it is ever-evolving, dynamically-formed, and inextricably linked with the teacher's other identities. That teacher identity is not unitary but formed in interplay of various identities is the common thread linking differently-conducted research studies on the topic of identity development and construction. For instance, Akkerman and Meijer (2011) assert that identity shifts with time, place, and context and is characterized by discontinuity, multiplicity, and its social disposition. The researchers call for a dialogical approach to looking at the identity of teachers because they opine that a totally decentralized concept of identity (one that is wholly socially-constructed with minimum influence from the individual) is problematic. It is argued that dialogical approach gives one ample room to describe identity as discontinuous, multiple, and social while at the same time accounting for the fact that identity is unitary, individual, and continuous to a degree, for if it were not so, there would be no unique individuals in a particular society since all of them would have been created under the influence of the same society. The researchers opine that earlier as well as more recent conceptions of identity are so specific in explanation that it severely curtails the liberty of imaginative engagement. The idea of identity, as put forward by these researchers, as being concurrently single and manifold, personal and cultural, constant yet ceaseless might seemingly be strange, but it is nonetheless true. It is important to conceptualize teacher identity in this way so as to bridge the gap between the personal and professional identities of a teacher—two terms which could not be married happily under previous dichotomous explanations of identity. This notion is also intricately linked with the concept of teacher agency, which will be discussed later in this section.

Having said that, it is pertinent to mention here that identity formation is not a one-way process. Researchers have established that oft-times pre-service teachers have some imagined conceptualizations of how teaching is going to be. However, when they practically engage in teaching, they have to re-establish those conceptualizations. Therefore, their previously imagined identity goes through a process of construction, de-construction, and then re-construction (Flores & Day, 2006). In a similar manner, Yazan and Percy (2018) have established how authoritarian and power relations impact the identity construction of prospective

teachers, which leads to a re-negotiation of their identity in connection with the power relations and context around them. Seen from this viewpoint, one can envision identity as a performative and transformative practice that accepts influence from the variety of factors surrounding it. Similarly, Ortaçtepe (2015) has established how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers form and re-form their identities as teachers of intercultural competence. Employing Norton's (2000) concept of Investment as the theoretical framework in combination with narrative inquiry and thematic analysis, this study explores how, when introduced into the distinct socio-cultural milieu of the United States, two Turkish EFL teachers were active agents in re-construction of their LTI, implying that LTI is not static or immutable.

It is pertinent to mention here that the multiple dimensions of the formation and re-formation of teacher professional identity have been explored; however, there is a scarcity of research on how LTI develops (Norton & Toohy, 2011), and much less so on how the professional identity of a female language teacher in rural KP, Pakistan evolves. For instance, Goktepe and Kunt (2020) have explored how the imagined identity of prospective teachers transforms into their practiced identity when they come under the influence of factors such as pre-service training, beliefs about teaching and learning, the multitude of relations among the communities of practice and so on. Drawing upon reflective teaching narratives, the teacher's journal entries, semi-structured interviews, and observation, this longitudinal study traced the being and becoming of the LTI of Turkish language teachers. Similarly, Widodo, Fang, and Elyas (2020) have investigated LTI construction in the context of Global Englishes. Employing narrative case study as the research method and Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte, and Cain's (1998) Identity theory as the theoretical framework, this study explored the lived experiences of non-native English speaker teachers in the rising Global Englishes context from China. The findings of this study made clear how non-native English speaker teachers suffer from a crisis of professional identity owing to their status as non-native English teachers. These findings are an indication of how the socio-cultural or racial background of a language teacher affects their professional identity as a language teacher. However, as is evident, this study was conducted with an older theoretical framework, and on Chinese teachers in the context of Global Englishes, there is a need to conduct a similar, though not identical, study in the language teaching context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The current study, employing Barkhuizen (2016) as the theoretical framework and collecting data from

female language teachers in rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, is a step towards fulfilling this research gap. Moreover, Song (2016) has investigated the effect of the experiences of non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) and how negative attitudes towards them can have detrimental consequences for the development of their identity as English teachers. The researcher has reported that some teachers move beyond their perceived lack of proficiency being NNESTs, while others suffer from a conflict of identity. The former group might face shame, anxiety, or insecurity in work environments, which leads to difficulty in development of their professional identities. The researcher maintains that emotional experiences (such as self-professed proficiency or the lack of it) operate behind the complicated language teacher trajectory of such teachers.

As stated earlier, teacher identity is a product of negotiation and re-negotiation between the individual and society. The self finds acceptance and acknowledgment in society. Theorists have called the role of the purposeful action of individuals in identity formation as ‘agency’ (Tao & Gao, 2017). Employing a narrative case study, journal entries, and semi-structured interviews to examine teacher agency in Hispanic language teachers, Kayi-Aydar (2019) has shown how factors like discrimination at work and their educational backgrounds help shape teacher agency. This agency then aids in the development of one’s identity as a language teacher as the teacher journeys through the various levels of teaching. Using Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson’s (2015) ecological approach to agency development, the researcher empirically inquired into how teachers obtain agency in their work environment. The researcher emphasized that external factors like one’s racial history, earlier experiences, and relations of power and authority positively or negatively affect agency development in relation to one’s identity as a language teacher.

In a more recent study, Kocabaş-Gedik and Hart (2020) explore teacher agency and identity development in terms of emotional labour—a phenomenon which has not enjoyed as much prominence in the context of identity formation but which merits a mention nonetheless. Using a post-structuralist approach, the researchers found that emotional navigation, and thus language teacher identity construction, is eased when the teacher has a reasonably prestigious educational background and positive and supportive discourses, such as support from the administration and one’s colleagues, in their professional environment. The researchers also stressed that the interactions among the LTI, the teacher’s emotional investment in their work, and

their external environment is dynamic and under the influence of a variety of factors outside the work environment. In short, the process of language teacher identity construction is marred by conflicts and resolutions of those conflicts. The current study will also be anchored in this same concept that the professional identity construction of a language teacher is impacted by their other identities, which are in action outside the work environment but affect the professional identity of the teacher nonetheless.

Similarly, Avalos-Rivera (2019) carried out a research study on the professional experiences of a Mexican language teacher using individual accounts and verbal narratives. This researcher employed Gee (2008) as the theoretical framework to analyse the oral narratives of the language teacher and found that the socio-cultural class that one belongs to and dominant discourse ideologies were key players in professional identity formation. This study also stresses how the language teacher has to constantly navigate the nexus between their societal expectations and their personal agency.

However, Mirzaee and Aliakbari (2018) have reported the opposite findings. These researchers conducted a study on an Iranian language teacher using narrative analysis' life history approach and analysed the gathered data employing Wenger's (1998) theory of social ecology of identity. They found that the professional identity of the participant language teacher was wholly shaped by the society with only a minimum amount of influence from their personal agency. They argue that the personal agency of the teacher is also socially constructed under pressure from a substantial period of time in training. However, one could safely argue that the number of participants in this study was too small to generalize its findings. In connection to conflict between agency and one's immediate environment, Varghese and Snyder (2018) have found that even if teachers suffer some sort of discrimination, which might result in a degree of restricted agency, there is still much room for agency to grow. Under such circumstances, they argue, teacher agency nourishes in the day-to-day life and lived experiences of the teacher. Agency finds expression anyway. In this study, the researchers employed the concept of figured worlds to analyse four prospective teachers while they were inducted in a mono-glossic teacher training program. During the training, the researchers maintain, the teachers cultivated their image and notion of agency as 'dual language teachers'. Data in this study was collected through interviews, observations, and field notes. It was a comprehensive

research study with data collected over the period of a year. Drawing on these data, the researchers established that all the four teachers' linguistic ideologies were in a state of identity negotiation and re-construction with their socio-cultural, racial, and linguistic backdrops.

The discussion of identity construction and re-construction often comes along a discourse of identity conflict and attrition. It is vital to understand not only how identity evolves but also how it sometimes withers away. A language teacher's professional identity is a product of a host of factors, and sometimes the related identities or the external environment may lead to attrition of identity. Against this backdrop, Yuan (2019) has carried out a meta-analysis of twenty-two studies on LTI. This researcher found that three themes were active in the context of how non-native language teachers' identity evolves: their socio-cultural involvements, the nexus between their intrapersonal, interpersonal, and contextual positions, and the resultant identity attrition. Similarly, Choe (2016) reports that despite being able to better understand the learning needs of their students (because the teachers and the students come from the same socio-cultural context), NNESTs suffer from an identity conflict. Self-perceived or socially-perceived lack of proficiency is often at the root of such identity conflict. Hence, such language teachers face an inevitable sense of loss, which, subsequently, has a negative effect on the professional identity development of such teachers. The current study has also explored the crisis faced by non-native English language teachers as they teach other non-native English language students. However, the current study takes a wider approach, derived from the macro-analysis of LTI by Barkhuizen (2016). Additionally, the study context is also different since I have researched the lived experiences of language teachers in rural Pakistan.

As gender roles are deeply embedded in the Pakistani society, women are expected to do complete justice to both their personal and their professional lives. Sometimes, this results in a balance between the two, and, at others, the female teacher has to either quit her job or face critique from her family. This was amply demonstrated in a study by Fatima and Sahibzada (2012), in which they found that female university teachers in Pakistan faced more difficulties in balancing their personal and professional lives as compared to their male counterparts, leading to stress and demotivation. This balance was gauged in terms of childcare responsibilities, spouse support, colleague support, and unfair criticism by the society at large. The researchers opine that the last factor is especially damaging for identity

construction of female teachers because females generally concern themselves more with the opinions others hold of them. However, this study was conducted on university teachers whose identity development process is wholly different from those of school teachers in terms of the different factors that affect it, for example, the context and the higher level of education etc. Also, this study was quantitative in nature in which the researchers used questionnaires to collect data. On the other hand, the current study is an effort to gain a deeper understanding of the process by narratively inquiring into the experiences of female language teachers in rural KP. The theoretical underpinnings for both the studies are also different, as the study by Fatima and Sahibzada (2012) use a conceptual framework that is not specifically about language teachers.

In addition to these studies, another study, i.e. Shah et al. 2014, was carried out in the context of Bannu and which found out that factors like low salaries, frequent transfers, political (rather than on-merit) appointments, a lack of facilities, transport issues when far-flung areas are involved are issues that hinder the identity development of female teachers. However, this study looks at elementary teachers in general. This study is also not well-structured—with no indication of a theoretical framework, methodology standards, or sample information.

As is evident from the analysis of works already done on language teacher identity, there is a lack of research on how the professional identity of female language teachers develops in the context of rural Pakistan. Although a number of studies have been conducted on LTI, the research gap remains to be fulfilled. The current study aims to fulfil this gap by analysing how female language teachers in rural Pakistan view the process of their identity construction. In this context, it is pertinent to mention a study by Mahboob (2016), in which he argues in favour of ‘recognizing the local’ when it comes to LTI. He stresses the value of comprehending, conceptualizing, and integrating the ‘local’ factor in research on LTI. He builds his argument on how his experiences and engagements in the context of Pakistan made him challenge the exo-normative approaches to linguistics and language teaching. Drawing on biographical reflections, he puts forward a number of suggestions, among which include that researchers need to analyse teacher identity as it accepts influences from factors that are outside the classroom. This will lead to a better understanding of how language teachers negotiate their professional identities. Mahboob (2016) mainly builds his argument against the backdrop of the teachers’ linguistic choices; however,

the argument can be extended to argue that the *local* includes their overall beliefs, value judgments, and practices. Thus, it is crucial to understand the interplay of the various identities of a language teacher to appreciate how they influence and are influenced by a language teacher's professional identity.

CHAPTER 3

GOING ABOUT IT: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

For this research study, I have employed an interpretive/constructivist paradigm (Lincoln et al., 2011). This paradigm talks about the co-construction of reality in social interactions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Such a paradigm is ontologically relative, epistemologically subjective, and methodologically derived from naturalistic techniques (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The use of this paradigm stems from the fact that I have not attempted to find absolute answers; ontologically, I have understood reality to be a multi-dimensional and complex phenomenon, dependent on the subject and which cannot be neatly boxed as absolute answers. Epistemologically, through narrative inquiry, I engaged the teachers in reflective practice to explore their lived experiences relevant to their LTI development. The aim has been to explore how the participants make meaning of their professional identity, how it gets constructed, and what kind of influences help shape this identity. Because I wanted to inquire the ‘why’, ‘what’, and ‘how’ of the language teachers’ identity construction, I used a qualitative methodological design. In line with such a design, I have used the insightful and process-oriented technique of narrative inquiry, as guided by Barkhuizen (2015), to collect rich and in-depth data.

Moreover, the theoretical framework for this study (i.e. Barkhuizen’s (2016) conception of LTI), the analytical framework (i.e. Barkhuizen’s (2008) conception of the three-pronged conceptualization of ‘story’), and the methodology (i.e. narrative inquiry (Barkhuizen, 2015), all form a nexus in which they have been derived from the work of the same theorist (i.e. Gary Barkhuizen) and all of them deal with the narrative investigation of language teacher identity. Thus, these three aspects form a uniform whole whereby they complement one another. That is because the understanding of language teacher identity can best be theorized in a narrative form owing to its abstract nature, and that narrative form can best be understood when looked at from the three levels of ‘story’.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

Numerous researchers have conceptualized and investigated Language Teacher Identity (LTI) from different aspects using different methodological tools and

frameworks. For instance, Mahboob (2016) has used biographical reflections to discuss the importance of decoding LTI. Similarly, Ortaçtepe, (2015) has used an older model i.e. Norton's (2000) concept of investment as the theoretical framework, in combination with narrative inquiry, in their study on English as a foreign language teachers' identity construction. Another study, conducted by Martínez Prieto and Lindahl (2020), has used the Bordieuan concepts of symbolic power and legitimization in combination with in-depth interviews to explore the LTI of Mexican teachers amidst administrative policy changes.

