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### Research Paper

## Language Teachers' Identity Configurations and Their Resolution Strategies for Imposed Identity

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### Abstract

Identity conflict resolution is an essential stage in teachers' identity construction. As there seems to be no tool to measure resolution strategies for overcoming the imposed identity, we developed an 18-item questionnaire based on a previously validated imposed identity questionnaire. It included four options of resolution strategies for coping with imposed identity adopted by four identity configurations of teachers, namely Rebellious, Submissive, Harmonious, and Duplicitous. The analysis of the data which were collected from 42 EFL teachers through the resolution strategies questionnaire indicated the dominant types of configuration the teachers projected in coping with mandates by managers, supervisors, and learners as three sources of imposition. Faced with institute managers' imposition, most teachers manifested a Harmonious identity except when managers treated teachers based on their personal attitudes rather than teachers' professional abilities. To deal with supervisors' imposition, the teachers tended to be mostly

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Submissive or Harmonious. As to learner-driven imposition, the teachers opted for Rebellious and Harmonious strategies to resolve most of the impositions. The findings indicate how identity may be imposed, changed, and managed. Supervisors, managers, and EFL teachers need to consider how identity conflict resolution can lead to a desirable EFL environment for teaching.

**Keywords:** EFL Teachers, Identity, Imposed Identity, Resolution Strategy

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## 1. Introduction

Teacher identity is a site for the constant process of negotiation and renegotiation that occurs when teachers encounter conflicts between their personal attitudes and others' expectations imposed in their teaching context (Pennington & Richards, 2016). Undoubtedly, becoming a teacher is the result of equilibrium among tensions raised due to the interface of a teacher's personal identity and values on the one hand and others' demands, on the other, leading to the process of teacher identity evolution (Leeferink, Koopman, Beijgaard, & Schellings, 2018). Recent research has concentrated on the identity of teachers as active agents who have a voice in their workplace context and reshape their identity in interaction in their teaching practice (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018). Identity is not just projecting personal issues. Rather, it is an entity that indicates the relationship between the person and society in the broader social context (Smolcic, 2011) and is associated with teacher efficacy in the institutional context (Ghafar Samar, Kiany, Akbari, & Azimi, 2011). Many researchers (e.g., Richards, 2017; Van der Want et al., 2015) have revealed that not all teachers can successfully give a positive meaning to their interaction with others. However, as emphasized by Ramani and Zhimin (2010), teachers' conflict with their institutional managers is unavoidable and cannot be resolved and managed

completely. Conflict influences the pleasant performance of teaching, but if carefully managed, it culminates in peaceful concord between teachers and their institutional managers.

Imposition-driven conflicts for teachers can be harmful as it results in inefficient communication in a workplace and lowers their performance, which in turn affects the management of the teaching and learning environment (Bano, Ashraf, & Zia, 2013; Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012; Rahimi, Yousofi, & Moradkhani, 2019). However, if imposition-driven conflicts are properly managed, improvements in resolution of conflict increase, environmental relationships are strengthened, and identification of problems and solutions is enhanced (Bano et al., 2013; Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). Since conflict is natural in any teaching context, managers must create strategies that magnify its resolution and minimize its dysfunctional outcomes in educational relationships. This conflict resolution may align with the four identity configurations of teachers depicted as submissive, duplicitous, rebellious, and harmonious (Taylor, Busse, Gagova, Marsden, & Roosken, 2013). In view of the paucity of research on teacher-imposed identity and resolution strategies, the current study sought to measure Iranian EFL teachers' resolution strategies for imposed identity in view of their four identity configurations.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Varghese (2017) viewed teacher identity as the product of a connection between how teachers see themselves and how others expect them to be. Likewise, Fernando, Hernandez Varona, and Sanchez (2020) referred to teacher identity as the combination of the meaning individuals attribute to themselves and the meaning others assign to them, both of which are continually being modified as a result of teachers' interaction in the EFL context. In fact, rather than being passive subjects, teachers are believed to be

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active agents with unique personal views and experiences that directly impact their reaction toward any imposed institutional policies. This leads them to either defend or renegotiate their original identity (Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2018). Accordingly, tensions that teachers encounter in the process of adapting their personal perceptions in view of institutional attitudes result in an internal struggle, and in the case of complex frictions, possibly undesirable conditions (Leeferink et al., 2018). Being conscious of different aspects of imposed identity and being able to cope with probable conflicts in the EFL teaching context could accelerate the process of teachers' professional development. In this regard, Triarico and Yendol-Hoppey (2012) identified many strategies for coping with conflicts such as being aware of imposition, correspondence, withholding anger, affirmation of cooperation, awareness of bias, diversity of culture, peace-making, and opposition resolution.