For the purpose of this study, I have adopted the “composite conceptualization” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 3) of teacher identity given by Barkhuizen (2016) as the theoretical framework. The conceptual roots of Barkhuizen's theory of LTI allow us to evidence how a person builds themselves over time. He presents a novel way of looking at LTI. Getting down to brass tacks, Barkhuizen (2016) states that theorizing LTI is a complex exercise since it involves a borrowing of concepts from socio-linguistics, psychology, pedagogy, and even philosophy. Rather than limiting LTI to a specific area of education, he locates it in a variety of fields such as teacher education and professional development, multi-lingual education, teacher reflection and research, teacher autonomy, and pedagogy. This is a welcome addition to the general conceptualization of LTI by other scholars such as Varghese et al. (2005), who stress on the need to see teacher identities from different perspectives but do not specifically mention what kind of perspectives may be incorporated into this exercise. Barkhuizen, in other words, gives a macro-lens to understand LTI. Barkhuizen (2016, p. 4) states that:

- i. Language Teacher Identities (LTIs) are “cognitive, social, emotional, ideological, and historical”.
- ii. LTIs operate both “inside the teacher and outside in the social, material, and technological world”.
- ii. LTIs are “being and doing, feeling and imagining, and storying”.
- iv. LTIs are “contested and resisted”, “accepted, acknowledged, and valued by self and others”.
- v. LTIs are “core and peripheral, personal, and professional”, “dynamic, multiple, and hybrid”, “foregrounded and backgrounded”.
- vi. LTIs “change”.

Basing this research study on the above composite conceptualization, the process of teacher identity construction has been seen as a notion with multiple facets, accepting influence from a range of factors—factors which may be ‘cognitive, emotional, ideological, and historical’ and so on. In other words, teacher identities do not exist in isolation. They take shape in the presence of the factors quoted above. By ‘cognitive, Barkhuizen means LTIs are rooted in the minds of language teachers. Throughout their careers, language teachers are on a ceaseless struggle to understand themselves and their surroundings and to work out who they are and who they want/don’t want to be in the future. Cognition here broadly refers to the attitudes, beliefs, and conceptualizations a language teacher carries about themselves and their practice. Again, these beliefs may be strong or weak, central or peripheral. However, whether strong or weak, central or peripheral, all are linked with their LTI. By *social*, Barkhuizen implies the constructed, negotiated, relational, and embedded nature of LTI. By *social*, LTI is understood to be influenced by the immediate and farther surroundings of a language teacher, such as their family, colleagues, the learners, educational policy makers inter alia. Moreover, this *social* also takes into account the social nature of language learning. LTI forms at the intersection of both of these factors i.e. cognitive and social. It is, in essence, the integration of a language teacher’s agency and the socio-cultural milieu in which they exist.

LTIs are *inside* and *outside* the teacher: by *inside* Barkhuizen simply refers to everything that is related to the physical person who is a language teacher. By *outside*, Barkhuizen is signifying all that lies outside the physical person of the language teacher, and it may include a broad set such as the local and global educational context, non-material objects, and connection with other people (family, friends, colleagues, learners, policy-makers, etc.). The *inside* and *outside* are intricately linked with one another, as is evident from their parallel placement here.

That LTIs are *being*, *imagining*, *doing*, *storying* and *feeling* is a popular theme in LTI research and incorporated in the above composite conceptualization as well. All of these refer one way or another to how LTIs are not a stagnant possession but a dynamic performance. It is dynamic in the sense that it changes as the language teachers are *being* themselves, as they keep on *imagining* how they are and how they want or don’t want to be, as they engage in *doing* teaching, as they are *storying* their narrations, and the way they are *feeling* in the language teaching context. And the fact

that it is all a performance means that there are no certainties when it comes to LTI. Rather, LTIs present a swathe of possibilities.

LTIs are struggle and harmony because the several selves (identities) of a language teacher may either be in conflict or in resonance with one another. A language teacher occupies many roles in their capacity of being a language teacher; for example, they can teach a class as well as head the English department and be a teacher trainer. Other identities such as being a mother, a daughter, a single lady, and so on are beyond that. In short, one identity may either reinforce another (or all the other) identities or be at daggers drawn with it. Here, emphasis is put on how LTIs interact with the other multiple identities of, say, a female, as well as non-material aspects such as institutional policies, classroom realities, and so on. Not only that, because Barkhuizen (2016) argues that identities are “dynamic, multiple, and hybrid” (p. 4), the current study takes into account how they interconnect and inter-relate, how they influence each other, and how all of them exist more or less harmoniously.

Moreover, LTIs are core and peripheral, personal and professional. This is evident from the discussion above. LTIs may form the core of the many identities of a person (being the most powerful among many sister identities), or they can exist on the fringes. For instance, similar to the direction of the current study, gender is one identity that affects one’s LTI (for instance, one’s connection with their family, colleagues, the learners, educational policy-makers, and so on). In this example, being male or female forms a core identity which impacts one’s LTI.

LTIs change over time, and this change may be short or long term. Barkhuizen (2016) writes that LTIs not only change within the lifespan of a language teacher but they are also carried on to the next generation. And because language is at the core of LTI, and because languages are never static, it follows that LTI will also be dynamic and changeable. Generally, this point can be linked with the ever-evolving nature of identity.

The notion of a flexible and dynamic LTI allows ample room for discussion of the influence of a language teacher’s related identities upon their professional identity. Lastly, Barkhuizen’s (2016) conceptualization of language teacher identity as ever-changing, context-shaped and context-bound, spatial-temporal, and having multiple facets will be linked to research on identity at large which sees it as dynamic, multiple, and constructed as a contract between the social and the personal.

As is also evident from the discussion above, rather than calling it strictly a ‘definition’, Barkhuizen (2016) terms it a “composite conceptualization” of LTI (p. 3). In line with Barkhuizen’s (2016) composite conceptualization of LTI, this study takes LTI as collective stories of a person—embedded in different contexts and in their role as a language teacher. Narrative inquiry is in the backdrop of such an approach. Barkhuizen has particularly stressed on the importance of narrative inquiry for investigation of LTI; he maintains that stories lie at the core of our existence as human beings and identity may be termed a product of these stories and their narration (Barkhuizen, 2008). The current study will also conceptualize identity in this way i.e. unearthing dimensions of their self through an exploration of the discourses language teachers indulge in and the narratives they narrate about themselves and their teaching practice.

The choice of Barkhuizen (2016) stems from the fact that he has given an all-encompassing conceptualization of LTI incorporating the personal and the professional, the living and the non-living, and the inner and the outer aspects of the existence of a language teacher. These aspects can be fully explored only through narrative inquiry. Thus, narrative inquiry in combination with the composite conceptualization given by Barkhuizen (2016) forms the underlying framework for this study.

3.2.1 Narrative Inquiry

Similar to other studies conducted on identity development (Goktepe & Kunt, 2020; Lander, 2018; Ortaçtepe, 2015), qualitative data has been collected in the form of narrative inquiry. Qualitative data has been gathered in the form of interviews because the purpose of this study is not to generalize the findings but to gather the richest possible form of data (Holliday, 2015). This study qualitatively investigates the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the identity formation process of female language teachers from rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

Narrative inquiry is related to how humans tell stories about their lives and lived experiences and how they conjure meaning out of such incidents (Barkhuizen, 2015). Humans are social beings, and thus they rely on stories to safeguard their yesterday, to link with their today, and to visualize their tomorrow. In other words,

stories are not only a plain re-telling of facts; instead, they portray our comprehension of the events happening around us, as well as our value judgments about them (Barkhuizen, 2015). Narrative inquiry is particularly useful in investigating teachers' experience grounded in the context in which they operate (Barkhuizen, 2008). Moreover, narrative inquiry differs from other forms of approaches of qualitative research. Firstly, it is inextricably linked with lived or 'storied' experience. The different parts of such 'stories' operate in unison, and they have a beginning, middle, and end. There is also a temporal dimension to narrative inquiry, which may or may not be there in other qualitative data collection tools such as interviews. Thus, the participants reflect on their lived experiences located in time and context (Barkhuizen, 2016). The current study makes use of narrative inquiry because the lived experiences of the female language teachers in rural areas can only find their best expression in the form of narratives; statistics and quantification would never be able to do justice to the contours and highlights of this phenomenon. As stated earlier, identity itself is a flexible concept, and thus it is better understood when looked at qualitatively.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework for the analysis of the data has been derived from Barkhuizen (2008), in which he talks about three levels of story emerging from narrative accounts: *story*, *Story*, and *STORY*. These three levels portray the lived experiences of people as they are set in different contexts.

- i. The *story* facet of this framework signifies the innermost level of a teacher's identity i.e. their feelings, ambitions, and ideas etc.
- ii. The next level of *Story* ranges broader and describes the factors over which the teacher has less control such as the institution's administration and language policies, and the demands of the society from which the students hail and so on.
- iii. The broadest level of *STORY* represents the wider socio-political milieu where the process of teaching and learning transpires. *STORY* includes language policies at the national level, national curriculums, and the socio-economic conditions in an area.

It is important to mention here that these three levels do not work separately; they form a continuum. And this is exactly how they have been applied to the current research study. Firstly, at the *story* level, I have analysed the language teachers' different feelings and perspectives about their job. Under this domain, I have

examined the fears the language teachers suffer, their ambitions for their future in language teaching, as well as documented their thoughts about language teaching itself. All of this has been done through the technique of narrative inquiry. Secondly, under the *Story* level, the factors over which the teacher has less control such as the institution's administration and language policies, and the demands of the society to which the students belong have also been examined in the present study. Under this domain, I have looked into how local institutional administrative policies make language teaching more or less difficult and how the multi-lingual background of the students in combination with the rural setting and female gender of the teachers gives us a novel way of looking at LTI. Lastly, under the broadest level of *STORY*, I have examined how the local experiences of female English teachers take shape under the influence of the socio-economic conditions of rural Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and policies made at the national level.

3.4 Data Collection

The main data in this study consisted of narrative interviews in which they told me about their journeys of becoming language teachers in storied form. In line with the requirements of narrative inquiry, semi-structured interviews (Dornyei, 2007) were used to gather data from 12 female language teachers teaching in rural Bannu. Additionally, in order to triangulate the data for enhancing the reliability and validity of research (Dornyei, 2007), narrative frames (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008) were employed, so that the participants could get a chance to express what they missed or could not express during the interviews. Throughout data collection, I kept a diary in which I drafted notes and tracked observations, along with audio-recording the interviews.

The study was carried out over a period of two months. As suggested by Maxwell (2013), long-term involvement with the participants and their feedback on transcripts, informal intervention by me, comparison of one case with another and detailed notes have ensured the trustworthiness (Borg, 2015) of this study.

3.4.1 Participants

There are a total of 16 higher secondary schools in Bannu. During my visits to each of them, I had to first meet the principal to take permission to meet the teachers

and involve them in my study. Out of the many teachers, only 16 showed interest to be a part of this study at first. However, upon knowing that their experiences (which may involve a narration of personal details) will be audio-recorded for purposes of translation later on, 4 backed off (even though I tried to assure them of their anonymity and that the narration will only be recorded so that I can translate and analyse it later on). Their hesitance to being audio-recorded is enough evidence of the conservative culture of rural Bannu. This was also the first indication of what I would ultimately find in my data analysis i.e. the significant effect of the socio-cultural milieu on their professional identity formation. Where audio-recording is frowned upon, video-recoding is completely out of the question. This was also the reason why I could capture neither the teachers' pictures nor that of the female students. Consequently, I started off the process of data collection with 12 teachers. Once they had filled and returned the narrative frames, I found four of them vocal enough to be included in the narrative inquiry. Thus, the participants were purposively selected (Dornyei, 2007) and included four female English language teachers teaching as Subject Specialists in five different rural Higher Secondary Schools in the District of Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These four female teachers all held an MA English degree with an average teaching experience of 11 years and average age of 36 years.

Lastly, to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, pseudonyms have been assigned to them. The participants were ensured that the collected data will be used only for research purposes and that their identity will not be disclosed at any stage. I also made them privy to their assigned pseudonyms to which they happily consented. Following Khan (2016), the assigned pseudonyms are generally reflective of their personalities. This was not only a requirement following research ethics but also an absolute necessity keeping in view cultural restrictions of the area. All the participants agreed to be a part of this study only if their identity was not to be disclosed.

3.4.2 Narrative Frames

Narrative frames have been used to give direction to the open-ended interview data, to ease the process of narrative self-reflection by the participants, and to prevent data overload (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). My choice for the use of narrative frames

in the first phase of data collection rather than directly venturing into narrative inquiry was to off-set the above-mentioned challenges. None of the 16 participants I initially approached for this study had engaged in reflective practice/narrative inquiry before. Thus, to ease their introduction into an uncharted research practice, I thought it wise to use narrative frames. However, as suggested by Barkhuizen and Wette (2008), narrative frames are useful to filter out candidates in the first phase of research only because they are prone to depersonalize the teachers' experiences. Such a depersonalization is not feared in narrative inquiry, which I used as my main tool of data collection going ahead.

As there are 16 higher secondary schools in district Bannu, my target was to get the narrative frames filled by at least 16 English teachers. As I visited the different schools for data collection, I could find only 12 teachers willing to participate in the study. These 12 teachers filled out the narrative frames. The narrative frames directed the participants to answer simple questions about their professional life in story/narrative form. The questions revolved around the main themes of the study such as the difficulties they face or opportunities they enjoy being a female language teacher teaching in a rural area. The questions focused on eliciting their responses on how they overcame or gave up in face of different teaching-related challenges.

A serendipitous outcome of using the narrative frames at the preliminary stage of my research was that they gave me an opportunity to break ice and build trust with the participants—something that is crucial in narrative inquiry where potentially personal thoughts and experiences are to be shared.

After analysing the responses, I came to the conclusion that a total of 4 out of these 12 will be suitable to be narratively inquired for the current study because they seemed more vocal, expressive, and open to sharing experiences. I also came to know that the dropped-out eight teachers had a teaching experience comparatively shorter than the others. This is in line with the observation by Soodmand-Afshar and Donyaie (2019) who report that LTI takes time to develop.

3.4.3 Narrative interviews

Particularly during the past decade and a half, the practice of narrative inquiry has been extensively utilized in the field of TESOL studies (Barkhuizen 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011). Earlier discredited, now narrative tools are seen best suitable to the exploration of teacher identity, TESOL educational policies and pedagogy in general

(Barkhuizen, 2011). Narrative inquiry is a viable tool to explore language teacher identity with reference to different factors, which in the current study are nativity, gender, and the rural context. Interviews are alternatively called *oral narratives* or simply *narratives* in narrative inquiry.

Regarding the suitability of the use of semi-structured narrative interviews, this research work concerns itself with the narrative stories of teachers whereby they reflect on the process of becoming language teachers with reference to their cognitive, ideological, socio-economic, and historical domains etc. Such narratives have been analysed using the narrative inquiry and analysis techniques provided by Barkhuizen (2008; 2015; 2016) and examined as per the “composite conceptualization” (p. 3) by Barkhuizen (2016), as discussed in the theoretical framework section. The theoretical underpinnings surrounding narrative inquiry have all been derived from the selected works of Barkhuizen. For the purposes of this study, my interest lay in how the participant language teachers’ across time and contexts led to them *becoming language teachers* and the development of their identity as language teachers. Thus, the questions I asked surrounded themes like the teachers’ educational views and beliefs, minute details about the problems they face being females or the opportunities they enjoy, issues related with their NNEST status, problems or advantages associated with the rural background, the attitude of the school administration, students, and their colleagues, and other meaningful and relevant anecdotes and stories about their teaching experience. This included stories not only from their professional but also personal and social life because, as Barkhuizen (2008) states, the three levels of ‘story’, ‘Story’, and ‘STORY’ are interconnected and one cannot be understood without comprehending and borrowing from the other two. Consequently, I encouraged the participant language teachers to be narrators of their lived experiences instead of merely being respondents of questions. During the interviews, I conceptualized the three focus areas (non-nativity, gender, and the rural context) as three rivers leading up to the ocean of LTI. I also shared this analogy with the teachers so that their open-ended responses may remain relatively focused. Such a conceptualization and documentation of lived experience is possible only through the richly detailed lens of narrative inquiry as suggested by Barkhuizen (2008; 2015; 2016). Said (2014) and Georgakopoulou (2011) agree with this on Barkhuizen and point to a fortified connection between identity and narrative of personal existence. Thus, narrative inquiry offers an effective framework to explore the meanings English

teachers construct of the collective impact of nativity, gender, and rural context on their professional identity development and the ways the female teachers connect their professional identity construction with their English language teaching. To explore such subtle contexts of meaning-making, qualitative narrative inquiry is best suited as it provides ample space to incorporate detailed experiences, cultural impacts, and other forms of understandings (Barkhuizen, 2008; Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008). Thus, after the participants had filled-up the frames, the four most vocal ones (out of the initially selected twelve teachers) were selected for the narrative interviews. The narration format was used because it allows one to collect richly-detailed stories set in the personal and social context of the participant (Glass, 2018). Such an exploration is helpful in establishing how the teachers' identity is shaped and transformed through their lived experiences. Being deeply immersive and detailed, narrative inquiry gives an altogether different perspective as compared to other modes of data collection because the participant has to locate their story along a timeline of progressing events and thus it creates an interesting, elaborate, and comprehensive perspective. Another advantage of narrative inquiry is that we do not ask questions merely for the sake of asking but the process of asking and responding creates a context whereby we get to know not only '*what*' the events were, but also '*why*' they are important in the sense that led to other, more consequential, events (Glass, 2018).

Collecting data for this study was especially tricky since I had to gather stories about the cumulative effect of three factors (i.e. nativity, gender, and the rural context). However, I had to be on the look-out for cliché answers or responses that did not seamlessly merge the effect of the three factors and instead contained them in boxes completely divorced from one another. I had to invite the participants to tell me about their '*being*' as language teachers; however, it would have been unsuitable to ask them direct questions about the three factors I was focusing on. Their collective self was my concern in general and their LTI was my interest in particular since the latter could not be talked about without taking the former into consideration. In doing that, Margaret Somers' (1994) concept of the twin conceptualization of identity and narratives proved helpful. Her thesis statement is that a person's social experience is itself storied, and that different identities are formed by people as they place/locate themselves within a repository of embodied stories. She further adds that narratives give expression to experience and gives three factors that direct the above-mentioned

embodied stories which are time, place, and relationality. A consideration of these three factors has also been helpful in making sense of the collected data.

The interviews I conducted led to a collection of inspiring stories that were filled with instances of fortitude, resilience, and perseverance as the females pursued their careers in teaching. The data established that their identities as English teachers were deeply integrated with their place in the society from where they derived their choices but also went against the flow in some cases. Being immensely detailed, thus, this study presents a bulk of data previously unavailable and hence it fills the research gap.

3.4.3.1 Procedure of conducting narrative interviews

The narrative interviews were conducted in Pashto and Urdu, depending upon the choice of the participant. The narrative interviews were also audio-recorded and subsequently translated (from Pashto and Urdu to English) and transcribed for analysis.

As suggested by Dornyei (2007), at least three sessions were conducted with each teacher in order to gain a deeper insight into their experiences. The first interview with each participant was aimed towards briefly getting to know the teacher so that they may feel comfortable in sharing their experiences with me. The time span between the first and the second interview thus allowed the interviewee some introspection time as well as let me prepare a well-suited interview guide. This led to the second interview being more focused as compared to the first one. The third interview was used to expand upon the topic covered so far in the previous two interviews and, having analysed the earlier ones, to pose follow-up questions. All the interviews, spanning a total of one-two hours (each session) with each teacher, were directed towards eliciting the teachers' responses to how their professional identities have formed (and are still forming) in parallel with their other identities and how their professional identity is affected by these related identities. Reflecting on their practices, the teachers elaborated on how they deal with their multiple identities.

3.4.4 Data Transcription and Translation

The interviews were conducted in Pashto and Urdu, depending upon the preference of the participants. To ensure that the quality of the data reaches its fullest potential, I translated and transcribed the data with utmost care and precision. Along

the way, I continually kept in touch with the participants for clarification. I did this to ensure accuracy and so that the translation should match the source data as best as possible. I also augmented and improved the field notes and incorporated them into the source data.

For the purpose of validating the collected data and making it trustworthy, inter-rater reliability of the translated text was ensured by checking it with a language specialist. For this purpose, I coded a part of the data and identified 6 themes. Afterwards, I sent the same swatch of data to the language specialist and requested her to code it in four parts. Upon finding that five out of her four identified codes were similar to ones I identified, I was ensured of the data's inter-rater reliability. To guarantee intra-rater reliability, I coded and identified themes in a patch of data and then did not visit it for a week. After the said span of time, without looking at the coded data, I coded the said patch of data again to see whether the themes I identify now match the ones I identified in the second instance. The intra-rater reliability was confirmed when I found that both matched almost identically.

I translated the data myself for which my knowledge of both the source and the target languages came in handy, because an insider comprehension of both the languages is extremely important (Santos, Black, and Sandelowski 2015). Nurjannah et al. (2014) also hold the same opinion, stating that a bilingual researcher themselves is better positioned to do the translation (as compared to a professional translator) due to them being steeped in the context of the study. That is true also because the narratives will be rich in cultural cues and which can best be decoded when the translator is an insider and which puts me in a better position to translate the data (Cormier, 2018). Moreover, I was best suited to translate the data since the interviews were not video recorded due to *Pardah* (veil) restrictions, and only I was aware of the contextual and body-language cues given out by the teachers. It is well-known that a conversation can best be decoded when all the contextual and body language cues are taken into consideration. This is especially because an abrupt pause might mean nothing to an objective translator but to one steeped in the context it may mean a multitude of factors (such as reluctance to share data and allowing one's self time to think about what to say next). The interviewer may then also clarify during the translation that the incoming questions were modified to take care of different meanings of the above-discussed pause. However, to ensure that no word and para-linguistic feature was misconstrued, after the translation, the participants were given the chance to give

feedback on it to ensure that the translated text accurately represented what they meant. As mentioned earlier, I conducted three interviews with each participant. After each interview, I translated and transcribed the data and got it checked with the respective participant for authenticity. This also helped me ask them more questions on what they answered before as the feedback proved to be an opportunity for them to reflect on their practice. The language specialist who then finally cross-checked the translation was also made aware of the context of this study so that they could evaluate the text in a manner that did not negatively affect the richness of the data.

3.4.5 Data Analysis Procedure

After the collection of data, in connection with the conceptualization of teacher identity by Barkhuizen (2016), themes were identified in the teachers' responses, which were subsequently used to form an argument. The analysis of this study was carried out separately at each stage and for each data set immediately after data collection. As mentioned earlier, two sets of interviews were conducted with each participant. After the first interview, I analysed the data to spot themes relevant to the participant's nativity, gender, and the rural context. As guided by Holliday's (2015) observations about collection and analysis of qualitative data, and keeping in mind the three levels of story given by Barkhuizen (2016), I analysed the data by 'coding' it first. The coding was carried out in three steps as suggested by Saldana (2009) i.e. open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. After translation and transcription of the data, I thoroughly read my field notes and the transcribed data more than once. Afterwards, in the open coding phase, I assigned key-words and phrases (such as family, cognition, society, institutional set-up, etc.) to sets of data. This was done to identify how different codes are scattered throughout data collected from the different teachers. In the axial coding stage, I figured out how the initially spotted codes inter-linked with one another to form categories. Similar codes were then clustered as tentative themes and sub-themes in the selective coding stage. At this stage, the data was categorised in topics based on how they reflected the research questions and an argument was constructed keeping in view the previously assigned themes and categories. This was done to make sense of the data and to extract lessons from it. As I carried out this meticulous process, I started seeing the teachers' LTI development journey embedded in the mini-stories they told me.

Finally, I went back to the data which involved falling back upon the collected data and re-evaluating the themes and categories. In line with the data, the categories and themes were modified if refinement was needed.

After the data collection and translation and transcription, the preliminary and tentative observations were shared with the participants to elicit their critical comments on the accuracy of the analysis and to integrate their own observations into the analysis. Using their comments, I revised the categories accordingly.

3.4.6 Researcher Positionality

My status being an insider researcher (Cormier, 2018) has been immensely helpful in the process of gathering the data, translating and transcribing, and, later, analysing it. As I was an insider researcher (Cormier, 2018), i.e. sharing a common language, common culture, a common set of experiences, and shared themes, it was advantageous in terms of breaking the ice. Being a female and a resident of Bannu, I was also in a great position conducting this study in Bannu in terms of having better access not only to the intimate knowledge of the area, but also in getting the participants' consent (Cormier, 2018; Kim, 2012). Furthermore, my linguistic positionality enabled me to transcribe and analyse the data easily and trustworthily (Borg, 2015; Cormier, 2018).

The issues that came with being an insider such as too much subjectivity and being too close to the participants to be able to ask hard questions (Kanuha, 2000) was addressed by ensuring that shared knowledge is acknowledged but not taken for granted. It was also ensured by spending a greater length of time with the participants and eliciting their feedback on the collected data to get rid of any bias or unrepresentative data.

Other problems associated with insider positionality such as subjectivity and being too intimate to ask sensitive questions (Kanuha, 2000) were countered by making sure that shared knowledge is not taken for granted. It is also important to mention that this study takes a constructivist (and thus, subjectivist) stance, which poses that there are multiple, relative versions of reality and there is no absolute truth that we can aspire to. Unlike mathematics, social sciences operate in a different sphere where the constructivist stance aims to loosen the bolts on all certainties. Rather, there are only different, subjective versions of reality. However, to ensure trustworthiness of the study, the above-mentioned measures have been undertaken.

During the data collection and data analysis process, I was cognizant of my subjectivity; hence, to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I wrote extensive reflections and field notes. During the analysis, such notes greatly helped me to interpret the data.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described and tried to justify the decisions I made in terms of the methodological design for this study. I started with a discussion of the interpretive/constructivist paradigm that I have implemented, as derived from Lincoln et al. (2011). This was followed by an account of the theoretical and analytical framework for this study. Under the domain of data collection, I have explained in detail the choice of participants and narrative inquiry that drives this study methodologically. Following this, I explained the data translation and transcription procedures including the stages I followed to analyse the data. Lastly, I explained my background and role as an insider researcher to clarify my positionality. The next chapter concerns itself with data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

EXPLORING LANGUAGE TEACHER IDENTITIES: DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I have analysed the data collected in the form of narrations. The narrations were analysed keeping in mind the composite conceptualization of LTI given by Barkhuizen (2016) and the analytical framework of three levels of story given by Barkhuizen (2008). I find it important to state here that the analysis was not a process completely divorced from the process of data collection, as one question in the interviews built upon the preceding one (Holliday, 2015) and I continually asked follow-up questions to clarify earlier ambiguities in previous answers (Barkhuizen, Benson, & Chick, 2014). I kept the questions and their order flexible enough to incorporate changes as the participants' responses evolved. Thus, preliminary analysis started while I was still collecting the data.

Here, I will briefly restate how I went about the process. For data analysis, firstly, I tried to organise and categorise the data according to the three research questions i.e. material that was helpful in characterizing the highlights and contours of the language teacher identities of the participants, and material that was useful in analysing the influence of the varied life experiences on the pathways of their professional identity development. However, after a while, I realized that the subjectivity of this study does not allow for an analysis that categorises data in cold themes. Thus, to retain the subjectivity of each participant (as is the goal of narrative inquiry), I have categorised the data analysis section with reference to each participant's narration (rather than giving thematic headings). However, to facilitate the spotting of themes, I have analysed the data in sufficient detail beneath each excerpt while quoting Barkhuizen's (2016) composite conceptualization of LTI. This strategy has left the subjective experiences of each participant uncompromised while also making the themes clear enough to be spotted.