Although the earlier definition of teacher identity considered it as a unitary construct, the more recent conceptualization has regarded it as unstable (Flores, 2020) by emphasizing the strong relationship between teachers' contextual factors and the construction of their identity (Pennington & Richards, 2016). That is why contextual identity was defined as institutional identity formed by EFL contexts, such as institutional policies or expectations. Thus, Rodgers and Scott (2008) delineated four suppositions that most conceptions of teacher identity share. The first supposition is that identity is configured inside multiple connections, the second maintains that identity is shaped through relationships, the third signifies that identity is constantly shifting, and the last expresses that identity involves the reconstruction of stories told over time.

Both imposed identity and coping strategies manifest the most adaptive mechanism and response for teachers at each moment. However, EFL teachers sometimes favor contextual forces shaping their teaching practices,

which directs them toward facing struggles between themselves and undesirable situations (Pillen, Beijaard, & Brok, 2013). In addition, imposed identity and coping strategies describe the individual self-perceptions that are aimed at providing balance in the trajectory of identity development and adaptation to the requirements of the context. In the same direction, Ruohotie-Lyhty (2018) suggested that teachers' personal beliefs impact their process of identity development by illustrating the conflict between the personal aspect of their identity and others' demands. Flores (2020) also indicated that tensions are experienced by teachers during their real teaching practice and developing a more realistic view of teaching. In this regard, the current study aimed at investigating how teacher identity conflicts could be resolved by teachers.

EFL teachers do not passively receive their imposed identities or any other social functions, but go through an intense process of imposition, negotiation, and renegotiation in order to figure their identities. By insisting on the power-laden nature of language and identity, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) recommend three kinds of identities: (1) imposed identities, which are non-negotiable identities in a specific context; (2) assumed identities, which are accepted and non-negotiated identities; and (3) negotiable identities, which were based on the process of identifying Submissive, Duplicitous, Rebellious, and Harmonious teachers. According to Taylor et al. (2013), these four types of teachers have their own configurations. Submissive teachers succumb to the strong imposed self, which produces responses against their ideal self. In Duplicitous teachers, ideal and imposed selves are different from each other and hence parallel responses to imposition are generated. Rebellious teachers have a strong ideal self, which projects responses against the imposed self. In Harmonious, there is a convergence

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between teachers' ideal and imposed selves, which results in congruent responses.

Studies show that aspects of imposition in different organizations depend on organizational culture. For instance, Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem, and Odigwe (2013) revealed that schools, like other institutions, have their own set of requirements concerning teacher-principal, higher-lower relationships, and regulations and rules which are tied to the enactment of impositions. In fact, imposition occurs for all statuses in all institutions. Interpersonal oppositions happen because of differing work roles and workloads (Kipruto & Kipkemboi, 2013). Intragroup oppositions may result from dissimilarity among group members, and intergroup conflicts may ensue when group members see each other as enemies (Ramani & Zhimin, 2010). Based on this conceptualization, Uchendu et al. (2013) added several factors, including insufficient institutional policy, task interdependence, incompatibility of roles and goals, systematic and unsystematic group disapproval, complications of communication, and deficient academic production. In conflict resolution, researchers argue that successful principals should learn to manipulate institutional policies (e.g., Makaye & Ndofirepi, 2012). According to Bano et al. (2013), principals may pay attention to the modification of organization rules. Additionally, studies indicate that the capacity building of the staff (Kipruto & Kipkemboi, 2013) and the skills of the principals (Ghaffar, 2010) have an impact on teachers' individual responsibility development in their teaching workplace, which places an emphasis on the accountability of the individual and results in fewer conflicts.

Career development is another conflict-related feature where teachers require help to use their ability. Barmao (2012) asserted that when teachers have confirmed job security and institutional support, fewer conflicts occur. In addition, teachers are motivated to meet their responsibility when their

efforts are appropriated (Barmao, 2012). Barmao further maintained that imposition could be controlled by creating a pleasant teaching environment, for example, accessibility of teaching materials and sympathetic supervisory service. Ramani and Zhimin (2010) posited that successful imposition resolution strategies include listening to and accommodating the needs and interests of all group members to find a win-win solution for all concerned. Ramani and Zhimin found that in the case of schools, unambiguous approaches, operations, and mechanisms need to exist to provide guidelines on how to solve impositions. Copious regulations and rules have been generated, such as consultation and mediation, to resolve contentions in educational contexts (Mapolisa & Tshabalala, 2013; Ramani & Zhimin, 2010).

In view of the gap in the literature on resolution strategies for conflicts among EFL teachers, the rationale behind the current study was to add a quantitative component to the existing qualitative studies to provide more insight into the notion of teachers' conflict resolution strategies. This study sought to answer the following research question:

What are EFL teachers' resolution strategies for their imposed identity and the agents of this imposition in view of the four types of teacher identity configurations?