4.1 Stories of *Becoming*: LTI unplugged

4.1.1 Malala's story

Malala is a 40-year-old female language teacher. She has been in the language teaching field for the last 16 years. Born and raised in Bannu, she belonged to a conservative family with a strict father who didn't support her education or any of her siblings (as communicated by her in an interpersonal interview): *"After my matric, my father did not allow me to go outside the home [for schooling] so I did my FA and BA privately [distance learning]."*

Despite not receiving any kind of support from her family, she kept on pursuing her education remotely since she wanted to see 'doctor' put before her name. Finding herself unable to pursue the medical degree, she believed she could pursue her dream in the field of language learning and teaching. For her, pursuing a degree in English became a way to prove her mettle. This is because English is considered a tough subject for learners in this area.

English was the subject that appealed to me the most and I used to think that if I ever got a chance to obtain higher degrees, I would prefer them to be related to English. I don't think I was appealed to English merely because I had seen the outside world where the ones who can spoke good English were envied. We were very much confined to our homes due to the strict nature of our father. However, there was no person in my family who had had an MA in English. So, due to the need to set myself apart from them, to differentiate myself from the rest, I chose this field. You can say I took it up as a strategy to prove that I am a capable student. It was because of my passion for educating myself that I came into this field. I am the second oldest off-spring of my parents so you can say I had no standards in the family to look up in terms of education. I had to set my own standards. And I thought English would be a good choice for that.

The above excerpt can be located in the 'story' context as she talks about her personal aspirations. This is evidence of the smallest 'story' level since her decision was based on her own thinking in relation to her circumstances. We can see how her LTI developed while she was still a student. This also points to the "social" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) nature of LTI since she made her decision while pondering about how to

prove her mettle against an unfair society. Afterwards, she narrated a number of moral and logistical reasons why she ventured into the language teaching field.

I have always wanted to be a doctor. However, due to the strict environment of our home, I could not go into that field. Afterwards, as I studied, I came to know more and more about the education department and the issues that plague it. This inspired me to join the field. I believe teachers are builders of the nation. No other profession compares to what we do. No other profession is better than teaching because of its moral high ground. And because this profession suits my choices, I will never quit it for another career option.

The above excerpt relates to the ‘Story’ level (which is broader than ‘story’) as delineated by Barkhuizen (2008). Teaching is often the ultimate landing job for females in this rural area of Pakistan because not many career choices are available due to cultural reservations. I found Malala to be a woman of strong character who never gave up in face of challenges. She brought her motivated nature into language teaching as well. Comparing herself with teachers of other subjects, she narrated:

Personally, I think I am more zealous and enthusiastic when I compare myself to teacher of other subjects at my school ... I want to share my knowledge with them. I believe the ones who come to the teaching profession because they had no other option or the ones who come here due to certain crises in their lives do not give their best to this job. At many points, I have observed teaching is the back-up plan for most teachers. That is why they are not passionate about it. They only kill their time in classes. They are not sincere with their subject and their students. For them, teaching is just a source of earning some money. I am different because I am intrinsically motivated about my job. I chose English as my subject in student life because I wanted to prove my mettle by obtaining good score in a subject that is considered one of the toughest.

Thus, the way she considered English difficult to learn forms part of her initial LTI. English’s perceived difficulty and the fact that Malala’s and her students’ non-native status was a hindrance in her LTI development became evident to her in her very first class. She reminisced:

I went well-prepared. I stayed up late the previous night to prepare an organized lecture. However, it was a complete failure. It had been many years since I had been in the premises of a government school. I had almost forgotten my own experience as a student of a government school during my

secondary education. On my first day, I could not engage the students very well because my lecture was too advanced for them. Most of the students could not even read fluently. When I asked a student to read from the book, she took half an hour to read only one half of the page. Before I knew it, the class time was over and I had not really taught them anything. This discouraged me a lot. The same student who would be talkative when I spoke in Urdu seemed very shy and under-confident when I asked her something in English. I have since learnt a lot and now I prepare my lessons in accordance with the students' understanding. During all the process, my colleagues were a great help.

Thus, according to the proficiency level of her students, she adjusted her lesson and, thus, her LTI. This is aligned with the observation by Beijaard, Verloop, and Vermunt, (2000), who state that a teacher should be amply aware of the model that is the most suitable for their students because information only about the subject matter is not sufficient in the classroom. In the above excerpt, we see how her LTI “change[d]” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) as she interacted with her students for the first time and was exasperated by the ineffectiveness of her teaching strategy. This necessitated a shift in her own thinking of the kind of teacher she needed to be. It is important to note that Malala attributed her lack of success in her first class to her identity as a new language teacher. This is also evidence of the “social” and “personal” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) nature of LTI since she compared her performance with “imagined” constructions of how the teaching process should be. Going through a process of trial-and-error that she accepted with an open mind, her LTI also “change[d]” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4). Park (2012) maintains that collaborative colleagues are a sure-fire way to enhance teachers’ confidence; this was certainly true in the case of Malala. Moreover, as Barkhuizen says, LTI exists not only “inside” but also “outside” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) the teacher, we see how Malala’s identity underwent a substantial shift as she interacted with ‘outside’ factors. Here, we see the stepping of her narrative into the broader ‘Story’ level as indicated by Barkhuizen (2008). Just as earlier Malala had chosen English as a subject to prove her skills, she positioned herself in her new identity as a teacher to prove herself once again (but this time as a competent language teacher). Moreover, she proudly announces she can now command the class in a better manner by assessing her

previous practice in light of her recent strategies. As I referenced to earlier, reflective practice has put her emotions about herself in perspective.

Wanting to broaden the discussion into the broadest ‘STORY’ level, when I asked how she, as a non-native speaker, faces challenges related to subject matter, accent, and pronunciation, etc. (since English is a supposedly tough subject), she responded as follows:

As students, we were not taught pronunciation separately. There was always too much of the syllabus to cover and that never left much time to focus on accent and pronunciation. Nowadays, students learn about phonetics and phonology but when I was doing my MA, we would study literature most of the time. Now that I am a teacher, I use repetitive reading of a lesson to correct the students’ pronunciation and to enhance their fluency. However, being from the same area, my students face the same problems I faced. They often don’t know where to put stress in a word. Even I am confused sometimes when I meet an unfamiliar word... We do not have many opportunities to practice English outside classroom and this is why we cannot speak like natives. Even private schools are better because there are fewer students for the teacher to focus on. Here I have almost a hundred students in each class spanning 45 minutes. Thus, not all the students get the opportunity to speak and read a lesson loudly during such a short time-period.

Here we see how a motivated language teacher behaved when faced with classroom realities in a rural area of a developing country. The same Malala who reiterated how she wants to share her knowledge with students the best she can has found herself limited due to issues that non-native learners generally face in terms of fluency, accent, and pronunciation. Besides the overwhelming responsibility of teaching a lesson to a hundred-strong class in 45 minutes, she narrates how English teachers also have to shoulder extra responsibilities from the school administration side.

Because all official communication within and among school goes on in English ... it is the English teachers who compose different letters and emails that are to be sent out to other schools or the education department ... this creates additional burdens for us. That is because I have these responsibilities apart from our official teaching duties. For example, if the education department has arranged for a debating competition among different schools,

it is the responsibility of language teachers [both Urdu and English] that we prepare the students. For other formal events, I have to prepare the introductory speeches, charts, and what not.

Because of her identification as a language teacher, she has to shoulder additional burdens. In Barkhuizen's (2016) words, her LTI is "foregrounded" (p. 5) whenever additional responsibilities are heaped upon her. In continuation of my previous question, I asked Malala, how she thinks language teaching is different than other teaching other subjects. Her response was such:

Language teaching is more difficult ... When you are an English teacher, you are not supposed to only be proficient in the course contents, which in themselves contain different portions such as writing skills, reading skills, listening skills etc. Other than that, your communication skills also matter. Your writing skills matter as well since mostly you are responsible for composing and receiving different types of correspondence for the school principal. You are also expected to prepare the students for debate competitions, drama competitions and other such things. And I think English teachers are expected to be more well-groomed generally.

Her response was emblematic of how a language teacher has to take up additional identities that teachers of other subjects do not. Language teachers are supposed to carry an additional repertoire of skills that may or may not be directly linked with her teaching skills. Thus, "being and doing" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) language teaching consists not only requires teaching skills but also acting, debating, and administrative skills. Thus, their LTI development is a process that brings together experiences from a diverse array of fields.

When I asked her how she copes with all these issues, she narrated: "*I am a staunch believer of the potential of intrinsic motivation. I believe we emerge stronger when we go through hard times.*"

Based on the above narration, it becomes clear that Malala takes teaching as an extension of her personal life (shifting the debate once again to the smallest 'story' level) where she has faced the mistrust of her father and later the infidelity of her husband. Responding to such challenges has kept her evolving in her role as a language teacher.

I asked her more about her personal life, and how she went from being stopped from getting education to pursuing a flourishing career in language teaching and where she derives her enthusiasm for teaching from. She described:

I have seen a lot of crises in my life, financial and otherwise. I was not supported by my father for higher studies and although my husband supported me, I bore my expenses on my own. But in spite of all these hurdles, I was not disappointed; lack of money has never made me give up on my dreams. I think it was intrinsic motivation that didn't let me give up. I worked two-shifts: teaching in the morning and then tutoring kids in the evening.

Today, I support my whole family. A few years back, my husband married for the second time and now he lives with his other wife. At my in-laws, I support my brother-in-law's family as well because they are going through a rough patch in life. I think this is also one reason why I never faced any issue regarding why I go out of the home for work.

She added:

If my in-laws were not dependent on me, they would surely have objected to my teaching responsibilities which sometimes involve meeting and training with male colleagues and what not. I have even taken the second marriage of my husband in my stride. It has given me more time to put into my teaching ... Teaching has now become my shelter and refuge. The abundance of time also allowed me to complete my PhD. And it also let me pass the test for the current language teaching job that I have.

Barkhuizen (2008) says the three levels of story, Story, and STORY are interconnected with each other. In the above excerpt, we see how her story weaves into her Story. Malala used the personal crises in her life to excel in her professional life. Thus, when her identity as a wife was “backgrounded”, her LTI was “foregrounded”. In a way, her LTI is her “core” identity since she mentioned how she dedicates most of her time to excel in teaching now. An evidence of this fact is how when I asked later participants about teacher training, they said they could not attend them because they were to be arranged out of the city or because they found the trainings to be of little utility. However, Malala has equipped herself with a number of training sessions:

I have attended different trainings as a master trainer in the British Council. I have also received PIDE trainings that were based on the subject of English

as medium of instruction. Other than that, I have been a part of my induction training as an English language expert. I have also worked with the CPD programme as English subject facilitator. I think they gave me a good chance to enhance my language teaching skills.

Malala is the only teacher I interviewed with such a broad experience of teacher training. However, answering my question about difficulties she encountered during training, she gave me a generalized response:

I have observed that most teachers would come along with their children. As the burden of raising the kids is solely on the shoulders of the mother here, they had no other choice. Having kids around distracted not only the mothers but also other teachers. If I was placed in a group with a mother-teacher, you could not depend on her to complete her portion of the tasks or to participate efficiently because she had to get up intermittently to tend to her child. The training programs here do not take account of this factor at all. There are no baby-sitting facilities etc. Discipline was hard to maintain during trainings with so many children around. The male teachers were unbothered during training though. Other than that, in the places where we are trained, no washroom facility was available. There were also lactating mothers with us who faced immense difficulties.

Her response points to issues present at the ‘Story’ and ‘STORY’ level but which ultimately affected the ‘story’ paradigm. Barkhuizen (2016) mentioned how LTIs exist in the outside material world. For teachers like Malala, who suffer from a lack of facilities teaching in a rural area and gender-insensitive policies, a scarcity of resources is a hindering factor when it comes to their LTI development. Barkhuizen’s (2016, p. 4) words ring true here when he says LTIs are “struggle and harmony”: the teachers’ identity as a mother exists alongside her identity as a language teacher and especially with young mothers, the two are in conflict. Barkhuizen (2016) calls such conflict between a person’s multiple selves as “sites of contradiction” (p. 7). Going back to the original discussion, she voiced her final opinion about teacher trainings:

I think we can only learn a fraction of what teaching is in these trainings ... the training programs do not align closely with the requirements of government schools where you have to tend to almost a hundred students in each class. You cannot possibly give individual attention to speaking skills of each and every subject. And because there is a lack of schools in the rural

areas, we have no other option but to admit tens of girls in one class. This negatively affects their learning potential but it's better than keeping them uneducated since if they are not admitted in the school nearest to their homes, their parents would most probably drop them out of schooling ... We have to make compromises. Language learning is a field where consistency and individual attention is the key. Here, neither I nor the students have anyone to speak English with. As we are non-native speakers, our learning abilities are hindered due to all these factors. Having to see your students not learning much disappoints me to a great extent. But I am helpless.

Malala's above response is an indication of issues at the 'STORY' level. She says she is 'helpless' even though she does not feel as accomplished as a teacher as she would want to be. Barkhuizen (2008) states issues at the 'STORY' level are outside the ambit of the teacher and they have little control over them. This is certainly true in the case of Malala who feels hindered. I asked her whether she would feel more accomplished if she was teaching in an urban area. She agreed.