### **3. Method**

#### **3.1 Participants**

Convenience sampling was used to select 42 Iranian EFL teachers in this study. Half of the participants were novice teachers with three or fewer years of teaching experience (Gatbonton, 2008), and the other half were well-versed teachers having more than five years of teaching experience (Tsui, 2005). Among both novice and experienced English language teachers,

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approximately half were male and half were female, who were young (20-40) or middle-aged (41-67). They held B.A., M.A., or Ph.D. degrees and taught at different language institutes in Iran.

There were other participants in this study. Two TEFL experts analyzed questionnaire content validity, 12 novice teachers participated in the read-aloud stage to ensure that the teachers understood the items in terms of language and content, and 30 teachers were involved in test-retest reliability by responding to the same questionnaire twice to see if the answers were correlated. As the early version of the resolution strategy questionnaire had to be examined in a pilot study, 15 EFL teachers participated in piloting the questionnaire. After all participants' opinions were applied, the modified version of the questionnaire was generated.

### **3.2 Instruments**

In view of the different aspects of imposition, specifically from the teachers' perspective, data were collected through an imposed identity questionnaire previously developed construct-validated developed in a larger study (Gholamshahi, Alemi, & Tajeddin, 2021). The original questionnaire was developed through the review of the relevant literature and interviews with 44 EFL teachers, resulting in a 45-item questionnaire which was disseminated among 450 EFL teachers. The resolution strategy questionnaire, which was part of the original questionnaire, consisted of 18 items, each with four options related to teachers' Rebellious, Harmonious, Submissive, and Duplicitous identities in institutes. In the current study, 60 teachers filled out online the questionnaire. After removing incompletely filled-out questionnaires, 42 were considered in the data pool to find teachers' resolution strategies for imposed identity.

The original questionnaire included seven sections (families, supervisors, managers, institutes, colleagues, learners, and learners' parents) and revealed

the multi-dimensional nature of imposition in relation to which elements of identity change and harmonize under the influence of individual, contextual, and sociocultural forces. To focus on a selected number of themes, the resolution strategy questionnaire adapted in this study was selected from three sections: managers, supervisors, and learners. The face validity of the questionnaire was increased via an orderly layout, and the content validity was checked through several experts' feedback.

### **3.3 Data Collection Procedure**

Several experts cooperated to check the items and the face validity of the questionnaire. The initial pool of the items was sent to these experts to identify items whose wording could be improved. A few items were subsequently eliminated, and others were modified. A pilot study was then conducted on the first draft of the questionnaire, and 12 EFL teachers read the items for the clarity of language and content and gave feedback on problematic items to improve item readability. Afterward, the questionnaire was administered and re-administered to the same participants with a one-week interval to ensure that the responses were the same. The index of this test-retest reliability in the piloting stage of the study ( $n = 30$ ) was .92. Consequently, after the piloting, the questionnaire items were shortened from 45 to 18 items. In the second phase of data collection, the items were administered to 60 Iranian EFL teachers who taught English at different institutes. Of the 52 completed instruments, 10 questionnaires were eliminated due to a large number of incomplete responses. Subsequently, 42 questionnaires were used in the final analysis.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

### **4.1 Results**

To unravel the various aspects and sources of imposed identity and teachers' perspectives, an 18-item resolution strategy questionnaire was developed-

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The English teachers selected their resolution strategy, which helped us identify whether they were (a) Rebellious, (b) Submissive, (c) Harmonious, or (d) Duplicitous agents in institutes and to depict how they coped with aspects of teacher-imposed identity and the agent of this imposition. In what follows, the findings are described and discussed.

#### 4.1.1 Managers

The analysis of the data on teachers' perceptions of resolution strategies for managers' impositions showed the frequent strategies used by teachers. As evident from table 1, 68.4% of the teachers perceived themselves as Harmonious and tried to convince managers that teachers have the right to develop their professional skills in evaluating learners by using their own test (Table 1). Furthermore, 65.7% of the teachers defined themselves as Harmonious beings who constantly try to convince managers about learners' scores, e.g., giving every learner a passing mark despite their inability (Table 1, item #2, option c). The results of item #3 also show that the highest percentage was for option a (i.e., being a rebellious teacher) which indicates that 82.1% of teachers agreed with the statement that they ignore the manager's opinion because they think the managers' discriminatory behavior reduces teachers' motivation. Over 80% of the teachers tended to be Harmonious as they tried to convince their managers that there is no difference between male and female teachers in the case of cooperation. (option c, in item #4). When asked to describe a suitable strategy in a conflict situation, option c, 75% of the participants assigned the feature of being Harmonious to themselves considering the fact that they have to merge ideal and imposed selves (item #5, option c). They claimed that as teachers, they needed their managers to respect teachers' points of view about teacher responsibilities.