I have had chances to meet with teachers from urban districts during my trainings. Generally, teachers teaching in rural areas are considered lesser expert or talented. Maybe this is because they think the students here are not as competitive so the teachers do not have as many opportunities of professional grooming. Another reason is that female teachers mostly prefer schools nearest their homes. This automatically means that most teachers teaching in rural area hail from the same rural background. This is exactly the same area where they were had been students once. And as rural areas do not offer you many opportunities of exposure to the outside world, especially if you are a female, the teachers here are also considered less talented. But as far as my own opinion is concerned, I believe there are good teachers in rural areas and bad teachers in urban areas. And once we get in touch with the teachers from urban areas, they are sometimes amazed at how hard-working and talented teachers from rural areas are.

The above is an evidence of how Malala has come to terms with her identity as a rural-dweller female language teacher. She beautifully summarizes the effect of her gender and the rural background on the growth of her LTI in this story that may be categorized in the 'story' level since it considers her own aspirations of the kind of teacher she wants to be seen as. Her "multiple" identities i.e. being a rural dweller,

being a female, and being a language teacher can be seen intersecting in the above narration (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4).

4.1.2 Rameen's story

Like Malala, the language teaching field was also the second choice of Rameen. She is 35 years-old and has a language teaching experience spanning 8 years. At first, she wanted to go into the medical profession; however, she couldn't pass the entry test for admission into the medical college. Rameen's male siblings were in quite diverse fields (for instance, she told me one was a colonel in the army, another was a dentist, and the youngest was pursuing his Ph.D. in Denmark), so I asked her why she chose a field that seems the most popular (or, cliché) for ladies in this area (as communicated by her in an interpersonal interview). Her narrative response may be fit under the 'story' level:

A lot of my female friends were planning to become teachers in different subjects. In our area, there are two fields that are deemed the most suitable for a lady. The first is the medical profession and the second is teaching. After I couldn't get into the first, I naturally opted for the second. In Bannu, if you look around, you will encounter at least one female teacher in every educated family.

Thus, she owed the formation of her initial teacher identity to a resonance with affinity relations. Moreover, we see how her gendered identity limited her other career possibilities. The fact that Rameen quoted the choice of going into the teaching field as 'natural' was interesting. I noticed how her LTI started forming socializing with friends even before she joined the field. Pointing out how her brothers were in quite diverse fields, I asked her to imagine how her circumstances would have been different if she was not a female. With a melancholic tone, she put her thoughts to words:

I don't think I would have been a teacher if I were a male. Although I try to be as sincere with my job as I can possibly be, teaching has never been my first priority. I think it would've been easier for me to go into the medical profession if I were a male. In our part of the world, females have few other opportunities than to become a teacher. In fact, teaching is the profession by default for us. The whole of Bannu is a rural area and because it is

underdeveloped with no diverse job opportunities and because of cultural restrictions, teaching is often seen as the perfect job for a lady. It is a profession where you stay inside the four walls of the school and interact with female students. Our schools are alter egos of our homes for us.

Again, her gendered identity is a hindrance in her autonomy. She is obligated to carry on her job despite not being keen on teaching. Later on in the conversation, the effect of the Barkhuizen's (2008) 'Story' became more evident as she mentioned why she would not quit the profession despite language teaching being her second choice.

When I asked her why she chose to go into the language teaching field specifically, she responded:

I belong to a highly educated family ... my brothers are all in quite reputable fields. Thus, I also wanted to go for a subject that is reputed and well-respected. I don't think I would have achieved the same if I had chosen, say, Urdu or History.

One can see how her choices are dictated by others' perceptions of English being a prestigious subject, thus betraying the "social" nature of LTI (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4). Her socialization in a society that values the English language has formed part of her LTI. Later, when I asked her whether she is respected more as an English teacher and whether English brings her any advantage as a teacher, she emphasized on her earlier point:

In our society, a person who holds an MA in English is considered quite a talented person because English is the toughest subject for almost everyone and also because everyone desperately wants to learn it. [People think we] possess extraordinary skills since we have 'mastered' the most unwieldy of languages. English is linked with being cultured. In fact, an educated person with no English proficiency is no better than an uneducated person.

When I asked Rameen why she liked language teaching, she promptly said she likes her role as a 'knowledge-sharer and an experience-sharer'. This echoes her later comment where she narrated how teaching another language is equivalent to stepping into a new world:

Any language is also tied to its culture and the English culture is opposite to ours. Thus, whenever we learn and teach English, we are stepping into a

world not our own. This makes it difficult to teach and learn. Thus, I would say teaching English is more difficult in comparison with other subjects.

Since she had emphasized on the difficulty of learning English, I asked her how she deals with the subject being a non-native herself. She responded thus:

Languages change with time so we have to remain updated. For example, the syllabus of, say, physics, or chemistry, remains the same even if slight modifications are made. However, with English, a change in course contents means we have to look up every new unfamiliar word and acquaint ourselves with the whole lesson from scratch. It is impossible for us to even learn all the words of Pashto, so how can we be able to perfectly learn a language that is our third language? But this excuse does not work in the classroom and you have to go absolutely prepared for each lesson. And whenever we prepare a lesson, we have to make the students learn from the different aspects of learning such as writing, reading, speaking, and listening. This is unlike other subjects where the teachers only have to clarify the student's concepts and their work is done. English teachers have to work on multiple fronts simultaneously.

Keeping in view the above narration, when I inquired whether she thinks she feels unaccomplished being a non-native teacher, I found that her LTI development was not affected by this factor.

If you ask me whether I would want to speak like a native both in terms of fluency and pronunciation, I would happily say yes. Of course English is not our language and we have problems acquiring it. If you ask my students, they will most probably be happier if taught by a native teacher. However, I don't think a native speaker can function here as a teacher. Why will a native speaker even come to this backward area of Pakistan? Besides, a native English teacher will not be able to teach as well as me because I am familiar with the local issues. I know my students; I know where they need more help. I mean, at one stage, I have been a non-native learner of English so I know what areas are more problematic for students.

I believe teaching English encompasses a range of aspects. It is a process which involves not only knowledge about the subject matter but also information about the learners, their level of proficiency, curriculum, pedagogical rules, as well as the broader socio-cultural context.

In the earlier part of the answer, she was answering as an English learner; however, in the second part, she quickly metamorphosed into a language teacher who knows what she is doing. Despite facing issues that NNESTs are usually faced with, she “foreground[s]” her LTI in this particular instance (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4).

Rameen told me how her life choices were determined by her being first an English student and then a language teacher.

I would not have been married to my husband if I was not an English teacher. After my marriage, my husband told me he had always struggled with English in school, and that is why he wanted his own kids to be proficient in English from the very start. So he thought it would be best to marry a girl who was reasonably proficient in the language. And because my husband and I are cousins, he knew about my subject. All of this led to us getting married. So I would say selecting English as my subject not only decided my career but also who I married.

This shows how being a language teacher forms Rameen’s core identity. The same was reinforced when I asked her whether she would consider quitting her job as a language teacher (preferably in favour of a better paying job). She realistically said:

It will be difficult to switch jobs now. I have developed attachment with my field. It is also more convenient for me. Besides, with the degrees I have, let’s be honest, I don’t have other job prospects while living in Bannu. And I cannot possibly leave Bannu. I am not a male who can leave the kids at their partner’s disposal and move out of the city for better job prospects. I am bound by culture and fate to teaching.

From her response to another question, I concluded why she did not plan on leaving the teaching field. Since females are supposed to solely bear the burden of domestic responsibilities in this rural area, she mentioned how the teaching profession enabled her to give ample time to the former.

My husband is supportive of my job, thankfully. This is also because I manage my domestic responsibilities quite well along with my professional ones. I try to do justice to both. That is why he has never asked me to quit my job. If he is letting me work, why should I quit?

It is interesting to see the immense impact of one’s family (especially the male members) on Rameen’s LTI development particularly and the other participants generally. Her choices about language teaching are determined not merely based on

what she thinks of the field but also how her husband sees it. This is evidence yet again of Barkhuizen's (2008) 'Story' level. Being at the receiving end of such a huge "social" impact, it sometimes becomes quite difficult to detect her own "cognitive" and "emotional" undertones in her LTI development—all these three factors being the defining features of LTI as per Barkhuizen (2016).

At another point, while talking about her financial conditions, she told me how her husband has gone out of country and currently remains jobless so she manages the house's expenses on her own. Thus, despite the fact that she is sole bread-winner of the family for now, she did not quote this reason when I asked her whether she would quit her job.

Relevant to the above discussion is how Rameen ensures "harmony" in the contest between her LTI and motherhood. Describing her experience raising her kids along with pursuing her career, she narrated:

I have hired a baby sitter ... She comes with me to the school and tends to my three children when I am busy. In any case, it is true that I am a bit disturbed or you can say distracted when the kids are around. One is a toddler and kids are noisy when unattended to.

And even though our family is on a tight budget nowadays, I have no choice but to keep on employing the baby-sitter. She is as important for the sustenance of my job as is food for sustaining life. I cannot possibly concentrate on teaching with three of my kids around without her.

Her response is unlike Malala who had replied to the above question by saying that she had raised her kids while on job by virtue of sheer intrinsic motivation. Thus, we see how in the Malala's case her "cognition" and "feelings" have been impactful while in Rameen's case, her "social" circle helps her LTI development.

Throughout her responses, I noticed how she used 'our area' as a hindering factor in her journey. Thus, I asked her to share her thoughts on how her journey would have been different if she had been living in an urban area. Although at first she said there are good and bad teacher both in rural and urban areas, she shared how language teaching in a rural area is different at some points:

Students in urban areas are more competitive and expressive. And the more responsive the students are, the more enjoyable the teaching and learning process is. Thus, I think teaching in an urban area would have provided me with more opportunities to be groomed as a teacher.

It is clear how she delineates the rural context as a factor that has hindered her LTI development.

Moreover, like most of the participants in this study, she reported how she has not received any language-teaching specific training. However, even though she had not attended any training, she had observed such trainings had little utility: *“Bookish knowledge about learning strategies does not work well in the circumstances we teach in.”*

4.1.3 Maliha’s story

Born in Bannu but raised in Peshawar, Maliha is 32 years old, and although she has a total language teaching experience of 6 years, she has been teaching in the current school for 3 years. She told me how she believed in luck for if her father had not got a teaching job in the provincial capital Peshawar, she would not have been able to obtain her education since her extended family was against female education. She reminisced how even her mother wanted to continue her education after her marriage but she could not since her grand-father was an imam in a mosque and was “very traditional in values”. Thus, although Maliha’s maternal uncles were highly educated, her mother was not. She cited the lack of educational opportunities for her mother to be one reason why she and her sisters were educated and pursuing a career. She told me her mother “did not want her fate to be repeated with her daughters. She wanted to see us independent.” She added that her mother raised her own sons in an enlightened fashion away from the influence of her conservative in-laws’ family. In short, after they moved to a relatively more urban area i.e. Peshawar, Maliha’s father admitted her in a school. Thereafter, she obtained her education till her M.A. in English. Even for her M.A., she wanted to take admission in the prestigious National University of Modern Languages, but this would’ve necessitated staying in a hostel. As much as her father was supportive of his daughters’ education, she said her staying in a hostel away from home was “intolerable for him”. Hailing from such a traditionally-bound background, I asked her how she was able to follow a career in teaching. As communicated by her in an interpersonal interview, she gave the entire credit of this to two men she was closely related to:

I give the whole credit of this job to my brother because I was not in favour of pursuing a job in Bannu. Now that I am married, I am lucky that my husband has also not raised any serious objections on my job.

Further elaborating such ‘serious objections’, she said:

Although my husband has not stopped me from working, I feel like he would be happier if I quit my job and dedicated the entirety of my time to my domestic responsibilities. My husband feels that the society of Bannu is conservative so females should better stay home.

Because she mentioned the reservations of her husband, I asked her who is responsible for her household’s expenses. She said:

My father used to manage the house’s finances before I got married. He was controller examination in UET Peshawar. We were fairly stable. After my marriage, my husband manages the finances although I can comfortably contribute. But I would say he is the default bread-winner. He doesn’t ask me for money. That is also because we are a family of two so we don’t have lots of expenses to care about.

Unlike Malala, who derived her confidence from being the family’s financial supporter, Maliha has always been financially dependent on men. Because she is not the ‘default bread-winner’, she has to “background” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) her LTI to step into the shoes of her husband to see the world. This was interesting to note since she always had a defensive tone when talking about the conservative mind-set of her husband. She also mentioned that she is child-less and this is another reason why she has not quit her job. She remarked: *‘The school is my refuge from the boredom and depression that often plagues childless ladies’*. This is another interesting insight embedded in the culturally conservative rural area of Bannu. Women are generally not allowed to go outside the house for recreation and enjoyment. Thus, many women who do go out for work do it to take a break from their house’s constricting environment.

This seemed like a good point where I asked her whether her husband would be more supportive if they were living (and she was teaching) in an urban area. She responded:

Of course if we were living in an urban area, say, Peshawar, maybe he would not have such reservations. He ... has no problems with women working as teachers; however, he is fearful of the society around us that does not view a

woman who works outside home favourably. Another factor is that I was already working when we got engaged. So one of the conditions for accepting his proposal was that I would continue working after marriage. Be that as it may, once you get married, your husband exercises the entire control. After all, no woman would choose to pursue a job if it is causing rifts with her husband. Thankfully, I have not faced any such terrible choice. He himself is a lecturer so he understands my position.

Thus, she agrees the rural background creates a hindrance for females to freely and undistractedly pursue their professions. Elaborating more on the attitude of her husband towards her job, she narrated:

Earlier, when I was in a school very far away than this one, he used to pick and drop me himself. He said he cannot trust a taxi wala for pick and drop to a far flung area ...

I feel like the society's moral fabric is crumbling. Every person is afraid of the other. We cannot let our children play outside the house for long. Thus, the fear and insecurity of my husband is also understandable.

Her equation of herself with kids (who may not be good decision-makers) is particularly interesting. This is evidence of how women's choices in the rural recesses of Pakistan are dictated by the male members. Going into the language teaching field, as I mentioned in examining the above interviews, is also a by-product of the patriarchal society's dictation on the best suitable career choices for women. When I asked her why she chose the language teaching field, she reported:

Even the most conservative of families in our area prefer teaching jobs for women. It is considered to be the most respectable job for ladies. It is also because the timings are fixed and you can also easily observe pardah. Both of these factors enable female teachers to divide their time equally between their professional and domestic responsibilities. And I believe it is mostly a matter of trust. If the parents and later on the husband trust your character, they will let you pursue your teaching job.

Barkhuizen (2016) says LTIs are "accepted, acknowledged, and valued by self and others" (p. 3). In the case above, Maliha's LTI is accepted, acknowledged, and valued by others because of the socio-cultural acceptance of teaching as a suitable field for ladies. Moreover, her pride in the integrity of her character is also a contributing factor according to her perceptions. However, the fact that she quotes the family's

trust to be the deciding factor for whether a woman should work is aligned with her other argument where she said her husband is fearful of the society's moral downturn but since he 'trusts' her, he has allowed her to pursue her job. Throughout the interviews and later on the analysis, I saw how the participants' LTI are embedded in a negative plane where more consideration is given to why they *should not* pursue a job rather than on why they *should*. Hence, pursuing a job for a woman in the rural recesses of Pakistan is not only a matter of interest but also one of pleading your case against a society that plays the devil's advocate. In relation to the current study, this is how LTIs are "contested and resisted" (p. 3) in Barkhuizen's (2016) words.

When I asked Maliha why she chose to do her M.A. in English, she said:

I have always been a lover of languages. In my school and college life, whenever someone looked for me, they'd first go the library because that's where they thought they would find me ... I liked to improve my English by reading in English. Since Urdu was our second language and we were already proficient in it, I didn't think there was any point of reading in Urdu for the sake of language improvement. So I instinctively chose language teaching as a career afterwards. It's not because other career options were not open to me. Even if I had chosen army as career, my father would have supported me.

She says this having mentioned a few moments ago that it was 'intolerable' for her father that girls should live in hostels. Having landed in a profession that is considered the most suitable for ladies, and even there facing subtle pressure to quit her job, the above statement seems contradictory *prima facie*. However, generally in the participants (and especially the ones who had chosen the teaching as a second priority) I noticed a justification of sorts where they agreed their profession is socially preferred for women and then stating that they could have chosen any field of their choice because, as Maliha said, 'the household trusted them'. One sees how the teaching profession is in "harmony" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 3) with societal values, and thus it is "accepted, acknowledged, and valued". Such acceptance, acknowledgement, and value are magnified especially if the woman is a language teacher. Maliha reiterates:

The thought that it is a prophetic job always remains at the back of my mind ... if we want to be respected the most, we should go into teaching. After all, teachers are king-makers. Secondly, in every career field that people cherish, they remain in touch with people's welfare. I believe teaching is one such field

where you can positively impact a society and work for its welfare. Furthermore, because I am teaching females in this job, it is very dear to my heart. As they say, you teach a man, you teach a man; teach a woman and you teach a whole generation. In every class here we have tens of girls. This is equivalent to teaching hundreds of generations ... I have always been interested in language so going into language teaching was instinctive. It is also because we value and cherish English as a language. The 'wow-factor' is always there whenever I tell people I am an English teacher ... Nowadays, lots of people are doing their MA in English. However, at the time I did it, few men could do it and even fewer females. So people used to look at us with awe and respect. This has lessened now but it certainly has not diminished. And because I have done my MA from a prestigious university, I get extra benefits in terms of value and respect. For example, people tell me and I agree that I can learn physics and chemistry because I know English. But a physics or chemistry teacher cannot learn teacher merely because they are aware of the concepts behind physics and chemistry. Thus, it is inevitable that being English teachers should entail extra respect and admiration.

Firstly, she narrates her role identity as a social panacea i.e. since teachers have a 'prophetic' job, it lends sacredness to what they do in terms of their contribution to civilization. Moreover, almost all the participants had told me they are respected more being English teachers; however, Maliha added into this by telling me that even the university you study from matters. Her role identity is developed through her prior experience of studying in a popular university. This is similar to the finding by Sahragard and Sadeghi (2017), who state that the prior learning experience greatly aid language teachers in their identity formation. In fact, Maliha derives confidence from the fact that she did her M.A. from a prestigious university and in turn her LTI is positively developed. She is confident in her skin as a language teacher and remains unbothered about her non-native status and the issues that come with being a non-native teacher.

I think the first thing we think about when talking about non-native teachers is their lack of fluency and terrible accent. As far as native-like accent is concerned, I don't think we can ever achieve that. I speak English under the effect of my first and second language. I believe that as far as our pronunciation is correct, we do not need to have a native-like accent.

However, I also believe that there will be limitations in our pronunciation as well because we are not exposed to English that much. Having said that, if you can communicate your point in English, there is no need to worry about proper native-like accent. In a way, our unique accent is part of our identity.

The above shows how Maliha connects with her students on a personal level having hailed from the same area as them. Thus, she is a collaborator who is aware of the issues non-native speakers face and thus she remains accepting of the mistakes her students make being non-native speakers. In fact, terming the students' and her unique accent as part of their identity is the epitome of acceptance. There is no reason why this should not drive her LTI forward, for if she was insecure about her accent, she would not have been able to teach with confidence. And since her belief in her own skills is internal to herself, this harks back to Barkhuizen's (2016) "cognitive" and "ideological" (p. 4) aspects of LTI. It is "cognitive" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) because it betrays Maliha's philosophy about teaching a language to students who are non-native speakers and it is "ideological" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) because it represents her ideology of how languages should be taught in general. Broadly, her response may be set in the "social" (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) frame of LTI that shows how she negotiates her role identity in the classroom as a collaborator.

While talking about the issues that NNESTs (and consequently their non-native students) face, I asked Maliha whether the high failure ratio of students in English. She narrated:

Once a mentor of mine said that if you want to pursue higher education, do it in an easy subject, like Urdu. Upon asking why, she said that in a difficult subject like English, the ratio of your failed student would always be higher. This would hinder your opportunities of professional development since you'd be the teacher whose students fail a lot, and which would resultantly stress you out.

Now when I think about it, I feel it's true. I want my students to progress but, as always, the failure ratio in English remains high. Thus, I always try to motivate them and myself by telling them different quotes about failure and success.

Her response showed how quotes are a symbolic representation of the way she deals with the challenges associated with language teaching in a non-native and rural context. Engaging in such a challenging pedagogical practice, as also suggested by

Barkhuizen (2016), develops her LTI about the kind of teacher she is (which in this case is a motivated teacher who wants the same enthusiasm in her students as well). Although she admits she feels discouraged by her students' lack of expertise in English, she tries to understand their issues and feels that motivation is the key to success. Once again, we see the “cognitive” and “emotional” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 3) role of LTI development as Maliha constantly strives to better her students by telling them motivational quotes. When I asked her whether verbal motivation is the only tool she uses, Maliha narrated:

We do not have many resources here to teach English. For example, we do not have a multi-media system to play recordings or videos. Since material that aids in the teaching process is not available, we have to make do with what we have. You see teachers are like candles that burn for their students. But in our area, due to a lack of resources, we burn from both ends.

The above response can be fit into the lens of ‘Story’ (since it betrays a budget-conscious school administration) as well as ‘STORY’ (since it signifies educational policies made at the national level which result in a low budget for education). However, her analogy makes clear how she personally feels discouraged, landing the argument into the ‘story’ paradigm. All of this is evidence of when Barkhuizen (2008) says that three levels affect each other deeply. Moreover, Barkhuizen (2016) states how LTI exist in the outside material and technological world. Maliha’s response shows how a lack of material facilities renders her unable to progress her LTI through technological means. Consequently, as she beautifully narrated in her candle analogy, she feels stressed out. When I asked her if she would feel she can teach better with such resources, she agreed entirely. I then asked her whether she thought the same teaching resources would be easily accessible in an urban area. She offered interesting insights on the difference between rural and urban contexts:

... when I was teaching in [an urban area], I did not need to start with the very basics whenever I started a lesson. Here, I have to teach words-meanings first before we even get to read the lesson. If I don't do this, the students will not understand anything. So I would say teachers here are faced with a double burden ... the students [in an urban area] are much more competitive and you just have to read and translate the lesson once and then they can do the rest on their own. If I were to make an analogy, I would say the foundation is already built in students of urban areas and the teacher only has to build a

wall. In rural areas, you have to start with the foundation. The retention level of students in rural areas is also lower ... this is because they been as exposed to advance culture as students in urban areas. Since they do not know the language, they resort to rote learning. And as rote memorization doesn't stay for long, their retention level is lower. Lastly, the quality of education in primary level govt. schools is also not up to the mark. Most of the girls we have here in secondary and tertiary levels hail from the same system so they are not as qualified in English as, say, girls from private schools are. Because teachers do not focus on the language skills of students from the primary level here, when they come to class 9th and 10th, they only have rudimentary understanding of English. Moreover, primary schools teachers themselves are not proficient in English so how do you expect them to teach it? This is because the requirement for primary level teaching is only having 16 years of education in any field, along with the mandatory NTS/FTS entry test. In most cases, the teacher does not have a degree in English. Long story short, the students who are admitted in class 6th in our school only have workable reading skills in English and their writing, speaking, and listening skills are equal to zero. This is why I said we have to start by building their base first. But then again, with only one academic year at hand, we cannot possibly make them 'angrez'. All of these factors are quite discouraging for a teacher who cannot possibly make the 'wall' they want to build. Then again, I recollect myself. This making and remaking process is a part of my job now.

The above response briefly summarizes the plight of language learning in government schools system especially in rural areas. This points to the broader 'STORY' level pointed out by Barkhuizen (2008). As gauged by her response, problems lie at the higher plane of decision-making where educational policies are made. Since she mentioned a lack of material facilities, I asked her whether she has received trainings specific for language teachers. To my surprise, she said she had not attended any but she has been a trainer herself:

I used to train primary level teachers. But I have found that most of those teachers attend the training because it is mandatory. They do not show any interest and do not come with the intention to learn. I think this is because they think teacher training sessions are superficial and the strategies are not applicable to context where they teach.

When I had asked Rameen, she had also communicated the same observation. Both Rameen and Maliha implied that teacher training modules do not consider ground realities of the area they teach in so the teachers find them useless.

Since Maliha had taught both male and female students in the urban area school, I inquired into how her experience was different here since she taught in an all-girls school. She said:

... female students do not have much exposure to the outside world, so they feel shy while speaking in English. This lack of practice proves damaging to their language skills in the long run. Confidence is a product of exposure. Students here, on the contrary, are more mistake-conscious.

Talking about hindrances and opportunities, I asked her to imagine how her circumstances would have been different had she been a male and not a female. She narrated light-heartedly:

I think I would have been more carefree if I was a male. I think challenges make us stronger. If I was a male, I would not have faced as many challenges, and I would not have been pushed to my limits. I believe that personal growth happens outside our comfort zones. Being a male, I would have had everything I wanted without any effort. This would surely have not developed qualities like resilience, perseverance, and strength in me.

On the other hand, being females, we have so much going on in our heads at the same time. We have to be honest with our professional as well as domestic responsibilities. The onus of taking care of the family's honour also falls on our shoulders, and we have to maintain a delicate balance between them. As I go out of the house every day, I am always reminded that I take the honour of my men with me. This creates a stressful environment for me.

I found Maliha to be a person who could always spot the silver lining. Even though she agrees females have to shoulder extra burdens, she takes it all in her stride. However, towards the end, she agreed that shouldering all these burdens surely stresses her out. This last observation is in line with previous findings made by Fatima and Sahibzada (2012), Malik et al., (2017) and Nadeem et al., (2011). Barkhuizen (2016) calls LTI a fractal system. LTI being a fractal system that is impacted by the “being” and “feeling” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) of the language teacher is amply evident here. Maliha has to grapple with the tensions that come with being a female in a conservative area. This can also be explained by the “contest and harmony” factor

of LTI (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4). As Maliha feels stressful, this is evidence of how her LTI is “contests and resisted” by others in her surroundings. Moreover, as she tries to strike a balance between her domestic and professional responsibilities, she faces issues with which identity to foreground and which to background. If she foregrounds her LTI, it creates issues for her identity as a wife especially since her husband is not a hundred percent supportive of her work.

Although Maliha associated problems with being a female, she derived confidence from being an English teacher in comparison with teachers of other subjects:

I have also seen that with changes in curriculum, science teachers get worried because they think a whole lot of new and unfamiliar English words will be included in the course. Thus they ask us English teachers often for help. And since we already know the language, we have no such qualms.

The above excerpt shows how the identity of language teachers exists on a different plane than teachers of other subjects especially when non-nativity is taken into account. Her grip on English not only helps her teach the subject but also puts her on a pedestal higher than teachers of other subjects since she mentioned they come to her for help. The “ideological” and “historical” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) strings attached with English being valued more are clear. In the school’s “social” contest, she can negotiate her LTI better than teachers of other subjects. This certainly positively affects her sense of self in the educational context. Maliha added further:

... I believe all ... subjects are dependent on English because most are taught in English ... English is equal to competence as long as the medium of instruction is English. Thus, even if a Physics teacher is not reasonably competent in English, she cannot possibly teach well. There are many instances where the teachers of other subjects come to us language teachers for help because they encounter unfamiliar words. I think this is also why English teachers are respected more. They are a utility in schools. As long as we continue to cherish English as a language, we will cherish and respect the people who teach English as a subject ... I always tell my students to take English learning seriously no matter what career they choose in the future. If they are not competent in English, they cannot become even a good physics or chemistry or biology teacher.