Table 1  
*Teachers' Perceptions of Resolution Strategies for Managers' Imposition (n=42)*

| Items                                                                                                                                                       | Percentage   |       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
|                                                                                                                                                             | Yes          | No    |
| 1 The institute manager prohibits me from developing my own test items to assess learners.                                                                  |              |       |
| a. I ignore my managers' opinion because I think teachers' main test is more important.                                                                     | 54.1%        | 45.9% |
| b. I try to see my teaching responsibility from the eyes of managers.                                                                                       | 54.1%        | 45.9% |
| c. I try to convince that I have right to develop my professional skills even in evaluating learners by my own main test.                                   | <b>68.4%</b> | 31.6% |
| d. I pretend to have accepted idea with my managers but I follow my own idea that I have consider creativity in all aspects of teaching even testing plans. | 44.4%        | 55.6% |
| 2 The institute manager forces me to give every learner a pass mark despite their inability or failure.                                                     |              |       |
| a. I have capacity to ignore what my manager expects of me as a teacher because I have given them marks based on their learning practices.                  | 63.2%        | 36.8% |
| b. I try to accept my managers ' idea to give every learner a pass mark despite their inability.                                                            | 35.1%        | 64.9% |
| c. I try to convince my managers that I should communicate words against any person where there is a clear intention to be harmful.                         | <b>65.7%</b> | 34.3% |
| d. I pretend to have accepted idea but actually I try to give them marks based on their ability rather than imposition by managers.                         | 48.6%        | 51.4% |
| 3 The institute manager treats me based on his/her own personal attitudes rather than my professional abilities.                                            |              |       |
| a. I ignore managers' opinion because I believe that managers' discriminatory behavior reduces teachers' motivation.                                        | <b>82.1%</b> | 17.9% |
| b. I try to respect my managers' idea that they can treat teachers based on their own personal attitudes rather than teachers' professional abilities.      | 47.2%        | 52.8% |
| c. I try to convince my managers that teacher should provide programs based on their own professional abilities.                                            | 68.4%        | 31.6% |
| d. I pretend to have accepted idea but I know that managers should provide the opportunity for friendship as an essential condition in the workplace.       | 57.1%        | 42.9% |
| 4 The institute manager expects that teachers who are female be more cooperative than male teachers.                                                        |              |       |

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|                                                                                                                                                                                                |              |       |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| a. I ignore such a belief because managers should provide the opportunity for both male and female teachers inside the institute in order to help them to be more cooperative.                 | 78.4%        | 21.6% |
| b. I try to accept with managers to avoid conflicts with them.                                                                                                                                 | 51.4%        | 48.6% |
| c. I try to convince that managers should be aware of gender differences, but do not focus on deviance because there is no difference between male and female teachers in case of cooperation. | <b>80.6%</b> | 19.4% |
| d. I pretend to have accepted idea but in reality I prove that both male and female teachers act the same.                                                                                     | 45.7%        | 54.3% |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                          |              |       |
| o The way I regard a teacher's profession and responsibility does not match the one defined by the institute manager.                                                                          |              |       |
| <hr/>                                                                                                                                                                                          |              |       |
| a. I ignore my managers' opinion because I have my own understanding of teaching profession.                                                                                                   | 67.6%        | 32.4% |
| b. I try to see my teaching responsibility from the eyes of manager.                                                                                                                           | 40.5%        | 59.5% |
| c. I asked my managers to respect my point of view about teaching responsibilities.                                                                                                            | <b>75%</b>   | 25%   |
| d. I pretend that I have accepted idea but I follow my own understanding of teaching profession.                                                                                               | 41.2%        | 58.8% |

Moreover, Table 1 shows less preferred strategies for coping with managers' imposition. A to Item #1, over half of the teachers tended to be Rebellious (54.1%) or Submissive (54.1%) and 44.4% preferred to be Duplicitous. However, a great number of teachers were Rebellious (63.2%) and Duplicitous (48.6%) whereas a far smaller number (35.1%) demonstrated a Submissive configuration when they were forced to give learners undue pass marks (Item #2). When they were asked about their strategies in dealing with managers' personal evaluation of teachers irrespective of their abilities (Item #3), more than half of the teachers adopted a Harmonious (68.4%) or Duplicitous (57.1%) orientation. Regarding managers' expectations about the need for female teachers to be more cooperative (Item #4), the teachers tended to be Rebellious, Submissive, and Duplicitous in descending order. As to the acceptance of managers' opinions about the teaching profession, about

40% and 41% of the teachers decided to ignore their own perception of the profession, respectively.

#### **4.1.2 Supervisors**

The findings on the teachers' perceptions of resolution strategies for supervisors' impositions in Table 2 show that the highest percentage was for option d, item #6, suggesting that 58.3% of the teachers believed they were Duplicitous and wanted to pretend that they had accepted the prescribed syllabi, but they actually followed their own methods. Furthermore, over 65% of the teachers expressed a strong preference for item #7, option b, which indicates that they were Submissive and accepted the supervisor's opinion to avoid informal relationships with learners. Among the options of item #8, option b highlighted that 61.5% of the teachers tended to be Submissive and complied with the supervisor's opinion to avoid introducing topics that do not match L1 cultural norms. In addition, the results of item #9 revealed that 77.5% of the teachers selected option c and hence believed that they were Harmonious and aimed to convince supervisors that collaboration is more appropriate than competition. As to the need for a large number of observations for teacher professional development, it was found that 65% of the participants agreed with option b (item #10), revealing they were Submissive and believed that their goals of these observations are in accordance with the supervision policy and objectives. There was a consensus among the participants as they agreed with option b, item #11, which indicated that they were Submissive and tried to accept the belief that female teachers need more restrictions. Finally, the selection of option c in item #12 by 74.4% of the teachers tended to be Harmonious and asked supervisors to respect their points of view about teaching responsibilities.

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Table 2

*Teachers' Perceptions of Resolution Strategies for Supervisors' Impositions (n=42)*

|   | Items                                                                                                                     | Percentage   |       |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
|   |                                                                                                                           | Yes          | No    |
| 6 | Institute supervisors force me to use prescribed textbooks, methods, and activities without any changes.                  |              |       |
|   | a. I ignore what supervisors tell me and use my own methods, and activities.                                              | 42.1%        | 57.9% |
|   | b. I try to follow that prescribed syllables, although I do not like them.                                                | 56.1%        | 43.9% |
|   | c. I try to convince my supervisor that there are some other more effective methods.                                      | 57.5%        | 42.5% |
|   | d. I pretend that I have accepted idea with that prescribed syllables, but I actually follow my own methods.              | <b>58.3%</b> | 41.7% |
| 7 | Institute supervisors prohibit me from having an informal relationship with learners.                                     |              |       |
|   | a. I ignore supervisor's opinion because informal personal relationships with learners counts to me.                      | 36.8%        | 63.2% |
|   | b. I try to accept supervisor's opinion to avoid an informal relationship with learners.                                  | <b>65.8%</b> | 34.2% |
|   | c. I try to convince my supervisors that informal relationships with learners is necessary.                               | 42.1%        | 57.9% |
|   | d. Although I pretend to accept supervisor's idea but I provide a friendly relationship with learners.                    | 48.6%        | 51.4% |
| 8 | Institute supervisors impose that I introduce only topics which match our cultural norms.                                 |              |       |
|   | a. I ignore supervisor's suggestion because I think that teaching L2 culture is important as well.                        | 48.6%        | 51.4% |
|   | b. I try to meet supervisor's opinion that avoid to introduce those topics which are not matched with our cultural norms. | <b>61.5%</b> | 38.5% |
|   | c. I try to convince supervisors that teaching second language should along with its culture.                             | 51.4%        | 48.6% |
|   | d. I pretend to have accepted idea with what my supervisors expect of me but actually I follow my own way.                | 52%          | 48%   |
| 9 | Institute supervisors' high expectations cause negative competition among teachers.                                       |              |       |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                   |              |       |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
|    | a. I ignore supervisor's idea because I believe that competition by nature is negative.                                                                           | 34.2%        | 65.8% |
|    | b. I try to accept supervisor's idea because I think that competition is one of sources of development.                                                           | 57.9%        | 42.1% |
|    | c. I try to convince supervisors that collaboration is more appropriate for professional development than competition.                                            | <b>77.5%</b> | 22.5% |
|    | d. I pretend to have accepted idea with my supervisors, but in reality I don't have any sense of competition with other teachers.                                 | 52.6%        | 47.4% |
| 10 | Institute supervisors insist that a large number of observations are needed for teacher professional development.                                                 |              |       |
|    | a. I ignore supervisor's opinion because I believe that too many observations make teachers feel less powerful to work.                                           | 51.4%        | 48.6% |
|    | b. I try to accept supervisor's opinion that a large number of observations can help teacher in their own professional development.                               | <b>65%</b>   | 35%   |
|    | c. I try to convince supervisors should attend the results of teachers' teaching by asking students' satisfaction instead of too many observations.               | 60.5%        | 39.5% |
|    | d. I pretend to have accepted idea with my supervisors, but I know that too many observations have negative points.                                               | 48.6%        | 51.4% |
| 11 | In their observations, institute supervisors place more limits on female rather than on male teachers.                                                            |              |       |
|    | a. I ignore such a belief by supervisors because I think both female and male teachers should be treated equally.                                                 | 77.85        | 22.2% |
|    | b. I try to respect such a practice by supervisors because I think female teachers need more restrictions.                                                        | <b>79.4%</b> | 20.6% |
|    | c. I try to convince my supervisors that female teachers should be given the same power and freedom as male in teaching practice.                                 | 77.15        | 22.9% |
|    | d. I pretend to have accepted idea that supervises place more limits on female teachers but actually I follow only logical reasoning and feedback made by others. | 50%          | 50%   |
| 12 | The way I regard a teacher's profession and responsibility does not match the one defined by institute supervisors.                                               |              |       |
|    | a. I ignore my supervisor's opinion because I have my own understanding of teaching profession.                                                                   | 60.5%        | 39.5% |
|    | b. I try to respect my supervisor's idea.                                                                                                                         | 66.7%        | 33.3% |
|    | c. I asked my supervisors to respect my point of view about teaching responsibilities.                                                                            | <b>74.4%</b> | 25.6% |
|    | d. I pretend that I have accepted idea but I follow my own understanding of teaching profession.                                                                  | 56.8%        | 43.2% |