The above is evidence of how Maliha “foreground[s]” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) her LTI in comparison with other teachers. Throughout her responses, I found that she

foregrounded her LTI when comparing herself with teachers of other subjects but backgrounded it when she thought of herself as a daughter or as a wife. Barkhuizen's (2016) words with relation to LTI ring true here as he says that LTIs are "struggle and harmony" (p. 4). At one point, Maliha's LTI is harmonious with her identity as a colleague, and at others it is in conflict with her identity as a daughter and a wife. Moreover, Barkhuizen's (2008) smaller level of 'story' fits here since all of this is related to how Maliha internally comprehends her position.

Towards the end, when I asked Maliha whether she would quit teaching, she answered in the negative. Her LTI was strong enough. She said:

"It is not even about the salary. Ultimately, it is because I am satisfied as a language teacher."

4.1.4 Aman's story

Aman is 36 years old and has been teaching English for 13 years. She was born in Bannu but since her father was a bank manager, they had to shift cities often. Consequently, she was raised in and received her primary and secondary education from three different cities i.e. Bannu, Naurang and D.I.Khan whereby the last two are adjacent Bannu. She has received her M.A. in English from Bannu though. She mentioned that her one brother is a software engineer while another is studying business administration. Her mother was a housewife. Seeing that her family members are in quite diverse fields, I asked her the reason why she chose to do M.A. English and later on pursue a career in language teaching. She communicated thusly in an interpersonal interview:

I was in class 8th when my uncle advised me that I should go for English because back then not many females had this degree. English was, and still is, considered the toughest subject. That is why he instructed me to focus on my English so that I can easily opt for it in my MA. Moreover, I've always been among the most brilliant students of the class and this is why English appealed to me the most.

Her views resonate with that of Malala. Although Malala had taken up English to set herself apart from her family, Aman did it to differentiate herself from her peers. She prided herself in always being the class' topper throughout her studies and since English was unwieldy for others, she thought she should be the one to select it.

Believing herself to be an excellent English learner contributed to her imagined identity as a good English teacher. This imagination formed her initial LTI. Once again, though, we see the influence of an influential man in her life who directed her choice partly.

Answering the second part of my question, she narrated:

I have always been career-oriented so when it came to the choice for a career, I thought: 'okay, I am good at English and teaching is one field where I can fulfil my desire to remain productive, to work, and to pursue a career and this is also where I can cater to the cultural values of my family and the society ... In field jobs or on administrative positions, you cannot remain veiled. And if you choose to remain veiled all the time, you cannot give your best to your profession. I believe that the concept of veil [hijab], that is in other areas of Pakistan or the world still leaves space for women to pursue any field they want. However, the kind of pardah system that is here, i.e. the shuttlecock burqa, keeps you very much confined to the folds of cloth that wrap you. This is the reason why I have never applied to any other job except teaching even though I have remained among the topper students of my class through and through. In short, I believe going into teaching was as much decision dictated by social norms as it was a personal one. And I am not even sure about the latter.

The above excerpt resonates with previous responses on when I had asked why they are teachers. Aman saying that her choice was as much social as it was personal and then saying, on second thoughts, that she is not even sure about the 'personal' part is ample evidence of how women's career choices are dictated by cultural standards in the rural society of Bannu. Barkhuizen (2016) states how LTI indexes both teacher agency and the social milieu. I have found that personal agency is backgrounded in this case.

Taking the same theme forward, I asked Aman whether she believes she is different from teachers of other subjects now. She reported:

... in our part of the world, a person who knows English is considered next to Socrates. There are many reasons for why it should be so. For example, the school I teach in is a higher secondary school. Now except Urdu, Islamyat, Arabic, and Home Economics, all their subjects are in English. So you see English is an important component of overall learning for them. Even if a

student wants to pursue Islamic studies in the future, they still have to pass the other subjects, most of which are taught in English. Even if you are not interested in opting for a Masters in English, you still have to have sufficient understanding of the language to excel academically. So, just as English is important for learning in general, English teachers are also given additional prestige. The same will go on as long as the medium of instruction is English. Until a few years back, science subjects were taught in Urdu, instead of English. But because of the transition of government-run schools from Urdu to English medium, English teachers were given even more respect as teachers of other subjects had to continuously ask us for help in their lessons. There were teachers who had taught Physics or chemistry or biology for 10 or even 20 years in Urdu and now they had to switch to English. Since the government did not provide any facilities to smoothen their transition, it was English teachers who helped them. Even if a few trainings were arranged, the teachers could not attend them because of them being conducted out of city.

The above insightful response pointed to broader issues at the level of educational policy making, which we term ‘STORY’ in Barkhuizen’s (2008) words. According to the above response, the burden that should have been shouldered by the government is bore by English teachers in school who have to guide teachers of other subjects because of the medium of instruction being English. Thus, as gauged from Aman’s response, “social” as well as “ideological and historical” (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4) factors are involved in shaping her LTI at work. The social factor is evident in her negotiation of her identity in juxtaposition with her colleagues while the ideological and historical factors are manifest in the treatment of English as a superior language. As Aman mentioned teachers could not attend any special trainings to ease their transition into the change of medium of instruction to English, I asked her whether she has attended any trainings herself pre-service or in-service. Her response was similar to that of Rameen and Maliha. She had not attended training specific to language teachers but she had been a trainer herself. Upon asking why she did not attend any training, she narrated: “*My kids were too young at that time and since the training was going to be arranged out of Bannu, I could not avail this opportunity to enhance my teaching skills.*”

She supposes here that she might have improved her skills had she attended the training. This is dissimilar to the experience of Rameen and Maliha who had attended

trainings and thought them to be of little values when implemented in real-life classrooms. I asked her whether any training was arranged in their own school so that the teachers could easily attend them. Her response, once again, pointed to a lack of facilities and the general downturn of educational policies in the countries that are marred by a lack of funds and gender insensitivity inter alia. She said female teachers have to look after their kids and bring them to school as well if they are too young. Once again, Aman's identity as a mother was clashing with her LTI:

I've had my youngest two during my job. I've had to always keep a baby-sitter with me. During the breast-feeding period, I could not leave them at home so my maid used to come with me to school. Of course I had to pay her more during that period because she'd spend the whole day here with me. And until they were admitted in school, I used to bring them here to school every day ... Of course when we bring kids to school, we sometimes get distracted. However, our cultural background is such that the entire responsibility of raising children falls on the shoulders of women. Even if the husband is jobless and is staying home, she still has to bring the children to her workplace. Thus, I have to divide my time wisely between being a mother and being a teacher. And since I don't know of any baby-sitting facilities in government schools in Bannu, I have faced issues. There aren't even enough classrooms in schools in rural areas; how can we expect the administration to allocate extra space to a baby-sitting facility?

Her response is emblematic of issues at the 'STORY' level. We also see how her emotions as a mother do not sit comfortably when her ideology as a teacher. She further told me that even that she has now stopped bringing her kids to school, other teachers do bring their toddlers along. Since the children have no recreational facilities to be entertained by, they often cry and scream which disrupts the school's discipline. She mentioned how the difficulty of her subject is aggravated by the noisy environment she has to teach in. Barkhuizen (2016) states how LTIs exist in the outside "material" world. In the case of Aman, it is better put as the difficulty of LTI development due to a lack of material facilities in the outside world. Consequently, Aman's "being and doing" of her LTI is hindered. Since we were talking about gender-based issues, I asked her to imagine how her position might have been different had she been a male. She said enthusiastically:

Absolutely. Firstly, for example, if I were a male teacher, I would not have had to bring my children to school with me. Being a teacher who is also a mother, I feel distracted and over-burdened sometimes as I have to tend both to my children and my students. Moreover, speaking from experience, female teachers face more issues of travelling both in every day conveyance and when we have to go out of city for training. I believe trainings are very important for our professional development. But since we cannot attend trainings most of the times, I'd say our professional skills lag behind that of male teachers. Moreover, male teachers can still be engaged in the school and with the students long after their off time. However, for us, we prefer to focus on home-making after our off-time.

Her response can be categorized in three parts. The first relates to her identity as a mother, the second is linked with her broader gender identity of being a female, and the third relates generally to her identity as a teacher. In all three spheres, she feels she would be better off if she were a male. Barkhuizen's (2016) comment that LTIs are core and peripheral is pertinent to mention here. In the above instance, her LTI is relegated to peripheries or fringes of her existence only because she identifies as a female. In other words, her LTI is struggling in the face of her gendered identity.

In terms of non-nativity, I found Aman as confident as Maliha. Even though she admitted to a plethora of issues that plague NNESTs, she was defensive of her identity. She narrated:

I believe we can only learn our first language the best. After that, we can develop a certain level of proficiency in 2nd and 3rd language but it is impossible to learn them as good as our 1st language. Since I properly started learning English in my teen-age years, I am not as fluent in it as I am in Pashto or even Urdu. I do face difficulties in pronunciation and fluency. If I was a native speaker, of course I would not have faced these issues. Moreover, because I am not a native speaker, my expertise will never be considered at par with a native English teacher. However, I believe that I can best teach students in this area because here we mostly learn by translation and practice. A native speaker will not be as aware of the needs of students back here as I am. Not only that: because I am a native of the area, the students feel more confident and jovial with me than they would with a native English speaker. With the latter, they will most probably feel shy and under-confident.

So even though I cannot speak or write English as well as a native speaker, I feel I can teach my students better than a native can.

As far as pronunciation [by which she meant 'accent'] is concerned, no matter how much we try and practice, it can never be like that of native speakers.

As is evident from the excerpt below, although Aman acknowledges deficit in her skills as an English learner, she is confident in her skills as a language teacher. She does not derive her professional legitimacy from restrictive ideas of pronunciation and accent but from larger and more broad-based factors embedded in the socio-cultural context she teaches. This relates to the 'Story' level as identified by Barkhuizen (2008).

Barkhuizen (2016, p. 4) states that LTIs change over time and across contexts. I found this true in the case of Aman whose LTI had transitioned from a phase where she was a motivated teacher to one where she has almost given up. She narrated:

When I was on my contract based job in college, I used to study and research a lot because I taught very motivated BA level students. The class was small in number and they had chosen English out of their interest in it. It was a phase of growing and learning both for me and for them. Another factor was that I was unmarried at that time so I had a lot of time to dedicate to grooming my teaching skills. On the contrary, now I have almost a hundred students in each class. It is exhausting for me and uninteresting for students because it is impossible to give individual attention to each student in a 45 minute session. Learning languages is a hefty task and has a number of aspects i.e. reading, listening, writing, and speaking. Moreover, in language learning, individual attention is crucial. But sadly, that is impossible here.

Although in both her roles she taught language, but we see how her thoughts have changed over time as her circumstances changed. This is evidence of the "dynamic", "multiple", and "hybrid" nature of LTI (Barkhuizen, 2016, p. 4).

I went on to ask her whether the difference was because she was living in a rural area now. In response, she narrated how she felt teaching in a rural area is different:

In urban areas, we face a more competitive and challenging environment. The students there have more exposure so they are more fluent in English. Thus, teachers have to make extra effort to keep up. On the contrary, we hardly ever step out of our comfort zone while teaching English in a rural area. Although students here are less proficient in the language and I have to start from

scratch, I do not have to research and strive as hard as teachers in urban areas. In the long run, this hinders my own professional development. For instance, since I do not communicate with students in English as much, and I have absolutely no other opportunity to practice English, my speaking skills are not as fine as urban teachers. Thus, whenever I interact with them, I feel a kind of inferiority complex.

Moreover, much also depends on how motivated and responsive students in the classroom are. Since students here are not proficient in the language, they do not question as much as they would do in a, say, physics' class. Thus, even if the teacher is passionate about her job, if the students are not responsive, it is quite difficult to retain the same level of motivation for your job after a few months or years, as has been my case.

In the above excerpt, Aman highlights the difficulties she has to face teaching in a rural area. It is also an indication of an identity crisis when she was juxtaposed with the supposed expertise of teachers from urban areas. Lesser facilities coupled with lesser responsive students, thus, lessens her possibilities of professional development. She did, however, mentioned how travelling expenses are far more affordable as compared to urban areas so she doesn't have to pay a lot to the taxi that picks and drops her.

Considering all these issues, I asked Aman whether she has ever imagined quitting her job. She said:

I don't think there is a 'better' opportunity for a married woman living in a rural area considering logistical and cultural reasons. It is quite difficult to transition to a different career now that I am married and have fallen into a routine.

The above excerpt can safely be considered an extension of previous responses which delineated teaching as the most suitable job for a woman according to societal standards. I asked Aman to specify why she thought teaching was the most suitable for her. In response, she said she values her identity as a home-maker and that:

My husband is supportive of my work. Partially, this is because I try my best to do justice to my domestic responsibilities. After school, I cook and clean like a regular house-wife. I believe teaching jobs are suitable for married women because you can take off at 2 pm. Afterwards, you can focus on home-making. I feel that if was in some other field where I had to stay out of home

till, say 7pm or even 5 pm, maybe he would not have extended such support. It would also have been difficult for me to raise my kids along while having a tough routine. So you see why teaching is often considered the most suitable job for a woman here..

Such an imagining and storying of her experience is insightful in the sense that Aman has negotiated her LTI well with her identity as a wife. Clearly, this links with the smallest ‘story’ level as delineated by Barkhuizen (2008).