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In addition to the most preferred strategies described above, the teachers opted for other strategies for supervisors' impositions less frequently framed by their configuration. In dealing with supervisors' demands for the use of prescribed textbooks and teaching activities (Item #6), only 42.1% of the teachers demonstrated a Rebellious configuration. Similarly, when asked by supervisors to avoid informal relationship with learners (Item #7), comparatively fewer teachers (36.8%) were Rebellious by ignoring this expectation. Similarly, being Rebellious was the least frequently demonstrated teaching orientation in addressing supervisors' demand for introducing only topics which match L1 cultural norms (48.6%, Item #8) and in considering supervisors' high expectations as causing negative competition among teachers (34.2%, Item #9). However, in Items #10-12, being Duplicitous was the least preferred tendency among the teachers: the need for a large number of observations for teacher professional development (48.6%, Item #10), placing more limits on female rather than on male teachers during observations (50%, Item #11), and regarding a teacher's profession and responsibility as incompatible with the one defined by institute supervisors (56.8%, Item #12).

#### **4.1.3 Learners**

The results of data analysis regarding teachers' perceptions of resolution strategies for handling learners' impositions are presented in Table 3. The finding on item #13, option a, showed that 82.9% of the participants stated that they were Rebellious and ignored the belief that male teachers can provide a more pleasant classroom atmosphere. Another finding highlighted in item #14, option c, showed that 68.8% of the teachers asserted that they were Harmonious. Although teachers had great empathy with their learners, they tried to communicate and adapt genuinely with those who expect that teachers must use teaching activities that learners favor. Moreover, there was

a great deal of consensus among participants for item #15, option c, which suggests that 73.5% of the teachers were Harmonious and tended to convince learners that there were other more effective methods of teaching. Moreover, 89.2% of the participants who responded to item #16 selected option a, believing that they were Rebellious. They believed that being able to build up a strong ideal self, a teacher must have the capacity to ignore what learners expect. It should be noted that more than 82% of the teachers who chose option c in item #17 considered themselves to be Harmonious and tried to convince learners that teaching a second language should be accompanied by its culture. As the teachers' selection of option c in item #18 indicated, 67.6% of teachers defined themselves as Harmonious, with the ability to ask learners to respect teachers' points of view about the teaching profession.

Table 3

*Teachers' Perceptions of Resolutions Strategies for Language Learners' Impositions (n=42)*

| Items | Percentage                                                                                                       |                    |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
|       | Yes                                                                                                              | No                 |
| 13    | Learners insist that male teachers can better provide a pleasant and friendly classroom.                         |                    |
|       | a. I ignore such a belief because I think both male and female can provide a pleasant classroom.                 | <b>82.9%</b> 17.1% |
|       | b. I try to accept the idea that male teachers' classes are friendlier.                                          | 33.3% 66.7%        |
|       | c. I try to convince the learners that both male and female teachers can be favorite.                            | 77.1% 22.9%        |
|       | d. I pretend to have accepted opinion but I believe that both male and female teachers' classes can be pleasant. | 30.3% 69.7%        |
| 14    | Learners expect that I use teaching methods and activities which they favor.                                     |                    |
|       | a. I ignore this an expectation because I am more aware of effective teaching activities                         | 58.8% 41.2%        |
|       | b. I try to accept such an expectation because teaching should be based on the needs of the learners.            | 66.7% 33.3%        |
|       | c. I try to convince learners that I know about professional teaching methods.                                   | <b>68.6%</b> 31.4% |
|       | d. I pretend to have accepted idea but I should aware                                                            | 33.3% 66.75%       |

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|    |                                                                                                                                            |              |       |
|----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
|    | that learners may tend to put their responsibilities on me.                                                                                |              |       |
| 15 | Learners have expectations which inhibit my own innovation in language teaching.                                                           |              |       |
|    | a. I ignore what learners expect me and use my own method.                                                                                 | 51.5%        | 48.5% |
|    | b. I try to follow that learners' expectations, although I don't like them.                                                                | 41.7%        | 58.3% |
|    | c. I try to convince my learners that there are some other more effective methods.                                                         | <b>73.5%</b> | 26.5% |
|    | d. I pretend that I have accepted idea with that expectations, but I actually follow my own way                                            | 36.4%        | 63.6% |
| 16 | Learners insist that I give them a pass mark despite their inability or failure.                                                           |              |       |
|    | a. I have capacity to ignore what my learners expect of me as a teacher because I have given them marks based on their learning practices. | <b>89.2%</b> | 10.8% |
|    | b. I try to accept my learners' idea to give them a pass mark despite their inability.                                                     | 29.4%        | 70.6% |
|    | c. I try to convince my learners that I should communicate words against any person where there is a clear intention to be harmful.        | 70.6%        | 29.6% |
|    | d. I pretend to have accepted idea but actually I try to give them marks based on their ability rather than imposition by learners.        | 45.5%        | 54.5% |
| 17 | Learners insist that I introduce only topics which match our cultural norms.                                                               |              |       |
|    | a. I ignore learners' suggestion because I think that teaching L2 culture is important as well.                                            | 57.6%        | 42.4% |
|    | b. I try to meet learners' opinion that avoid to introduce those topics which are not matched with our cultural norms.                     | 51.4%        | 48.6% |
|    | c. I try to convince learners' that teaching second language should along with its culture too.                                            | <b>82.9%</b> | 17.1% |
|    | d. I pretend to have accepted idea with what my learners expect of me but actually I follow my own way                                     | 28.1%        | 71.9% |
| 18 | The way I regard a teacher's profession and responsibility does not match the one defined by learners.                                     |              |       |

|                                                                                                  |              |       |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-------|
| a. I ignore my learners' opinion because I have my own understanding of teaching profession.     | 58.8%        | 41.2% |
| b. I try to see my teaching responsibility from the eyes of learners.                            | 54.3%        | 45.7% |
| c. I asked my learners to respect my point of view about teaching responsibilities.              | <b>67.6%</b> | 32.4% |
| d. I pretend that I have accepted idea but I follow my own understanding of teaching profession. | 42.4%        | 57.6% |

In addition to the most frequent resolution strategies adopted by the teachers, as described above, their responses indicate the use of other strategies. Unlike strategies selected in addressing managers' and supervisors' impositions, the teachers tended to be less Duplicitous and/or Submissive when faced with learners' impositions. In five situations, the teachers manifested the lowest degree of Duplicitous configuration: (a) learners' insistence that male teachers can better provide a pleasant and friendly classroom (30.3%, Item #13), (b) learners' expectation teachers use teaching methods and activities which learners favor (33.3%, Item #14), (c) learners expectations inhibiting teachers' innovation in language teaching (36.4%, Item #15), (d) learners' insistence that teachers introduce only topics which match L1 cultural norms (28.1%, Item #17), and (e) teachers' perceptions regarding a teacher's profession and responsibility not matching those defined by learners (42.4%, Item #18). However, teachers' responses to Item #16 showed that they tended to be the least Submissive when learners insist that teachers give them a pass mark despite their inability or failure (29.4%, Item #16).

## 4.2 Discussion

Based on the findings, the perceptions of the participants were quite different, and they did not feel they could disclose their real selves with regard to resolution strategies to overcome imposed identity. This agrees with the study by Kocabaş-Gedik and Ortaçtepe Hart (2020), who found that teacher

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identity was reshaped due to the interaction between teachers and the institutional context. Raharjo and Iswandari (2019) also explored resolution strategies for coping with the experiences of imposition. In another study, Pillen, Beijaard, and Brok (2013) demonstrated that tensions are often accompanied by feelings of helplessness, anger, or shortcomings and are the result of an unbalanced personal and professional views of becoming a teacher. Indeed, a teacher's identity is affected when teachers encounter conflicts between their personal attitude of teachers' roles and others' expectations (Kayi-Aydar, 2017; Pennington & Richards, 2016).