4.2 Discussion and Conclusion

Firstly, as is evident from the analysis above, the language teachers mostly consider the rural context to be a hindrance because not many opportunities are available whereby they can grow professionally. On a personal level as well, the rural setting of their life has stolen many opportunities from them, first as learners and then as language teachers, as is evident from the story of Malala who was not allowed to pursue her education and had to resort to distance learning. As I discussed earlier, I found that the LTI of the participants existed more along a negative plane where they were asked why they *should* pursue a job rather than why they *should not*. In this game, the rural society played the devil’s advocate where by the teachers had to argue strongly *why* they want to pursue their jobs. In this context, as Maliha shared, if her family had not moved out the village, she would not have been able to receive education and consequently pursue a career in language teaching. However, for the participant language teachers, the English subject became an avenue whereby they could prove their talent against the challenging rural context. This is because English is considered a tough subject for learners in this area (and, of course, beyond it), and all the participant language teachers reiterated this point. For instance, Malala chose learning and then teaching English as a way to prove her mettle against a family who did not believe in the merits of a woman. Put into the perspectives of ‘Story’ and ‘story’, the participants seemed to choose teaching as a career due to affinity relations (just as Rameen did) and English because they wanted to differentiate themselves from other females in the area. In the case of Rameen, her gendered identity limited her other career possibilities since she admitted that her other siblings were in quite diverse fields and that she chose teaching because it was considered a well-respected job for a female. Like Rameen, most other participants agreed that they would have

been engaged in other careers if they were men. However, for women, they term teaching a 'natural' choice. This is interesting since the choice stems from the society and thus may better be called a deeply 'social' choice. Another interesting insight was how Maliha used her career as a refuge away from the boredom of home as she did not have any kids. This is because women in the conservative areas are generally not allowed to go outside their homes for recreation or enjoyment. Thus, some of those that pursue their careers do it as a way to take a break from their monotonous domestic lives.

The analysis also revealed how being economically independent has freed these women from some of the hindrances that shackle women residing in rural areas. For instance, because Malala's husband was no longer supporting her children and her, and because she had to financially support her in-laws as well, she never faced any pressure to quit her job. This was despite the fact that she was quite active in extra-curricular activities like attending and arranging training sessions, and which often required mingling with males. As almost all participants mentioned that teaching is considered a suitable job for females in this area because they can conveniently follow *pardah* restrictions while teaching in an all-women school, it was quite surprising to record Malala's take. She was independent to make her own decisions because the family's finances depended upon her. Now, although her being completely independent was something out of the ordinary, her being the breadwinner of the family was equally unusual. This is because the other participants did not consider themselves to be the sole bread-winners of the family and this still seemed to be working under the thumb of the male members of their family. This was evident from way they often referred to how the males dictated their career choices. In short, even though the rural setting was somewhat of a hindrance for participants like Rameen, it was lesser so for Malala.

Similarly, the participant teachers' and the learners' non-native status is deemed problematic in some respects as both parties strive to gain expertise in this unwieldy language. As discussed above, Malala's first well-prepared lecture was a complete failure because the students could not comprehend spoken English. Thus, despite being students of higher secondary level, Malala had to down-grade her lesson to a rudimentary level to make them more understandable. The same point was reiterated by the other participants. Almost all had at least one instance to quote where they had to start from the scratch to make the students understand course textbooks of their

corresponding grade. In this way, teaching and learning English is not merely an exercise in pedagogy but a whole new world of ‘knowledge-sharing’ and ‘experience-sharing’ for these women, just as Rameen claimed. This means that teaching languages comes with a baggage of experience sharing whereby both the teachers and learners engage in an exercise to understand and absorb the social strings that come attached with each language. And given our bitter-sweet relationship with English, the equation is quite complex with teaching English here.

However, contrary to common observations where one’s non-native status is deemed to be a hindrance when it comes to learning a language, the participants shared that because they come from almost the same background as the learners in their class, they are in a better position to teach them. Because a non-native understands where a young non-native learner faces the most difficulties, they adjust their lessons accordingly. According to the participants, and in my own opinion, a native speaker would hardly be able to teach in the circumstances the NNESTs teach. This is because circumstances of the NNESTs in the rural context of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are marked by a lack of resources and exposure for women, teachers and learners alike. Just as Maliha strongly believed, the non-native take on English is deemed a unique part of the LTI of the non-native English teachers here. And this unique part of their LTI is much cherished since the participants believed that being non-native puts them in a favourable (rather than a disadvantaged) position to teach English. I found that even though the teachers were discouraged by the relative ineptitude of the rural learners of English in grasping the nuances of the language, they believed that they understood the difficulties faced by the students because they have been non-native learners themselves. Thus, even though non-nativity is seem to pose hindrances in terms of learning the language, the role is reversed, surprisingly, when it comes to teaching it. This has been an insightful and eye-opening finding for me as well, especially since I have also taught English for quite some time.

CHAPTER 5

MAKING SENSE OF IT: CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to look at LTI from the triple lenses of non-nativity, gender, and the rural setting. The current study was eye-opening for me on various levels especially since I have occupied all the three planes that were the features of this work (i.e. non-nativity, the female gender, and teaching in a rural context) at one point in time. Life being a ceaseless journey of self-awareness, this study was an attempt on my part to not only understand LTI deeply but also to understand my own position as a non-native female English teacher better. Below I make an attempt to restate and reflect on the findings I have stated in the previous chapter and also add my concluding remarks about this study.

5.1 Summary of findings

The discussion above makes clear that LTI is a helpful tool to track and comprehend professional experiences and how they are embedded in broader contexts. Before going forward, I would state why the findings of this study are significant. They are important since they foreground the dynamic and fluid nature of identity by exploring the intersection of gender, non-nativity, and the rural context. The findings of this study are a reaffirmation that one facet of a person's identity cannot be studied in separation from their other identities.

This research work gives evidence of how LTI starts developing even before one enters the teaching profession and then develops in tandem with one's additional identities as the person goes through life. Similar to the observation by Liu, Li, and Xing, (2019). I found that the teachers' supposed competence in English formed their initial LTI (equalizing good English learners with good English teachers). Unlike other studies (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2004; Prabjandee, 2019), the LTIs of the participants I interacted with did not start with them reflecting on the kind of teachers they wished to become. Rather, their LTIs formed under the effect of social expectations of what career path a lady residing in a rural area should go for. Mainly, the participants' emotional and historical attachment with English and their perceptions that English is a subject that can set them apart formed their initial LTI. However, once they enter the language teaching profession, we see the agentic nature

of LTI as the teachers cope with the multifarious issues because of their gender, non-native status, and the issues specific to a backward rural area.

I found how the teachers are at first highly motivated about their jobs; however, upon an introduction to ground realities in government school classrooms in a rural area, a shift in LTI is seen. This shift was caused as the teachers engaged in actual teaching practice. Barkhuizen's "contest" and "harmony" with reference to LTI is amply seen here as the teachers fine-tuned their practice with respect to ground realities. For example, when Malala's first lecture failed, she had to experiment with different strategies that might be more suitable to non-native female students in a rural context. Along the way, her LTI was reconstructed. In a nutshell, the participants' actual teaching practice shaped their identity. This observation is in line with the findings by Wenger (1998) and Prabjandee (2019). The observation that practice shaped their identity is aligned with Barkhuizen (2016)'s stance that "LTIs are outside in the social, material, and technological world" (p. 4). For instance, in Malala's case, her "inside" LTI was impacted by "outside" factors which may broadly be called the larger socio-educational context of the rural area she teaches in. Interaction with the students and learning materials (or lack thereof) changed her perceptions and thus her LTI. This also reaffirms Barkhuizen's (2016) stance that teacher identity is a "fractal system" (p. 6), that changes and re-organizes as it interacts with the "outside" (p. 3). Moreover, I found that their LTI did not develop along a linear path. Rather, crises in identity were felt by them intermittently and interspersed between phases of a well-established LTI. This is in opposition to the finding by Liu et al., (2019) who track the LTI of female language teachers teaching in rural China along a linear path. However, I believe that my own finding is more aligned with the bulk of research on identity that identifies it as a continuous, messy, and non-linear process (Barkhuizen, 2016).

The responses also showed how challenges that non-native language teachers face in a rural context are aggravated by the lack of support and opportunities for the female gender. Their autonomy was found to be hindered by their gendered identity. This resembles the observation by Schmenk (2005) and Liu et al., (2019) that autonomy, like identity, is not a universal concept. Rather, it is loaded with cultural meanings and expectations of how and what to be, as well as encompassing a critical awareness and acknowledgement of limitations and opportunities in certain contexts. The participants' gender was not only a deciding factor of their career but it also

directed their LTI development by limiting them in some ways and liberating them in others (such as not being burdened by financial responsibilities of running the household).

Surprisingly, their non-native status did not seem a hindering factor in the participants' LTI development. Rather, their LTI was more a product of their observance of socio-cultural ideologies about women, work, and the English language, and the limitations posed by the rural context, as well as their gendered identity.

Throughout this study, narrative inquiry has been highly useful in eliciting the responses of language teachers regarding their LTI development. This shows that the immensely rich, detailed, and descriptive lens of narrative inquiry helps us unearth LTI as nested in narratives. And because LTI is complicated, only the expansive lens of narrative inquiry could have done justice to its exploration.

The findings of this study contribute to the present understandings of LTI as they track how the latter develops specifically under the impact of non-nativity, the female gender, and the rural context. Because the analysis and findings shed light on the challenges non-native female language teachers teaching in a rural context face, this study is useful in fine-tuning upcoming educational policies.

If we were to summarize the findings of this study, it would be that language teacher identity is always complex, always multi-dimensional, and always in flux. The findings of this study suggest against using a monochromatic lens to understand LTI. Rather, the findings make clear that while considering LTI, different social, cognitive, historical, ideological, material and non-material factors have to be taken into account to arrive at a comprehensive understanding. To enclose the varied findings of this study in a simplified way would be to say that the sundry lived experiences and occurrences are highly impactful when it comes to shaping the identity of female language teacher teaching in a rural area. In essence, the current study has been an effort to encapsulate the intersection of the participant language teachers' views and attitude towards the support they have had and the hindrances they have overcome (or given up to), and how all of it has led to them being and becoming language teachers.

5.2 Limitations

The fact that only female participants have been made part of this study is a limitation. However, the choice of female-only participants was deliberate since the way female teachers experience and comprehend their teaching journey is different from male teachers, especially when we consider the rural area of Pakistan where opportunities are few and far between and hindrances are in abundance for any female who wishes to follow a career outside home-making. It was expected that the teachers will filter their experience through a gendered lens and give me insights into the way their gender contributed (or not) to their professional identity development. Coming from the same cultural background as the participant teacher, I was well-aware of this, hence the choice of females only for this study. Future researchers can explore the same topic with male teachers since the male experience would offer new insights into how language teaching works.

Another limitation I faced was that I wanted to collect data from all the initially selected 16 teachers but I had to rule that out once I analysed the narrative frames. Due to a multitude of cultural and personal factors, I found that the teachers were not as expressive as participants in a qualitative study ought to be, and even if they were expressive, they remained otherwise due to cultural reservations around sharing details about their private and professional lives.

Lastly, as this study was based on the experiences of four teachers only, its findings may not be generalized. However, to reiterate the point I made in the research design section, such has not been my aim to start with. Therefore, although the fewer number of participants may be considered a limitation of this study, the fact that this was a deliberate choice in order to gain more in-depth and insightful data should remain at the forefront and is ample justification for the participation of only a few language teachers. In any case, '*less is more*' remains a valuable maxim when it comes to qualitative studies, and especially where narrative inquiry has been employed.

5.3 Future Implications

The process of LTI formation and re-formation is not a simple task. However, as a language teacher reflects on their practice, they become more aware of their

choices and hence they can correct their way if need be. Glass (2018) and Soodmand-Afshar and Donyaie (2019) maintain that teachers should continually be engaged in narrative reflective events so that they may become cognizant of the various ways that their teaching abilities are influenced. They suggest narrative reflective processes as one way to better the teaching and learning process. As the teachers become more aware of their identities through self-reflection, this not only helps them harbour a clearer perception of their own self but also aids them in creating, developing, and refining their teaching skills to inspire and enhance love for language learning in students. Therefore, as the findings of the current study have also proved, engaging teachers in narrative inquiry to reflect on their lived experience gives them a valued opportunity to re-explore how their teaching practice and personal and social life are inter-linked and how they can be better language teachers by gaining insights through such a process. As has been proved by this and previous studies, the vital role of language teachers in their professional identity development from their own points of view cannot be underestimated. Thus, language policy makers and teacher trainers should (theoretically and practically, respectively) acknowledge the beneficial role of reflective and narrative events in progressing language teachers' professional identity development. And this acknowledgement should find translation into practical events by giving more and more opportunities to language teachers to self-reflect and narrate their experience.

The current study may be used as a springboard by future researchers who want to explore the process of teacher identity development especially in previously under-researched places such as the rural areas of Pakistan. This is because this study makes a unique and creative contribution to literature regarding the influences that help shape the identities of female language teachers in the rural swathes of Pakistan and the meanings such teachers construct of the collective impact of nativity, gender, and the rural context. More research set in varied contexts has the potential to offer a deeper understanding of LTI, nested in the stories that language teachers tell about their lives. In short, the more the research, the more the chances of studying the stories of teachers embedded in expansive narratives, and the more the understanding of LTI.

Moreover, this study also has implications in the field of teacher training and skill development as it depicts various constraints that may hinder language teaching

and learning process. Reasons underlying such constraints have also been discussed to explore identity transformation.

There is another point that I may add here which I came to learn as I collected and analysed the qualitative bulk of data during the months I dedicated to this research study. Although I knew in theory that LTI is a dynamic, historical, and multi-faceted phenomenon, it came to know it in practice only when I was engaging with the teachers and subsequently trying to categorize, codify, and analyse their responses. During this whole process, it became evident to me that the merger of varied sub-identities is a difficult task, methodologically speaking. Thus, there is a need to develop as much multi-faceted and varied methodologies to study LTI as LTI is complex. This is crucial if we aspire to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and to capture it in all its complexity.

On a concluding note, I hope to present a humble offering to the ever-expanding bulk of knowledge surrounding LTI through this study. I hope the insights provided by this study will contribute towards the expansion of the field theoretically, methodologically, and practically. As this study puts into practice the composite conceptualization of LTI given by Barkhuizen (2016), I hope it has opened new avenues of thinking about LTI as a lived experience since it has looked at the effect of three very important factors (i.e. nativity, gender, and the rural context).

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