This study also provided a picture of each of the four dimensions of teachers' configurations, namely Submissive, Duplicitous, Harmonious, and Rebellious. The findings showed what being an EFL teacher looks like with regard to imposition resolution. They echo the results of a study by Ashforth and Schinoff (2016), who found that people need a clear sense of "who they are" in their workplace. This is further supported by Kumazawa (2013), who found that there might be discrepancies among the different types of teachers' selves. This study found that Duplicitous teachers pretend to be very interested in academic issues but actually put in as little effort as possible and follow their own substitute agenda. This finding is supported by de Graaf's (2020) study, which demonstrated that the most significant coping strategy was hybridization. This strategy refers to teachers' tendency to preserve the quality of teaching in contrast to the obligations of career demands. Furthermore, it was seen that Harmonious teachers are willing to work hard to achieve their targets and get along well with others. It should be noted that most of the participants agreed on the idea of being flexible and open-minded. This is in line the observation that EFL teachers prefer to employ problem-focused strategies to overcome tensions. What is more, it was revealed that as various types of teacher configurations are shaped through

either direct or indirect tensions with others, it is not difficult to moderate and replace some with new ones. This is supported by Cendra (2019), who collected reflective stories of teachers to examine common tensions experienced by teachers and recognized four common coping strategies, namely looking for solutions, accepting the situation, getting help, and sharing with others. By the same token, Yayli's (2017) results showed that how teachers can overcome the tensions might result in negative consequences and that coping approaches can affect teacher identity.

According to the majority of participants in this study, a teacher should not be pressured by others' expectations. This aligns with Anspal, Leijen, and Lofstrom's (2019) finding that teachers have expectations about their roles. However, as was evident from our findings, Submissive teachers have a strong imposed self that generates responses in contrast with their ideal self. In addition, an aversion to change seems natural in the context of Iran. Namaghi (2006) found that in a mandated setting that controls the teaching process, others' expectations are superior to teaching well. In our study, the data indicated that Rebellious teachers have a strong ideal self that generates responses against the imposed self. This agrees with several studies conducted in Iran (e.g., Akbari & Eghtesadi, 2017; Sadeghi & Khezrlou, 2016; Sadeghi & Sa'adatpourvahid, 2016; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2015, 2016; Yaghoubinejad, Zarrinabadi, & Nejadansari, 2016), which attest to the undesirable contexts in which Iranian English teachers work. These unfavourable and unsatisfactory conditions have resulted in teachers' coping strategies that make them be disobedient and persistent in sticking to their own teaching methods. Sadeghi and Sa'adatpourvahid (2016) stated that teachers consider themselves as merely the implementers of mandated institute policies. In this relation, teachers use very limited coping strategies for dealing with impositions and disagreeable conditions in which they work

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(Akbari & Eghtesadi, 2017). As various types of impositions are encountered, teachers seem to incrementally move toward either end of the continuum.

### **5. Conclusion and Implications**

The absence of an instrument to measure teachers' resolution strategies to cope with imposed identity prompted the researchers to conduct the current study. To this end, the present study was focused on unravelling the relationship between teachers' configurations (Submissive, Harmonious, Duplicitous, and Rebellious) and their resolution strategies for imposed identity. In relation to teacher agency in dealing with impositions and sources of impositions, it was indicated that teacher identity is a multidimensional entity in which teaching is an interactive act rather than an individualistic one. This was seen in the current study, which measured teachers' self-reported beliefs about their ability to cope with impositions. The findings showed that teachers' perceptions of imposed identity and resolution strategies were reshaped through interaction with others. Some of the teachers showed a low level of self-confidence in coping with identity imposition. Further, as enunciated by the teachers, notable constraints were caused by the contrasts between their ideal ideologies and the adjustments demanded by the authorities inside the language centers. Finally, teachers developed various strategies to cope with contextual mandates in that their (re)creation of their professional identity is rooted in how they prioritize and position their personal values in practice. Professional development would ideally entail that teachers develop a balance between conflicting aspects in their professional practice.

The results obtained from the resolution strategies to solve imposition have pedagogical implications. They offer EFL teachers and language institute administrators a clearer picture of teachers' resolution strategies and

may provide a diagnostic or consciousness-raising tool to monitor teachers' progress in regulating the various forms of imposition. Further, the sources of imposition such as managers, supervisors, and learners can be discussed in teacher education courses and collaborative teacher reflections to enhance teachers' abilities to encounter these impositions. Regarding the limitations of this study, it should be noted that the data were elicited from non-native EFL teachers. Therefore, it is suggested that future research be focused on native English-speaking teachers. Also, further studies are needed to provide evidence of resolution strategies to overcome imposition through teacher observation and diaries and their impact on their professional career. Finally, because the aim of the study was to find various strategies for teachers' imposition, other studies should investigate learners' strategies for dealing with imposition.

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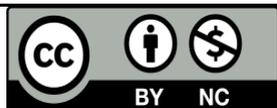
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